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# Reenergising and REVAMPING

Riwal has undergone a radical transformation and transition process in recent years as the company has overhauled its processes, procedures, and operations.

Images by John Roeland

**W**ith a firm foundation in strong values and a fundamental focus on the customer, Riwal has significantly revamped its strategies and processes to ensure it remains at the forefront of its industry. An international aerial-work platform and telehandler rental specialist, Riwal is based in Dordrecht, the Netherlands, and has operations in 17 countries, with a wide-ranging fleet of 13,000 units.

*The CEO Magazine* recently sat down with Norty Turner, CEO of Riwal, to discuss the multi-tiered transformation that has set the company on its future course.

***The CEO Magazine:*** What led you to the position of CEO of Riwal?

**Norty:** I began my career in the rental business in March of 1995 with Hertz Equipment Rental Corporation, part of the greater Hertz Corporation. I started in an entry-level position straight out of college. I was on the rental desk as a sales coordinator and then 14 months later I progressed into an outside sales representative role. I did that for a little over two years, and I learned a lot about how to sell effectively. I had great teachers and mentors along the way.

I then became a regional sales director looking after six locations and 15 sales people. That was great to be able to step into a

management role at such a young age. I was still in my twenties, and I was leading a sales force. That was a good experience for me, and it taught me how to manage and how to drive initiatives through other people, which is so important in leadership.

Following that, I became a branch manager. One of my mentors in the business was Shelton Johnson in Raleigh, North Carolina, who was the branch manager of the Raleigh Hertz equipment store from 1961 to 2000. Hertz Equipment got into the business in 1965 so he was with the company that they bought before they even got into business. He came with the building. He was incredibly successful and very highly respected. >

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*“It’s just fundamental that we focus on our customers. It drives so many of the initiatives that we do. We’re aiming to achieve that level where we’re delivering the best customer experience.”*

- Norty Turner

It was an absolute pleasure to learn from him. He focused on three things, which are still the foundation for me to this day. He was extremely customer-focused, he focused on employees and he wanted everyone to be excited about coming in that front door every morning, and he focused on his fleet and making sure that the equipment was well taken care of, that he had the right machines, and that he could satisfy exactly what the customer wanted. Those were his foundations and I really subscribe to those as well.

I learned from him and we had a great year in 2000. I was actually getting my Masters in Business during that time and I was getting that done at night and on the

weekends. However, I was learning more during the day as a branch manager of the Raleigh store, in terms of how to effectively run a business.

I then stepped into a regional manager position where I was looking after sales and operations for North and South Carolina. We went into a recession and that was also a learning experience because that was the first recession that I had been through. With the support of my boss, I was then able to build a really effective team and I learned a lot about what it takes to be successful in business. It comes down to building that strong team. That’s the first fundamental. With such a strong team in place we had some fantastic years.

Hertz then moved me over to Europe so my family and I moved to Europe in August 2008 and I became the Vice-President of

Hertz Europe, Middle East, and Africa. That was stepping up into another learning position where I learned a tremendous amount. I also had a great mentor in the former president of Hertz Equipment, Gerry Plescia, who was an outstanding mentor to me, and I gathered so much from him.

I always love interacting with people in this industry and I had met the owners of Riwal in 2007, prior even to my vice-presidential role. I had come over with Gerry to Europe and I met the owners of Riwal on that trip. I maintained contact and relations with them, and one day I got a call and they asked me to come see them.

It was an opportunity that I couldn’t pass up because I was able to take on a CEO position with Riwal, which was obviously not the same size as Hertz, but in terms of my level of responsibility, Riwal is in 17 countries and it’s a multinational company so to become CEO of Riwal, just prior to turning 40, was a real honour for me. Yet again, I’ve got great mentors and teachers with the board members that I report to and a great team to work with.

