



## Three Wise Men

*Actually there were lots of "wise men", but three of them made a big impact - and one in particular came bearing a gift of essence of wisdom so valuable I thought he was the Messiah incarnate.*

The Misty Valley team was at the recently held, inaugural Wine Business Symposium at EIT in Hawkes Bay. We were proud to be associated as a Premier sponsor of this event. The messages that came from it, particularly in branding and building a connection with your customers were extraordinary. Those fortunate souls that were there, have equipped themselves with an advantage over the rest of our industry.

So, who were these Three Wise Men, and what was this distilled essence of wisdom? Tony Spawton, Associate Professor & International Director of the Wine Marketing Research Group, University of South Australia; Dr Johan Bruwer, Convenor of the Wine Business Group at the University of Adelaide, and Professor David Hughes, Emeritus Professor of Food Marketing at Imperial College London & visiting Professor at University of Kent and the Royal Agricultural College.

All very important men in the world of Agricultural and Horticultural marketing. These men who had traveled from afar on ships in the sky; regaled us with their stories of building trust with our customers, of how to tell our story in digestible and relevant form, how to position ourselves so that our customers are willing to pay more for our wine.

One story that stood out beyond all of the others, was seemingly unrelated to the exercise of branding, yet the underlying message was poignant and oh so relevant.

I apologise if my retelling of this story muddles the facts but the punch line is most definitely correct!

Professor Hughes is the Chair of a significant berry growing co-operative in the UK. Let's put this into context - the turnover of this organization is £500 million. That's bigger than the entire New Zealand Wine Industry!

Professor Hughes told us how the UK supermarket chains collect an enormous amount of data on their clients through their purchasing habits. They also survey their customers regularly and probe deeply into why they make certain purchasing decisions.

These guys then spend lots of time and money analyzing this data in an effort to distil the truths from it that will give them an edge over their competitors.

One day Professor Hughes got a call from a customer, the Chairman of their most important supermarket chain - If he valued their business he would present himself at HQ the next day. David had been summoned to meet with Goliath.

The meeting was peaceful, no blood on the carpet but a message was delivered that would have an immediate and far reaching impact on this £500 million business.

Goliath had done his homework, the data was convincing. Consumers, he said, were becoming confused with the many "good cause" messages they were receiving; Carbon Footprint; Food Miles; Organic; Sustainable; Ethical, etc. There were too many causes pulling at the purse strings. They needed to find the high ground and claim it.

So they had asked the question of their customers, "What's the most important bit of all this stuff, to you?". The answer was as surprising as it is simple. Their customers wanted to eat a strawberry that was free of chemical residues.

David was sent home with a clear message. Deliver residue free berries or we'll find someone who can. And yes, they did it, and yes, their business is stronger than ever.

If you'd been in that room with us, I hope you would have shared the same thought that I did at that moment...talk is cheap... it's time to start living up to our talk. Here is the Messiah, come to share with us his wisdom. The time has come to act on that wisdom, for surely if we don't others will.

NZWG is embarking on a number of projects with the aim of having our entire industry producing first sustainably, and eventually residue free. Why? Because this issue stands out amongst our customers as a bottom line, "right of consumption". If we don't do it, others will - and quickly.

Professor David Hughes has given us a gift worth many millions of dollars of market research. We could never afford to pay for this ourselves. We can talk until we are blue in the face about our wonderful wines, and they are wonderful. But we need to put our money where our mouth is, and start ensuring that they really are Pure in every sense of the word.



**Congratulations to the 5 lucky winners of our prize draw at the Symposium, who each receive 200 vines of their choice:**

**Mission Estate Winery  
Starborough Farming  
Brunton Road Wines  
Fairbourne Estate Ltd  
Negotiants NZ**

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