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Coals to California

BRIAN R RICHARDS LTD LEVEL 2, 6 LEEK STREET
NEWMARKET, AUCKLAND 1023, NEW ZEALAND

PHN +64 9 520 0014 **EML** brand@brrltd.com

FAX +64 9 522 2709 **WEB** www.brrltd.com

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FRESH BRAND THINKING FROM DOWNUNDER

As the first New Zealander to be invited to speak at the Direct Marketing Association Conference and Exhibition, the world's largest marketing event, brand strategist Brian Richards will have to shift a few perceptions.

"Realistically," says Brian Richards, "many of the attendees at the San Francisco event won't know where New Zealand is, let alone the fact that we can generate clever ideas around marketing and branding. Bear in mind that California's Stanford University was the first campus anywhere to set up a marketing faculty."

At the October event he'll be joining the likes of Sir Richard Branson and senior marketing executives from global heavyweights such as Microsoft, Harrah's, Cingular and Hewlett Packard. In addition to the 500 plus exhibitions on offer, marketers from the US and around the world will be learning the latest best practices in a raft of marketing disciplines.

Brian Richards will be fronting a series of in-depth workshops on branding and outlining some of the specialised tools his company has developed to enhance brand performance, manage storytelling, modify internal cultures, foster loop learning and create effective brand stewardship.

Despite the audience challenges, Brian Richards is undaunted. "It's a great opportunity," he says, "to take some fresh thinking from New Zealand to the home of modern day marketing. But it's more than waving the flag; I'm sure I'll be capturing some valuable new ideas and perspectives myself. Teaching is, after all, a great way of learning."