**Looking at the industry, how are you directing and positioning Riwal to lead the company through these shifts and trends?**

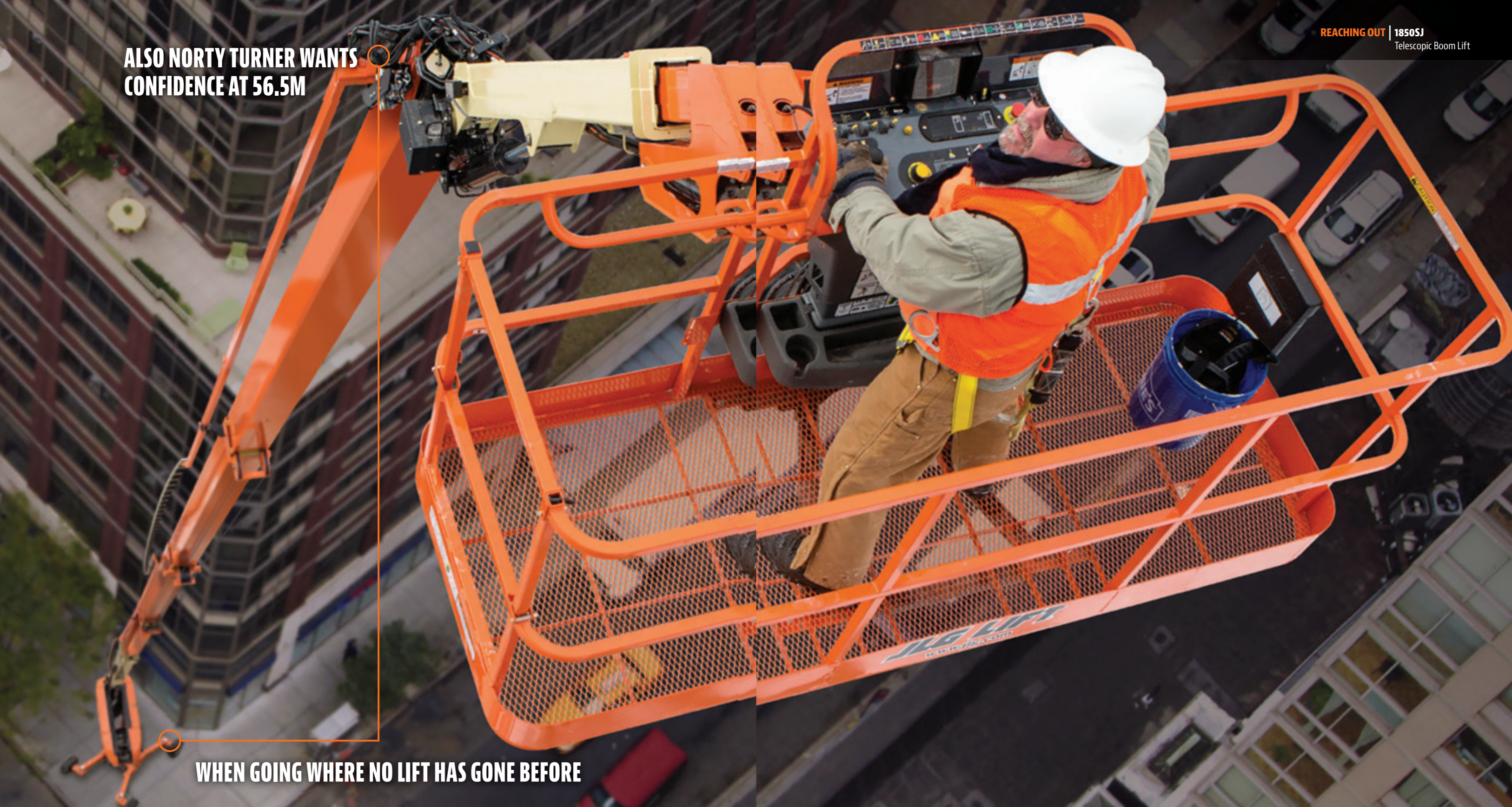
The first thing that we do, and I don’t want it to sound clichéd but it’s the fundamental truth, is we focus on our customers. Part of our vision statement is literally, “Riwal will grow by creating and delivering the best customer experience in our industry.” It’s just fundamental that we focus on our customers. It drives so many of the initiatives that we do. We’re aiming to achieve that level where we’re delivering the best customer experience.

