

Award comes to Gore

By **SONIA GERKEN**

GORE — Southland accountant Brendon Harrex has put the province on the map in the accounting and business sector, winning the New Zealand Young Chartered Accountant of the Year award.

At only 33 years of age, the Gore-based accountant is a man on the move. The title comes just months after he made history with Ward Wilson Ltd, one of Southland's largest accounting firms, by becoming its youngest chairman.

Mr Harrex said yesterday he had been overwhelmed by the support and congratulatory comments he had received since winning the award.

"It's a fantastic opportunity to have the award in Gore and Southland.

"It shows you don't have to live in Auckland or Wellington to be smart in business."

He had gone to last week's awards ceremony thinking he was in with a chance but suspecting his record of doing things outside the traditional accounting box may take it away.

Ironically, it was his innovative

approach to billing customers that clinched the award.

Mr Harrex has been instrumental in a move towards eliminating timesheets from Ward Wilson and offering customers agreed fees before starting work.

He admitted to thinking this concept might be "too scary for the profession to grasp".

However, the judges believed it showed initiative, leadership and an ability to influence a significant organisation.

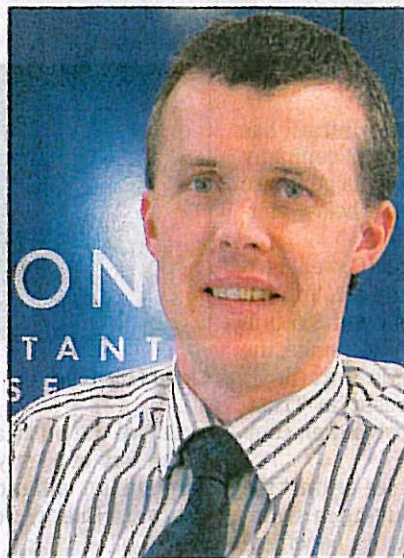
Mr Harrex said he instigated the change not only to offer a better service to customers but to attract talent to Southland in a profession where there was a shortage worldwide.

"Filling out a timesheet every 6 minutes is not that attractive."

There has been interest in the new approach to billing from accountancy firms throughout New Zealand, as well as overseas, Mr Harrex said.

For Ward Wilson and himself, the award had validated the strategic direction they were heading.

It would also give him more recognition to increase his influence over



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Recognition: Gore accountant and Ward Wilson Ltd board chairman Brendon Harrex, winner of the 2006 New Zealand Young Chartered Accountant of the Year title.

the profession nationally and promote the importance of attracting young accountants, Mr Harrex said.



New Zealand's Young Chartered Accountant of the Year, Brendon Harrex, in front of his firm's window proudly decorated by Ward Wilson staff.

Top talent wins

BY JERRIE ANDREWS

HE'S been in the business only nine years and Brendon Harrex is already at the top of his game.

Mr Harrex was named New Zealand's Young Chartered Accountant of the Year at a ceremony in Wellington last week and credited the win to a supportive business environment.

The 33-year-old is the chairman of Ward Wilson and director of the Gore firm and was a large influence in the company's latest strategic move of eliminating time sheets, which contributed to his winning of the award.

The old ways of going to the accountant and being hit with the bill later have gone out the window at Ward Wilson.

Under Mr Harrex's direction, the firm now has a policy whereby staff

sit down with the client, understand what it is they want, then present them with options which are all priced before the work starts.

"The customers love it, they know in advance what they're going to pay," Mr Harrex said. "It focuses us on making sure we deliver what customers want."

He said the initiative had sparked interest worldwide and was pleased the company had been so receptive to it.

Mr Harrex believed his award signalled a recognition that Ward Wilson was leading the way in terms of business focus, by being prepared to do something a little bit different.

His 5-year-old son was also stoked with the win, very excited that his father won the first trophy of the family.