



The Rental Rag

The voice of The ARA of NJ

June 2004

njara.org

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Message from [Megan](#) The President's Corner

GUIDING MIDDLE MANAGEMENT. At an “off shore” Region II rental convention in Barbados arranged by Alan Moorhead (no wonder he is now our ARA president) I picked up some tips at a seminar that help me today with guiding “middle” management regarding: 1) How to determine primary company objectives and enlist support for them, and 2) How to say “no” positively.

We can't be everywhere and yet we want our managers to be effective and able to make good decisions in all cases. Middle managers, “crew chiefs” fill this gap. They have to give direction and make the decisions when we are not around. They are given this responsibility because they have superior judgment and more initiative. However, since no one is perfect, including ourselves, we may wish to alter the decision process to suit without sabotaging their initiative, turning them off, or otherwise, inhibiting these managers.

The seminar suggested at any decision crossroad the employee “focus” on what was happening and ask themselves: “Will whatever action I want to take benefit the customer?” Let the answer guide the action to be taken. If the desire of the customer seems unreasonable “speak to upper management”. It works in almost any case! For example, say the manager is late to work “Do you suppose this will help customer service?” you ask. It becomes clear to all that whatever caused the lateness needs to be changed. It needs to be changed, not because management or company rules are cold and unreasonable, but for “customer service”.

For tough or unreasonable requests from middle managers the seminar suggested not to mix words, just say “no”! But, how you say it is just as important! Say it with a little laugh in your voice. That quickly conveys a) the request is unreasonable. b) it will not be given further consideration so avoid further discussion, and c) you are not angry cold or unreasonable.

The seminar gave other suggestions. Middle management should be “lead by example.” It pointed out that no decision is the lack of direction. Failure to direct your staff will result in others making the decisions for you. That leads to less momentum and less clarity in the direction of the company. On the other hand failure to give them sufficient autonomy (“space to grow”) will limit the companies growth potential.

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Party SIG

Driver Education

*Dave**Hinck*

I suppose there might still be some ARA members who are still not aware of the video and CERP materials for training drivers. These are good starting places to train drivers. They can be used for new recruits and when management time may be in short supply. Rental Management Magazine has articles periodically dealing with driver issues.

The best method I have found over the years is the “driver meeting” that needs to be called as problems occur or in anticipation of a heavy business schedule. These meetings need to be reasonably short. They are best when they are accompanied with light refreshments and are conducted in a positive manner. It should be illustrative of what can or did go wrong, NOT a complaint session.

Typical topics covered during these meetings include:

- A). Customer courtesy and how to respond to a customer complaint.
- B). How to deal with customer inquiries.
- C). What to do when there are unforeseen delays or obstacles on a delivery.
- D). How and where to leave rental equipment when customers are not home.
- E). What to do if the customer makes what seems to be an unreasonable request of them.
- F). Why customer service is important.
- G). Giving instructions on the use of equipment.
- H). Driving courtesy.
- I). Safety, on the road and at the site.
- J). Methods for handling and accounting for equipment.
- K). Best methods for loading and unloading equipment.
- L). Best methods to protect and secure equipment on the truck.
- M). Staying in touch with “Mission Control” (the office staff).
- N). Quality control checking of equipment.
- O). What to do if there is an accident.
- P). How to handle equipment in different weather conditions.

Rocky Sconda
Jessica Sorkau
 Main Attractions
 85 Newfield Ave
 Edison, NJ 08837
 phone 732-225-3500
 fax 732-225-2110

Membership
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 M & R Sales
 82 Gallinson Drive
 Murray Hill, NJ 07974
 phone (908) 508-0658
 mnrsls@bellatlantic.net



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A-1 Tablecloth Co.

Murray Vale

201-727-8987

Air & Electric Tool Services

Walter Benson

908-272-5567

Associated Insurance Brokers

Stephen Chapas

412-231-8383

Anchr Industries

Howard Jaslow

800-808-8368

Q). How to lift.

R). Care at the site of the customer's grounds, gardens, customer privacy, etc.

S). Dress codes.

T). Vehicle maintenance.

U). How to leave the site when the job is done.