That leads to other initiatives and other priorities for the group. For example, what we call ‘The Riwal Way’ is very important for our future. It’s a major part of our future success, and we have put a lot of time into it since we started >

*“Genie and RIVAL are natural partners as we share many of the same characteristics: we are passionate about exceeding customer expectations and delivering world class products, service, safety and support. We look forward to many years of working together.” - Joe George, Terex Aerial Work Platforms, Vice President and Managing Director, EMEAR*



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in the spring of 2013. We have brought in some external expertise to help us, and we work with someone I've spent some time with before who is an absolute guru when it comes to lean thinking.

There's something I call the 'rental value cycle', where machines are at a depot and they're on a ready line, they're ready to go on rent, and then they go on rent, they come off rent, they come back to the yard, they go through the workshop, and then they move back to the ready line. That's the cycle and it's a continual process that never stops. The thing is that there are so many processes involved with making that cycle happen.

What we've done is we've identified what we feel are the top 12 core value-driving processes involved in that cycle, and we've taken them apart and through our own internal, best current thinking and ideas, along with some outside expertise, and we've put those processes back together in what we

feel is the most optimum and effective way.

By doing that, we feel—and we're experiencing, as we've got movement on this already—that we're a much stronger and more effective company. Some of the processes are commercial, some are operational, and others are involving transport. As we're able to roll that out country by country, we're able to realise the benefits from doing that. We've started that program with several countries already and we've got still more to go. We essentially developed a manual in 2013 which details exactly how you do it in The Riwal Way. Each chapter represents a core process which we then roll out in each country kaizen by kaizen. Each country then becomes stronger and is able to fulfil exactly what the customer needs.

We're more effective, we're more responsive to customer needs, and we're then able to follow through on our vision statement and deliver

the best customer experience. That's a real critical point for our future and it's an important component in how we're positioning the company for even higher levels of success.

#### How does this plan incorporate different cultures and markets into its approach?

That's such a good point because you can design a program and share how it should be done, but if you design a program and then you're completely black and white about it and you're not giving any flexibility, then you're going to have trouble when you go to a different country.

One of Riwal's successes and hallmarks is the fact that we've been able to achieve success in

*"At JLG we trust the capability of our partners to adapt quickly to changing industry requirements. We appreciate the efforts Norty Turner is making, and leading the company's transition from an independent rental company to a globally sustainable and prudent corporation." - Karel Huijser, General Manager and Vice President EAME Region, JLG Access Equipment*



multiple, different countries. It's critical and we don't achieve that success by saying, "This is how we do it in Holland and this is the right way"—we adapt completely to the local market forces and exactly what's going to drive the most success and value in a given country.

The Riwal Way is certainly adaptable. The main thing about it is the ideas. We have a manual which serves as a base manual, but then when we roll out each process in each country, we bring the key people in that country who are involved in a given process together and the ideas that form how we roll out that plan come from our own team members in that country. That's where we really achieve that adaption which is vital when you're in multiple countries like we are.

#### In terms of the transition from a family-owned business to a global corporation, how did you implement that change?

That's a transformation that Riwal has been undergoing for some time. There was such an excellent foundation that was laid and such an ambitious and entrepreneurial culture that was, and is, a part of Riwal. You have to preserve your core and what's made you

successful in the past while transitioning with more structure and organisation so you can leverage and capitalise on that entrepreneurial culture that was already in place. That's been a critical thing.

Something that was underway and really initiated by our board members was something called the 'Riwal Tuning Program'. That focused on some key elements in the rental business like organisational design, strategic planning, financial management, fleet management, cash management, repair and maintenance, and an IT or ERP system that was better suited to help us with the transformation.

A lot of the foundation for that was laid before I arrived in 2012, and then through so many people in Riwal, including the COO Søren Rosenkrands, we were able to carry forth during 2012 and 2013 and really take so many of those projects that were part of that tuning program and implement them within Riwal so that they became a part of the way that we work.

Another thing that we did that was important to that transformation was to really nail down our strategy within the first 60 days

that I was on the job. Obviously, Riwal had an existing strategy and I wanted to take a close, detailed look at that strategy, understand it, and then adapt it to include where we wanted to go.

Strategy for us is composed of six components: vision, mission, values, strategies, objectives, and action plans. Vision focuses on what are we building and mission focuses on why we exist. The reason Riwal exists is to achieve the highest levels of safety, productivity, and service through our people.

