

inside mobile refueling

NETWORKING 101 THE SIGMA WAY

You do not have to teach Dan Abrams, President of Diesel Direct, how to network.

He has been doing it throughout his whole career, whether it be running a concrete batch plant manufacturing business, a full service truck leasing business, or his current expertise — a mobile diesel re-fueling business. Diesel Direct, Dan's company, that he started in 1998, is a new member of SIGMA and was introduced by the dynamic duo of Ed and Ted Burke from Dennis K. Burke, Inc. of Boston. Dan and I met during the 2007 Spring Convention in Tucson, AZ. At this convention I learned that he has made many contacts that will become long lasting relationships — both professional and personal. After all, what is networking without building friendships?

Diesel Direct, one of the largest regional mobile refueling companies in the Northeast, is headquartered in Stoughton, Massachusetts. Diesel Direct has established branches in New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Maine. Currently, Diesel Direct has a fleet of over 40 trucks servicing many national, regional and local customers. Mobile fueling is really Dan's second career. In his first career venture he owned several, very successful, truck leasing companies.

Dan created Diesel Direct because he believed he could create a company that would provide the same customer service and quality of workmanship as he did in the leasing industry. Everyone at Diesel Direct strongly believes that servicing the customer's unique needs is the key to a happy customer and building a long-lasting successful relationship. Diesel Direct believes you cannot treat all customers the same. Each has its own different wants and needs. However, one thing that is almost universal is that customers want their information quickly

and accurately so they can manage their business more effectively. Advancing technology in mobile refueling has enabled this by moving data electronically and quickly. This is an essential element of Diesel Direct's success and mobile refueling in general. Not only has advanced technology satisfied the customer needs, it also has enabled Diesel Direct faster billing times, allowing for improved cash flow.

Five years ago Diesel Direct bought their first truck computer with an electronic meter. However, the system was clumsy to use because it required expensive metal "buttons" that had to be preprogrammed and fastened to the trucks with epoxy glue. Dan thought there was a better way. He spoke with people around the country to see what they were doing and found various systems that had been cobbled together. It would have been a lot easier if he had the resources of the SIGMA network to draw on but that was unknown to him at that time. He asked his computer supplier for a contract

programmer that would work with Diesel Direct and the manufacturer to develop a bar code system and scanner that would link to the trucks computer. Another group of contract programmers were hired to develop the interface with Diesel Direct's proprietary billing system. The final product produces an accurate and timely information flow on every vehicle serviced.

Dan believes that companies like Comdata and WEX are well positioned to support future growth in mobile refueling. While it is not a solution for all mobile fuel companies, it does enable a better cash flow, something that many are looking for and want. In many cases, a consolidated invoice from mobile fuel purchases coupled with purchases they might have done at a retail location and/or card lock provides one comprehensive document for all fuel that has been purchased. Additionally, customers can have complete coverage with fuel cards providing flexibility for companies that want to fuel gas units at retail or have ►

NETWORKING 101: THE SIGMA WAY

◀ a couple of trucks that are never in the yard during delivery time. Additionally, it allows companies to cut out a lot of paperwork and view their transactions on-line while keeping a historical record.

Recently, I was in Boston. I met with Dan and talked with him about his SIGMA experience. "Fantastic!!" was his description of the convention. "I have to admit," he went on, "I have belonged to several national groups in my career, but none have been as productive, as friendly, and as dynamic as SIGMA. The exchange of ideas and networking is a great asset

for any company that wants to learn and expand. Many of us have national accounts that are looking for reliable suppliers in other regions of the country. SIGMA provides the environment to meet other companies that help us satisfy our customer's criteria."

Without revealing too much, I got the impression from Dan that his company is well positioned to grow and expand over the next several years. I know his contacts and information he receives from SIGMA will enable Dan to take Diesel Direct to the next level and beyond.

If you would like more information about networking with other mobile fueling companies, information on transactional providers like Comdata and WEX or need help with your mobile fueling operation you can reach Glen Sokolis, President, Sokolis Group at (267) 482-8371 or gsokolis@sokolisgroup.com or www.sokolisgroup.com. The Mobile Refueling Task Force will meet in beautiful Boston, MA for the SIGMA Annual Meeting on October 12-14. We hope to see you there. **igm**