

Master Broker - "Dick Clark: Leasing and Stoker Coal Expert" by Leslie Brown, Staff Writer



Dick Clark is President of Dick Clark Associates, Inc. based out of New Philadelphia, Ohio. Dick has been setting an example for all us, gaining important friends, and helping businesses to obtain financing since 1984. Through times of uncertainty including periods of economic lows, Dick has not only survived, but also created a legacy that everyone in the

industry can appreciate and learn from.

I was lucky to pin Dick down long enough to garner some golden information from him about his time in the industry, whom he networks with, and even what his first words were as a baby.

Me: Dick, where did you grow up and attend school?

Dick: I grew up in Clarksville, Ohio. Clarksville isn't really a town you will find on a map. My dad and four of his brothers built their home on the family farm, so we called it "Clarksville." It was seven miles from Millersburg, Ohio. I attended grade school there through 7th grade.

My father worked two jobs. He was a supervisor at a factory and had his own trucking business. It hauled primarily coal. One of my first memories of work was in the coal business. My brother and I had to help load the coal. Sometimes, I would get to go with my dad when he had a "stoker coal" delivery for the county home. Stoker coal is processed coal and is about the size of a quarter to half dollar.

Me: How old were you when you were helping to load the coal?

Dick: At five years old, you don't get more perfect than stoker coal. When we loaded stoker coal, we came out BLACK. We had something to show that that we had been working. Leasing is not like that. Now when I come home, my wife asks how my day was. All

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I can say is that I was able to move deals along. The only real measuring stick is my bank account. That's when I can see if any of the effort I expended ended up ultimately funding. I can't look in the mirror and see any black soot on my face. I do however have silver thinning hair... that may count.

Me: What about college, Dick?

Dick: I went to college at Mount Union College in Alliance where I received my B.S. degree. Having an education has served me well in the Leasing and Finance business.

Of course, my wife says that I had a "BS" degree before I ever went to college. She is right. I sold her on marrying me. Bill Granieri would have called it "one of my best closes." This August we will be married 42 years with three kids and 12 grandkids. That is my second best close.



Others have said that I could sell ice to an Eskimo. I should put that on my bucket list. It sounds like a great challenge, but I do something similar to that every day in our industry.

Me: We definitely hammer out some real challenges, that's for sure! Did you always want to be a broker?

Dick: (small laugh) Most children's first words are mommy or daddy. I think mine were, "You want buy ice?"

Me: (laughing) Were you always ambitious and a business owner?

Dick: I've owned several businesses including a furniture store. I bought that store, and my wife (before she was my wife) ran it while I was commuting to college an hour away. At the same time, I started my first job as a bookkeeping assistant and was a bookkeeping assistant for nine years right out of college, with a BS degree and \$10,000 worth of college debt. I'm glad God had a plan.

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I was able to help the company grow tenfold and was promoted all the way up to being the assistant of the President of the company. My responsibility was to do everything he did not want to do.

Me: Have you picked out any mentors along the way?

Dick: Bill Granier is my best-paid mentor. After 3 years of struggling, I was ready to get out of the business; his seminars and my mimicking his every presentation and closes is the reason I am still our business today. We still use some of them like "The President close for a day."

Gerald Oestreich from NAELB is another one. The first convention I went to, he gave me some invaluable funding advice. He's still giving it today. I'd like to publicly thank Gerald for all he has and continues to do. Thank you, Gerald!

Me: What was the doorway into the leasing industry for you?

Dick: I bought a franchise in car leasing for \$11,000. That \$11,000 bought me three notebooks of photocopied material and some funding source information that wasn't competitive. After one year of learning the car business, I was introduced to Betty Lance of Alan Acceptance through Jerry Cain. I realized how much easier equipment leasing was than what I was currently doing. In equipment leasing, the customer had already picked out what equipment they wanted and who they wanted it from before he came to me. All I had to do was get him financed. I'm amazed at how long the learning curve was to figure out who the best funding source was for each deal. Once I learned it, the process was shortened.

Me: You know we have to know... How did you survive the 2008 economic fallout?

Dick: We are a three-person office and have intentionally remained small with low overhead.

Me: Simple yet effective! I guess sometimes the glitz of being large and in charge isn't worth it and also isn't as stable. What is the best thing about being a broker, in your opinion?

Dick: I get to work with great people—my employees, our customers,



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Me: I agree, that is valuable and worthwhile. What are your target markets?

Dick: We have concentrated on screen-printing. We deal with almost everything from the beginning of the process on through and also digital printing.

Me: What's so different about running a lease brokerage today versus when you started?

Dick: Today, we have a lot of help from organizations like NAELB. When I first started, you had to do it all on your own.

Me: I can guess but, in your own words, why are you a member of NAELB?

Dick: NAELB has been able to provide benefits that are many times worth more than the annual cost.

Me: So on a cost versus return analysis, it seems to make sense! Thank you, Dick, for your time and for sharing your priceless knowledge. Your membership to NAELB and contribution to our community is greatly appreciated. Is there anything else you wanted to share with any other new brokers out there?

Dick: Be persistent, listen, learn and implement from someone that has been successful and working in the business for a long time, as I did with Bill and Gerry.

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