

CARRIER VALUE

Managing the Value Chain in Transport



NEIL WRIGHT

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FOREWORD

It is not often that one has the privilege of reading a book written by 'somebody who has been there'. Neil presents us with that wonderful opportunity of reading a product that is clearly a labour of love, written with passion and insight. For me what is heartening is that even though this book is grounded on a solid theoretical base, it is equally grounded on real life experience and practice. Many newcomers to the industry will feel privileged to have a reference that, if used correctly, provides important insights about the potential pitfalls of not paying attention to some of the fundamentals of this industry as clearly articulated in *Carrier Value*.

Neil presents us with an eye-witness account of the developments that have been taking place in the world of commercial wheels. Having been an operator himself, he not only bases his insights on academic theory, but also manages to weave in sound business principles, which makes this book an enormously rich intellectual product.

Carrier Value speaks to the operator, the business manager and any person with an interest in logistics. It highlights the importance of fundamental survival principles in the road freight industry – the importance of proper costing, vehicle maintenance, driver selection and overall professional management of the business operation. The application of sound business principles can only lead to the industry attaining its rightful place in the context of the South African economy.

This book is written in accessible language, which makes for an easy read. It also incorporates a lot of personal accounts, which gives it the warmth and personal feel that you do not find in textbooks.

Sipho G. Khumalo
CEO of the Road Freight Association of South Africa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Hugh Sutherland, previously editor of *Focus* magazine, gave me some sound advice in the early stages. He focused me towards pro-active writing as opposed to passive writing and he cautioned me against subjects that he felt were hackneyed.

My friend in Australia, Adelaide, Tony Wynne, always a mine of information, gave me some good advice and recommended I read *The Complete Plain Words* by Sir Ernest Gowers. This is a book that is recommended to British and Commonwealth officials in the interest of simple and clear writing.

Enrico Ulliana was my lecturer at the University of Cape Town for the degree I undertook in financial management. I have remained in contact with Enrico and he recommended reading John Shank and Vijay Govindarajan's book *Strategic Cost Management*. The book was a major influence in matching my business experience with theory.

John Miller updated me on some of the technical aspects of the new trucks; this was over and above the technical help I reconceived from reading *FleetWatch* and *Focus* magazine. John Gibb and Dennis Kaye edited the section I had written on them as entrepreneurs in the industry. Rodger Grafton, editor of *SA Forestry*, contributed to some interesting photographs and discussions.

Jon von Coller, a Durban economist, assisted me with Chapter 9, 'The Road Ahead', and researched most of the key economic indicators. For years he recorded South Africa's business cycle for Stellenbosch University's Bureau for Economic Research. Jon is active in advising KwaZulu-Natal province and Ethekwini Municipality on economic development. He personally visited the CTC development in Spain and hopes a similar facility will be established in KZN.

Lucinda Noyce was instrumental in typing the book. I would write the script in my own handwriting and then dictate while she typed. Once the text was in my computer I could then go to work doing my own altering and shaping.

Jill Franks proofread the book and made some valuable alterations. Sally Hines did the final editing and was very helpful in advising on what she believed did not contribute to the book and was an unnecessary diversion. 'You can't cover everything,' she said. I was adding a great deal of back-up information to the Appendices.

Anthony Cuerden of Flying Ant Designs did the final artwork and layout of the book. I particularly like the design of the cover. It was the sound advice of Peter Adams of Adams & Co, the booksellers/stationers in Durban, that initially lead me to Anthony's firm.

'Neil presents us with an eye-witness account of the developments that have been taking place in the world of commercial wheels. Having been an operator himself, he not only bases his insights on academic theory, but also manages to weave in sound business principles, which makes this book an enormously rich intellectual product.'

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CEO of the Road Freight Association of South Africa

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Carrier Value is a reflection of 28 years of experience in the motor carrier industry. It is an instructive biography of Neil Wright's career in this industry, but also has application in broader logistics functions and a variety of businesses.

The book goes far further than addressing the white business community. It also pays heed to transformation and BEE initiatives.

The business theories Wright draws on are intended to add clarity to what business is about, and sharpen awareness of the opportunities for businesses to sustain good returns and growth. This is what makes this book different: business stories are interesting, but with the introduction of theory there are some instructive lessons to be shared.

This is an invaluable book for the logistics industry and reflects on the broader changes that have occurred in South Africa in the last few decades. Wright's voice is a positive and clear one that provides inspiration for the future.

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