This is only a partial list of concerns drivers must deal with. If YOU don't address these matters so your drivers understand your expectations your drivers WILL in THEIR own way. The result could be customer dissatisfaction, lost customers, liability, lost time,

Worker-dissatisfaction and increased driver turnover, disability, equipment damage, accidents, etc. Remember after many years of operation these subjects may seem to be everyday common sense BUT they're not necessarily. Remember the drivers may not have the years of experience that you have to draw on in the rental business. Remember common sense isn't that common. Experience comes with time. The rest is up to management.

Drivers Wanted

Kristen Redmond

Have you ever seen this ad? No? Perhaps these phrases will send chills down your spine-

"Do you have a clean license?"

"Nope, mine's never been through the washer."

"NO, NO! Any tickets?"

"Not lately. I'm getting my license back next- once I've paid my sur charge to the state for DWI's."

Gone are the days when assured our drivers would report on time, neat and sober. We begin to accept 2 out of the 3. Is accepting 3 of 3 far behind?

All of us have drivers- what would we do with out them in the rental industry. So, what happens if one of your drivers likes to party- a lot? So much so that it effects their ability to perform their job? What if one of your drivers gets a DWI off-hours, let alone on the job? Do you fire them? Do you just take them off the road? Let's face it, we're in the service industry and we see our share of heavy drinkers, to put it lightly. Drinkers or heavy partygoers effect us all, especially when they get behind the wheel. So what do you do? First things first- GET THEM OFF THE ROAD! I know it sounds simple but we all know how hard that is to do when you're up against it. For example, you have 100 deliveries to do today and they're your only drivers. Your business is too important for any mistakes! Plus your insurance WILL NOT cover them if an accident should occur.

Atlas Copco

Tom Butler

412-536-0600

BiJax, Inc.

Sam Jacobs

707-432-1173

Blairs Rental Service

Blair Guker

732-255-3584

B.T. Sales Group

Jeffrey Kleinman

516-420-4111

Cadeo Company

Ben Ryom

800-942-2326

Ditch Witch of NJ

Joe Bera

732-446-9600

G.R.Evans Associates

Gary Evans

800-247-6722

Garden State Bobcat

Particularly if they're on that famous list from the insurance company- the "Do Not Drive List" or "Endangered Species List".

HIRING DRIVERS

Brian Higgins

The theme of "*The Rental Rag*" this month is drivers and I thought I would help you in the area of new hires. Business Automobile losses account for a fair share of losses suffered by the rental industry in general. The responsibility for the losses starts and ends with one person - the driver. So, it stands to reason that if you select and train these people better, there is less chance they will be involved in an "incident".

- Only hire people over 21 years old to drive
- Ask your insurance carrier to check their Motor vehicle Report prior to hiring
- Check current employees driving history once a year
- Driver should have experience operating the type of vehicle they will be driving
- Employee should know how to load and distribute equipment
- Employee should know how to secure equipment
- New hires should complete a road test
- Verify information on job application

The implementation of any of these recommendations does not guarantee that you will reduce or eliminate claims or incidents. But if you are not following procedures with your drivers these tips will help more than hurt. You could also contact your insurance company and ask if they could help you set up a Business Auto safety plan.

April Meeting Report

Carl Sparacio

The April meeting of the American Rental Association of New Jersey was a winner on all counts. President Megan Jones chose boxing as a theme and called the meeting "Point vs Counterpoint." The Meeting was hosted by Rocky Sconda of "Main Attraction;" a rental operation equipped to satisfy the most demanding

Bob Woods

732-780-6880

Harrison Products Corp

Al Harrison

201-833-0333

Hennign Associates

Tom Hennigan

888-944-4446

Hilti, Inc.

John Egan

610-608-2428

Kaye Insurance Associates

Brian Higgins

973-835-8439

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Loren Breck

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J D Sales

Mike Forristel

215-444-0474

J K Data Systems

customer.

The interior of a huge tent was decorated in black from top to bottom. Tables and chairs were set in raised tiers around a boxing ring that was as authentic as you could get and spotlights over the ring provided the bulk of illumination. The first part of the meeting called, "Meet & Greet," gave ample time for the membership to socialize and partake of a variety of appetizers and drinks from a free flowing bar.

