



**Bright spark:** Zane Brookes aced his two electrical qualification exams, recording the best marks in the country. He put his results down to having studied hard because he did not want to have to sit twice. Photo: MURRAY WILSON/FAIRFAX NZ

# ‘Exceptional’ marks win sparky honours

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A Palmerston North electrician has been awarded two top industry honours after taking top marks in his qualification exams.

Zane Brookes, who works for Couchmans Electrical, recorded the top marks in both his theory and regulation tests, with marks above 95 per cent in each.

The marks earned Brookes the New Zealand Electrical Institute's General Cable and Schneider Electric awards.

Institute convener Joe Heappey said it was rare for someone to take away both prizes. While people had achieved as high as 99 per cent on one test, they usually fell away on the other, he said.

"To get about 95 per cent on both is absolutely exceptional."

More than half of people who took the test failed on their first attempt, so the institute thought it appropriate to celebrate those who not only passed but passed well.

Brookes said his marks were down to "studying my a... off" because he did not like the idea of sitting his tests twice.

"I didn't know how hard it would be, so I started at least a month out and went hard."

Throughout his apprenticeship, the 24-year-old had to work 40-hour weeks on top of attending night classes to get his qualifications.

He said he quit his job as a motorcycle salesman to take up his new job because it was a "good solid trade".

While now doing domestic electrical work, Brookes said he eventually wanted to get into the industrial side of the business, as it could be far more interesting and "is where the money is".

Couchmans owner Mark Nixon said he had known his employee had done well in his exams before hiring him.

However, he had no idea Brookes was top of the country.

Coming through training with good grades would help Brookes in his trade.

"Anyone can fiddle with a power point, but to have that level of understanding behind the electric is why he can take it to the next level."

Brookes got one up on his boss. "When I did my exams I got in the 70s - he cleaned me up," Nixon said.