Another component of that strategy is our values. They start with safety. That's a major part of what we do and why we're here. Our other values are engagement, teamwork, integrity, and responsibility.

Then there's strategies and tactics around how we're going to be successful over time. We lay those out, we define those, and we say, "Here's what we're going to do and how we're going to do it." We also lay out the objectives and determine what we want achieve and what we're going to measure. Then we list out our existing year target and our vision year target for our objectives.

We then lay out our action plans and figure out what's the work that needs to be done, who's responsible for that work, and ›

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when are the deadlines for getting it done. We lay all that out and we put it all on one page, believe it or not. We just want it to be really clear. If we ever have any questions internally we can just pull that one page out and it's all right there. We simply call it the One Page Plan.

Every month as a senior leadership team we come together and we have business reviews where everyone prepares a scorecard in advance and we share those around. The group One Page Plan is actually my plan as the CEO. There's also a one-page plan for the CFO, the COO, all the functional leaders in our headquarters, and our region directors looking after their countries have a one-page plan. The region directors further cascade the process down to their country managers who compile their own one-page plans as well. All of it ultimately links back up with the group one-page plan so that we're all aligned on exactly what we're striving to achieve.

**How do you work with suppliers and strategic partners to ensure Riwal remains at the forefront of its industry?**

We're really close to them and they are so critical to what we do. We don't manufacture anything. What we do is we buy machines and what we're really good at is taking those machines and providing a service to customers, renting them out in a safe way, and ensuring the customer is safe and productive. Although at times we will create innovative adaptations, we don't make anything, but our suppliers do and they're good at that. It is a pleasure to work with such forward-thinking suppliers, who continuously invest in innovative products. For example, JLG has brought out their Hybrid 340 AJ; Holland Lift has introduced its Hybrid scissor lift; Genie has brought forward its 180-foot boom lift. Having partners who stay ahead of the technological curve is an important component of Riwal's success.



We've got very close relationships with some core suppliers and we're very closely aligned with them. We work with them strategically, in terms of new opportunities and how we both can leverage our existing networks and strengths to then come together and realise greater value for both. We work very closely with them in terms of the supply chain, lead times, types of machines, and new ideas.

We collaborate with them on improving their machines because we share the feedback we get from the end users. The majority of their business is not sold to end users—it's sold to rental companies like us—and so we're the ones who hear the end users and the voice of the customer. We share that with them. We also have a high level of expertise internally, from a technical expertise perspective, so we share where we think they could make improvements and they do the same with us.

That collaboration really brings us closer together. We know that we're in this thing together and we succeed because of those collaborations and relationships.

**Where do you see Riwal going in the years to come?**

I love that question because Riwal is a very exciting place to be and to work. There's so many opportunities and I feel so good about the work that we're doing and the initiatives that we have in place that we're driving forward and executing. Those initiatives are so fundamental and they're leading to our success in the future.

The future for Riwal is that we'll expand in our existing countries and we will continue to grow. We will definitely expand into new regions across the globe. We're so fortunate to be in the access rental business. Its economic model makes so much sense to the customer as they don't have to tie up their capital into acquiring, maintaining, or disposing of machines. We handle all that for them, so the economics make complete sense for the customer. Therefore, our industry continues to grow and it will continue to expand throughout my lifetime and well into the future.

Riwal is incredibly fortunate to be a part of that. The access rental business is something that is quite advanced in North America and Europe and it's also growing in the Middle East and certain parts of South America. There are so many other places in the world

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- Norty Turner



where it's going to continue to expand. In terms of Asia, there's already been a lot of development in Japan, and the rest of Asia has such a high ceiling.

For us at Riwal, we will continue to evaluate where the best and most optimum places are for growth. Our customers sometimes take us to these places because they're already expanding globally and they want us to go with them, so sometimes we simply follow our customers to help them on a given project. As we learn more about

another new area, we make the decision whether we should set up shop or not.

Where do I see Riwal in a few years? We'll certainly be a larger company, we'll be more geographically diverse, stronger, and we'll be delivering the best customer experience because we're benefiting from The Riwal Way. It's a continual entrepreneurial and ambitious growth pattern that we have, so it's exciting to be here and go along for the ride. •

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Norty Turner  
CEO Riwal Holding Group



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