The "Meet & Greet" opening was followed by the business meeting with its reports and announcements. Following that, Associate Members were given time to present new items and pricing from their companies. This led to the "Main Event" which featured three "bouts" by three pair of "boxers."

First to face each other, equipped with boxing gloves and microphones in the ring were Matt Holt and Bob Hibler who argued the pros and cons of damage waivers. The more vocal their arguments - the more reaction from an audience who happily responded with cheers and jeers.

Next up were Steve Kohn and Jessica Sorkau who slammed each other with the yeas and nays of niche marketing. The match might have been uneven because Steve hesitated even though the audience encouraged him to hit the lady. Both contestants looked like winners anyway.

The final "bout" was a match arguing the value of verbal or written product warnings. The fighters, Brian Higgins and Dave Hinck were well matched. Even though Dave was able to shout louder, he sometimes was overwhelmed by the jeers of the spectators. The pushing and shoving in the ring was never violent - only the noise.

One standout feature was the Ring Girl: a scantily clad beauty who circled the ring with a signs announcing the rounds. All members got to pose for pictures with her. In spite of her, the "bouts" were quite educational and members got a good sense of the problems addressed in the "fights."

After the bouts were over, members were invited to partake of a sumptuous dinner buffet - followed by a dessert table. After the meeting a 50/50 raffle was run as was a drawing for an assortment of door prizes.

It was a grand meeting and though it may not seem so from this report, a lot of important business was completed --- painlessly.

As you might guess, attendance was great and the membership is now anxiously awaiting Megan's next meeting extravaganza.



HOW FAR DOES CUSTOMER SERVICE

Kalki Joisher

201-818-0185

M & R Sales, Inc.

Howard Heller

908-508-0658

Maywood Furniture

Ken Perrson

800-238-6797

Millennium Steel

Sam Hoffman

212-594-2190

National Chemsearch

Angelo Pruscino

732-739-2428

North Jersey Bobcat

Vincent Ryan

201-703-8866

O'Donnell & English

Timothy English

732-275-1275

Pace Marketing

Benjamin Minardi

HAVE TO GO?

Dealing with customers in today's business and commercial world is not just part of the job but something that large corporations, commercial industries and small businesses are basing their marketing strategies on. Businesses such as Rental stores use "where you still get service" in their advertising slogan. Customers and clients today not only require but also expect good quality customer service. There is a well known saying in the business industry that you do something right and a customer will tell one person, but do something wrong and they will tell ten people. This is a good motto to use in any workplace.

We all know the saying that the customer is always right and this well known phrase is still applicable in all situations, though plans need to be set in place to insure that both you and your customer benefit from the outcome and to insure that the right decisions are made by your staff. I recommend having a guide for dealing with customers that is accessible and well rehearsed by all staff members. It is important for your staff when dealing with a disgruntled and angry client or customer to remain calm and listen carefully to what the customer is saying or trying to say. By listening to what the customer has to say your staff can understand what the problem is that the customer is experiencing and also what they intend for you to do to correct the problem.

Listening to your clients' problems enables you to be sympathetic and understanding, which will make your client feel that you care and provide them with a sense of security in a possibly hostile situation. When creating your Dealing with Customers Guideline it is important to make note of all the possible solutions and outcomes for that situation, by listening intently to your customer.

Some examples of Guideline entries are below.

If a customer discovers an item is rented cheaper elsewhere and wants a reason, refund or wants to just tell you their complaint, how would your company deal with the situation?

800-295-7955

Possible solutions in this circumstance are to advise your customer the advantages of making the rental through you, e.g. you may provide a better quality product, better technical or follow-up service.

RLM Agency, Inc.

Roy Peraga;;o

These are all issues that need to be discussed when trying to gain back your customers confidence in your business or service. If your company is not providing any of the above then what happens? Perhaps your company is able to then provide the client extras or other items to insure they leave your store satisfied. If your company is able to give away items then you need to add a list of the items into your guideline book and include under what circumstances they are to be given away. In the above circumstance of a customer finding a product rented elsewhere at a lower rate, you need to look into doing some market research to make sure you are always on top of your competitors (not necessarily based on price).

973-835-6171

Republic Business Forms

Louis Saraceni

973-616-0080

R S S Distributors

These are just a few of the issues that need to be included into your guideline book and regular updates of situations need to be added as they occur to insure that the second time it happens your staff is able to handle it with confidence to insure both you and your customer benefit.

