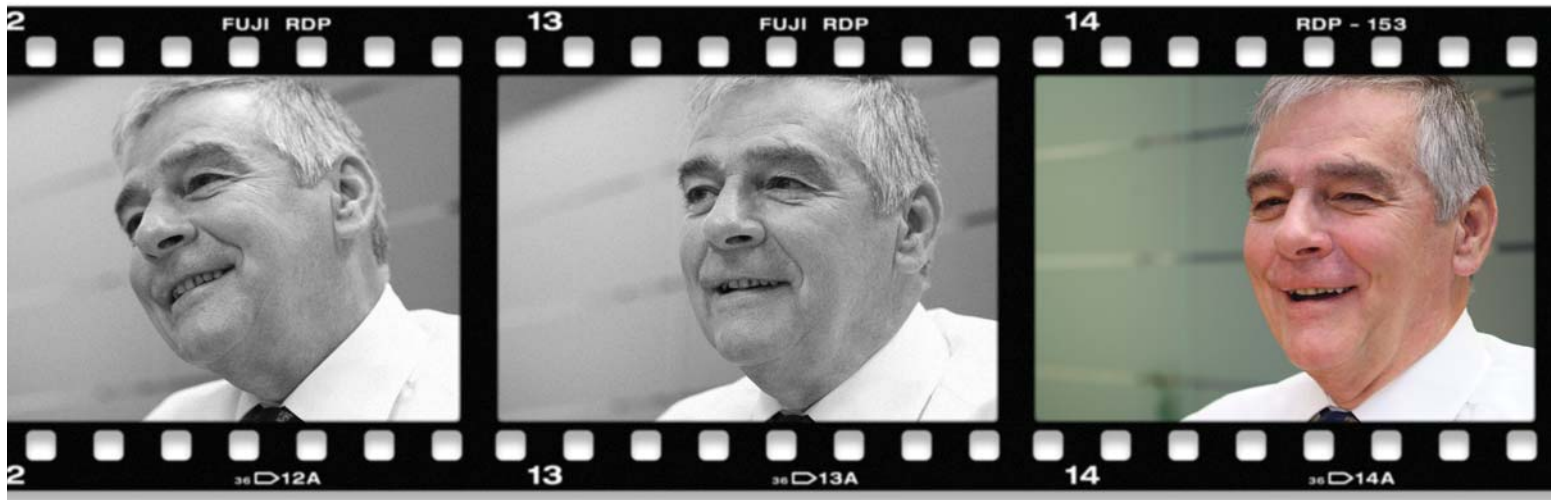


THE **vision** THING



HE MAY BE one of the most recognisable names in business, but you won't find David Mortimer in the social pages of the Sunday newspapers. The 63-year-old company director studiously avoids the outward trappings of fame in favour of the more satisfying rewards of being a decision-maker. "I have enough things to keep me interested without hiring a PR agent," he says.

David enrolled at what was then the Faculty of Economics back in 1967, following in the footsteps of his mother, Portia, who was one of the school's early women graduates. His time at university would have a lasting impact on his life, not only because of what he learnt from lecturers such as the "legendary" Sir Hermann Black (BEc '27, MEc '37, DUniv '89) but because he met his future wife, Barbara Mortimer (BEc '70 DipEd '71) on campus. His

student days also gave him a lifelong love of rugby, leading eventually to his current role as President of the University of Sydney Football Club.

After graduating, David won an overseas scholarship and briefly considered an academic career. But he soon decided he was much more suited to life in business and gained a junior executive position at the finance company Custom Credit, followed by a post at Slater & Walker. "I was still trying to find my feet, but I was fairly ambitious about succeeding at whatever I did," he explains.

Following a brief interlude working in the United States, David returned home to take up a job offer from TNT Limited in 1973. The decision was a critical factor in his future success, he says, because he was able to see first hand how elite business leaders,

