

Trust's witty and enthusiastic Paul Kennedy believes in making a positive contribution and having some fun while he's doing it.

trust
merged with Permanent

The magnificent MC

By CAROLYN SWANSON

Photograph by James Tait

An accountant who loves to talk, Trust business development manager (BDM), Paul Kennedy, has delivered more than 1,000 presentations for the trustee industry, captivating his audiences with a ready wit and boundless enthusiasm.

Considered a "top-rating chair" at industry conferences, Kennedy draws on a strong Irish/Catholic/New Zealand heritage and is in demand on both sides of the Tasman as an MC extraordinaire.

"Just give me a microphone and I'm away," Kennedy admits.

Charged with developing and marketing the Queensland business of Trust (which was formed by the merger last year of Permanent Trustee and Trust Company of Australia), Kennedy relishes the combination of relationship building and financial marketing that goes with his job.

The engaging expatriate New Zealander became a fledgling BDM in his first job as a paper boy, learning at age eight that relationship building was not only part of the job, but also reaped its own rewards in "tips".

A quintessential showman, Kennedy moonlighted as a part-time radio announcer for Radio Windy, in Wellington, New Zealand, while completing his accounting studies, and he was a popular disco DJ for 17 years.

He became something of an institution on the charity circuit for schools, sports, community clubs and businesses in the New Zealand capital, where his irreverent impersonations of *Sale of the Century's* Tony Barber invariably brought the house down. Kennedy's sense of humour has also served him well over many years as sergeant at arms in Rotary.

Kennedy moved to Brisbane in 1995 and worked initially as a financial consultant to Australian Communication Exchange (ACE), a national not-for-profit company established to give people who are deaf - or who have a hearing or speech impairment - access to the telephone and other communication networks.

His family was quick to rib Kennedy on the irony of his working for clients who were unlikely to chide him for talking too much, and he appreciates the joke, but is delighted now to sit on the board of such a successful community organisation.

Appointed BDM by Trust in 1997, after 15 months contract work with Suncorp, Kennedy thrives on a role that combines people involvement with the thrill of the chase of a new business proposal.

"Winning a new business appointment is a great feeling - getting the business on-board and keeping the client happy is an even better feeling," he explains.

Kennedy rates the signing up of Queensland's Q-Invest as one of his best wins for Trust, but he is probably better known for his lively adjudication of industry debates and chairmanship of various industry conferences and events.

Chair and facilitator of the role plays enacted at the last two ASFA national conferences and master of ceremonies for the 2002 Financial Planning Association Queensland conference, Kennedy also enjoyed adjudicating the 2002 Women in Finance (Qld) debate over the proposition, "That women in power are sexy". It was a demotion, however, he claims, when he was asked this year to debate rather than adjudicate the proposition, "That men are terrified to ask for directions".

His all-male team won the argument convincingly over their WIF female opposition, Kennedy producing an impressive timeline of hapless, terrified men, starting with Adam, "who got us blokes into this mess in the first place!" It went on to Moses, "who might have been able to part the Red Sea, but managed to lose himself in the desert for 40 years", to Christopher Columbus, "who took a wrong turning on the Queen of Spain's new yacht and discovered America by mistake", to Sir Edmund Hillary, "who went to the local corner store for a loaf of bread and a bottle of milk and then found himself on top of Mt Everest", to Neil Armstrong, "who opened the wrong door on the way to the bathroom, took one small step... and made history", to George W. Bush, "who, in spite of all the sophisticated technology available, still can't find those weapons of mass destruction".

Kennedy regrets that he and his Australian wife of 24 years separated three years ago, but he manages to maintain an amicable relationship with Jennifer, take an active role in parenting his three "young adult children", and balance it all with the demands of a new

relationship.

"I tend to throw myself into everything I do. These days I put in a 45-50 hour working week, but I used to work much longer hours. I was very much motivated by job satisfaction, but the price was very high - too high," Kennedy reveals. "My only regret is that I didn't realise this earlier."

Kennedy's financial pedigree stretches back over 30 years to his first accounting job with one of New Zealand's largest motor dealers, the New Zealand Motor Corporation. With that company for nine years, he went on to become corporate development manager of National Mutual New Zealand, and subsequently headed up National Mutual New Zealand's financial products division. He was introduced to the trustee industry when appointed managing director of New Zealand Permanent Trustees, after National Mutual acquired it.

Despite the angst it caused, Kennedy regards as a career highlight and sharp learning curve his role as a key witness in a high-profile corporate fraud case in New Zealand, following a "character-building" period as a company secretary forced to turn whistleblower.

Someone who always sees a glass as half full, rather than half empty, Kennedy counts as one of his greatest achievements in life, "enjoying everything I do, whoever I am with and wherever I am".

It is perhaps a measure of the man that Kennedy finishes a long list of personal triumphs with the latter, and begins the list with the receipt of his first pay cheque (as a paperboy!). Other highlights include holding the Bledisloe Cup above his head at the age of 15 (in the privacy of a goods lift while fetching it for a window display at a Wellington Department store); surviving a gruelling 23-day Outward Bound Course; working his first shift on radio (it didn't matter that it was the midnight to dawn shift and that his mother may have been the only listener!); completing his accounting exams, and, family occasions.

"My philosophy is we should always try to contribute something positive to society and have fun while doing it!" Kennedy insists. ■