Ross Wiggins

707-892-6743

..... Steve
Kohn

Sales To Industry

Mike Rand

800-336-4784

Stanley-Bostich

HOWARD HELLER’S JERSEY TALK

David Carr

800-556-6696

A “Drive-in Bandit” hit ABC Rental, Ocean Township recently – a quick pick up by a thief who drove right up to the equipment yard, loaded up a dethatcher, and drove off – no contract, no damage waiver. Watch out for Billy Goat Model PR 550HH (#052803087). Contact Harry Gould if you spot it.

Tarantin Tank & Equipment

Tom Tarantin

800-922-0724

Watch out for grills (where grease vapors are produced) placed under tents without ventilators and fire suppression systems. See NJ Uniform Fire Code: page 70-55. Applies to grills used in a public venue. Inspectors may be checking for this.

Viking Representatives

Ted Vetrini

800-526-2403

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Wacker Corp

Michael Kemmlein

973-442-1551

Wayne R. Cleven C.P.A.

Wayne Cleven

732-240-9700

Surcharges: Watch out for steel/metal surcharges on newly ordered equipment. Confirm pricing since many manufacturers are raising prices with a surcharge – not an official increase. These may go up or down later if steel pricing stabilizes.

NEWS FROM NATIONAL

We've been informed that Mary Rodgers, a longtime ARA Insurance Services employee, passed away on April 27 after a battle with pulmonary fibrosis disease. For the last ten years Mary served ARA members in Regions One, Two and Three as an account manager and underwriter. Her knowledge and humor were appreciated by her customers and by her fellow employees.

OUR NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

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Forge, L&M Manufacturing – Clean Tent Machine.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

For three days in late April, members of the American Rental Association trekked to Washington, DC to meet with their Congressional delegations and discuss issues most important to the ARA as part of the 2004 ARA National Legislative Caucus. Caucuses provide an opportunity to put faces to the many letters we write to our representatives, as well as to shed light on many legislative issues that groups deem to be essential. They are vital to all industries, and the rental industry is no different.

Some of the issues we discussed were the Association Health Plan, which would grant large associations like the ARA to provide an assortment of insurance plans to its members at a premium and would provide an alternative to the already established insurance companies like Aetna and the Blue Cross Blue Shields. ARA members discussed the ongoing debate of the estate tax, limits on which are set to expire in the next 6 years. The ARA hopes to fully eliminate this tax or to revise and increase the monetary rates. A bill is also being discussed in the legislator regarding liability reform. The bill will help to protect rental business from being named in lawsuits and held responsible when manufacturing errors lead to personal injuries or wrongful deaths.

Other hot topics discussed were recent regulations set on trailer equipment and surge breaks and the upcoming renewal of the transportation bill. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) ruled that for interstate commerce surge breaks may no longer be used and must be replaced by electric break systems, which can cost in excess of over \$400 per trailer. With no standard connection set up in place from the Auto industry, an inconsistency in enforcement, and in consideration of the enormous cost to small businesses, this is a serious issue for the ARA and should be continued to be monitored. In regards to the transportation bill, which is especially important to New Jersey considering its geographic placement, given the complexity and uncertainty of many of the bill's provisions, our message to lawmakers in both Houses was direct and simple. The ARA is pushing for a 6-year extension, an increase in the monies allotted to the development of our nation's roadways and to ensure Section 179 is extended to allow small business expensing.

Overall, the 2004 ARA National Legislative Caucus was a great event to be involved with. Though, in a hotly contested election year when much is at stake, it does not look likely we will see resolutions to most of these issues. But, the impressions we left with from the offices of our legislators, Democrat and Republican alike, this are issues that have a middle ground and will be resolved in the coming year. I cannot stress how important grassroots lobbying is for small businesses like us. It puts our faces, our votes and our message in front of the people that pass the laws that regulate every facet of our lives. I encourage and challenge each of you reading this to become involved. Vote and write and call your representatives and make sure they know that you are there and care. I hope to see you all in Washington next year.

Tim Meli - Joe Mihalko Do-it-Yourself Rentals, East Hanover, NJ