

SUCCESS STORY

Tiger Equipment Co-Owners Grow Company Into National Player

When father and son Charles and Joshua Trelease started their construction equipment distributorship almost three years ago, they were aware they were entering the market at a particularly tough time.

"We started at one of the most challenging times as the construction equipment market was stalled and even contracting due to the widespread economic hardships resulting from 9/11," explained Charles, president of Tiger Equipment. "When we entered the market, we were forced to start out lean. We didn't have to go through that painful process of being introduced to a tough market when you've never had a trial by fire. We've got processes in place here to survive the toughest times now."

Tiger Equipment in Rocky Mount is a national equipment distributor. Both Josh and Charles had a background working with other equipment manufacturers and distributors. Josh explains what triggered the Treleases to go into business for themselves. "We found out that you work really hard for someone else and you still end up being an expendable employee. We fig-



Joshua Trelease (left) and Charles Trelease of Tiger Equipment

ured that if we we're going to work that hard, we might as well work for ourselves. So we started this company and leveraged a lot of the ties we had from those other companies. We put together a product line of light construction equipment, compaction, concrete and earth moving equipment targeted to the rental industry."

Charles and Josh have expanded their business beyond the usual equipment rental sales. "Beyond just buying the product, bringing it in and reselling it, we're working with companies at a higher level

more like a partnership," explains Josh. "We have unique designs that we've put in play that companies will make specifically for us to our requirements."

The construction equipment that they sell to rental agencies is manufactured throughout the world including Canada, Mexico, Japan, Malaysia, and China. The equipment has been designed and manufactured specifically for use in construction. The Treleases recognize that most of the customers in their market appreciate specialty equipment manufacturers, but often prefer a multi-line provider as it simplifies their purchasing and support process.

Tiger Equipment has a total of 36 salesmen whose territory covers almost every state in the union. Their salesmen work on a commission basis. Each salesman is the equivalent of a "walking Wal-Mart of rental equipment," quips Josh.

The Treleases met with Roy Baldwin, director of the Roanoke Regional Small Business Development Center, shortly after opening their business.

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"Initially, we had a business plan put together that was a stereotypical business plan that anyone would make," explains Charles. "It included here is what I want to do, here is who I want to sell to, and this is the reason I think it will work. That was all well and good, but to get a bank to work with us they said we want to see the numbers. What Roy did was provide us with good insights for how to integrate that into the business plan. He actually provided us some software tools to help lay that out."

Being able to expand upon their basic business plan helped the pair to not only obtain working capital from an area bank, but to also predict and plan for the first months of operation.

"You can take anybody who claims to have a great idea and he

might be the best salesman in the world, capable of 'selling ice to an Eskimo,' but understanding the back end of it and helping us understand how to make a business run is where Roy helped us fill in the blanks," explains Josh.

He continued, "Actually, I have a background in business and I was surprised how much the success and failure of a business is controlling the financial aspects, specifically closely watching cash flow."

The New York State natives chose the Roanoke area to start their new business after considerable research.

"We didn't come here because we had family here and we didn't come here by accident," explains Charles. "We looked at everything – the cost of living, the availability of high-

ways, shipping, and weather. One of the things that surprised me here is the low unemployment rate."

The Treleases are continuing to seek out new products to widen their line and become even more appealing to their customers, but they look forward to the day where things are not going at such a break-neck pace. "I would like to get to the point where we have enough personnel to afford us some leisure time, at least holidays or a weekend here or there," Josh explains.

The father and son continue to spend significant time with their existing partners throughout the world, and are being sought out even more.

For more information about Tiger Equipment, call (540) 489-7777 or 1-888-54TIGER, or email info@tigerequip.com.

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