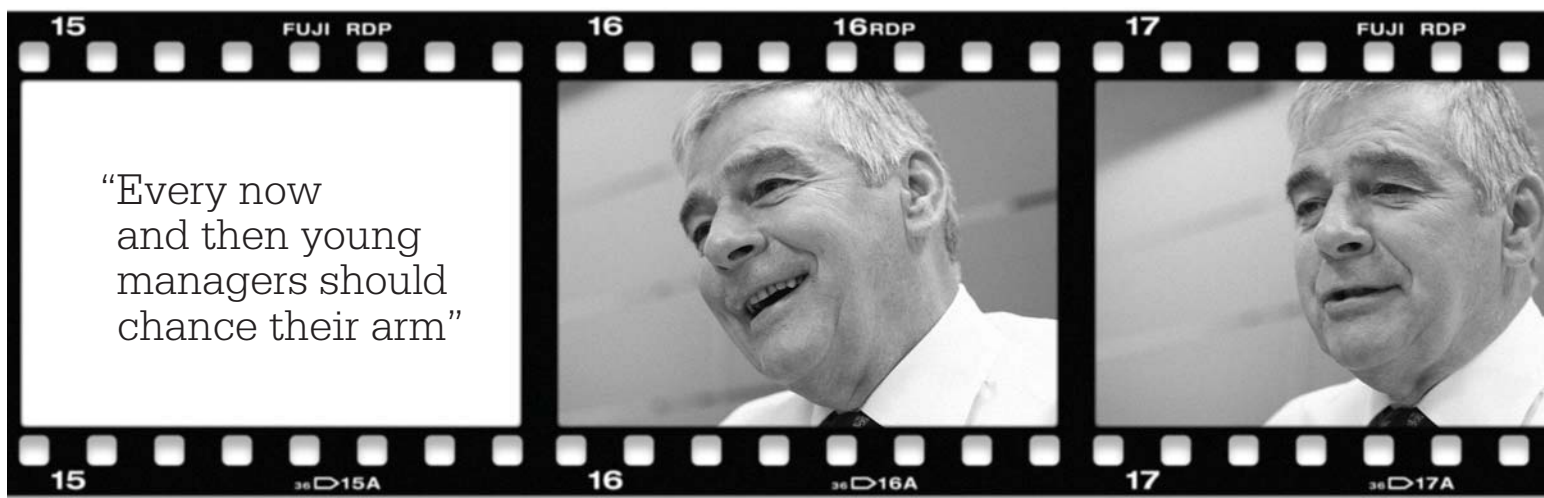
including the late Sir Peter Abeles, made their decisions: "I always say to young people starting in business: whatever you do, get close to people who have the ability to make decisions, so you can learn how they do it."

David climbed his way to the top of the logistics giant, where his far-sighted thinking played an important role in helping to expand the company's operations around the world. He progressed to Chief Financial Officer in 1985, then was appointed Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer in 1992. At the time, the company had a workforce of 65,000 employees and \$7 billion in annual revenue.

It was during his stint at the helm of TNT that David took on his first responsibilities as a company director. After the firm merged with the KPN Group in 1996, he stayed on briefly

Visionary thinking is the key to success for young Australian entrepreneurs, according to David Mortimer AO (BEC *Hons* '70), who holds a reputation as one of the nation's most inspired business leaders

GRANT SMITH



as head of the Asia-Pacific region before resigning to focus his energy on the corporate boardroom. His early appointments included positions as Chairman at Sydney Airports Corporation and GIO Australia, while he now holds the Chairman's seat at Australia Post, Crescent Capital Partners and Leighton Holdings. David is also a Director of Macquarie Infrastructure Group and has been a Director of companies in the software, pharmaceutical, communications and transport sectors.

Aside from his accomplishments in the corporate sphere, David has also played a high-profile role in non-profit bodies, which have ranged from the Salvation Army to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia, and in public affairs. In 1996, he was appointed by the Howard Government to conduct a review of business

programs which resulted in the Mortimer Report. More recently, Trade Minister Simon Crean has tapped David to chair the current government's review of Australian export policies. "It is an interesting time for Australian trade," he comments. "We've entered a period where trade is starting to turn around, which is good for the country. But it's also a time where we have a full employment economy, which raises questions about capacity management, bottlenecks and border issues. We are looking at some of these issues and I hope we will be making a few useful suggestions to government."

In addition, David was also Chairman of the Defence Procurement Advisory Board, which comprised some of the nation's leading senior public servants, and is now heading a review into defence procurement for the Federal Government.

Underlying all his diverse achievements is David's burning ambition to succeed at whatever he puts his mind to, even his self-admittedly "seriously poor" golf games ("sometimes I am probably too competitive," he says), and his bold, visionary leadership style. It was this quality that was cited when he was created an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2005.

According to David, innovative thinking in business is nothing short of vital to Australia's economic success. "We need young entrepreneurs who are prepared to take on challenges," he explains. "They must however be measured, so they don't result in a series of disasters! But every now and then young managers should chance their arm. My own personal view is that the future of this country is very much now in the hands of these creative and exciting young businesspeople."