



Look after your people and they will look after your customers

Damien Matthews, managing director of GTS Freight Management says that concentrating on his own people, looking after and rewarding them has resulted in his transport firm providing superior service for his valued customers.

Based in Mildura, North West Victoria, GTS is a family owned business that has grown from humble beginnings in 1980 to become one of the largest wine and beverage transport distributors in Australia employing more than 200 staff.

The company operates in the region that now contributes to more than 21 per cent of Australia's total wine grape crush and is worth in excess of \$500 million in export sales.

Since taking over from his father and company founder Don Matthews, Mr Matthews is now the sole director of the company. He admits that his working career may have been quite different but for a serious accident in his youth.

"I actually wanted to be a pilot," said Mr Matthews.

"During my senior school years I worked at GTS on the weekends. My jobs were initially to help fuel and wash the trucks and later I drove the forklifts. But in the background to all this activity I was training to become a pilot."

He explained that a serious water ski racing accident left him paralyzed in his left arm and that put paid to his dream of becoming a pilot.

"That accident stopped my hopes of having a career in aviation so I kept going with the trucking business. Working in the various channels of the business such as warehousing, operations management, then as general manager to managing director," he said.

Having been with the company for the past 19 years Mr Matthews understands the business and his customer requirements extremely well.

Backed by a team of dedicated staff and an ever expanding fleet of vehicles, the company having recently taken possession of their 100th truck, Mr Matthews says that GTS is committed to servicing their clients



(Photo courtesy of Prime Mover Magazine)

Damien Matthews proudly standing in front of the company's 100th truck

with the highest level of excellence.

Even though the company specializes in wine and beverage cartage Mr Matthews sees the real point of difference of his transport operation is the quality, service and innovation that exists across all areas of the business.

"Trailer design, load restraint design, OH&S effective quicker turn around times, less work for drivers and more productivity are all examples of our innovation within this business," he said.

Mr Matthews said that the business has grown for a number of reasons.

"We have a really good reputation in the wine and beverage industry built on providing a quality service," he said.

From a purpose built state of the art facility located at Mildura the company services all capital cities except Darwin.

"The main storage facilities are in Mildura and we use alliances in the other capital cities for storage," he said.

"Future growth of the company will come from growing business with existing customers as well as our future clients."

Turning his attention to the issue of fleet maintenance and key suppliers Mr Matthews said that Bridgestone was his

main supplier of tyres in conjunction with Bandag which provides retread product.

"The package that Bridgestone and Bandag give us works very well. While we use Bridgestone 30570R22.5 casings on the steer, drive and trailer we also run Bandag caps on the trailers. This combination works very well. We get extremely good mileage out of our Bridgestone and Bandag tyres and they're certainly competitive in price," said Mr Matthews.

"We've seen the Bridgestone and Bandag tyre technology improve markedly over the twenty year relationship that we have had with both companies.

"With the current Bandag R4200 tread pattern product that we use today we get extremely high performance and reliability from the caps.

"As part of our tyre management program we recap the Bridgestone casing just the one time.

"We receive regular contact from Bridgestone and Bandag at different levels from the local dealer to head office management and communication at all levels is excellent.

"We rate our experience with Bridgestone and Bandag very highly. It adds to the value of our business from a customer service and financial aspect."