


 FIRESTONE FINANCIAL

The Midway

Newsletter for The Carnival Industry

When Payment is Due, Communication is King

"We'll do everything possible to find solutions, because when our customers succeed, we succeed."



Larry Yaffe, Sr. VP
Sales & Marketing

"Seventy-five percent of Firestone's business comes from repeat customers," says Larry Yaffe, Senior VP – Sales & Marketing. "Over the years, many customers who faced challenging times found that by working with Firestone, they were able to work things out, maintain good credit, and continue to finance through us."

Yaffe says one key way for a customer to handle 'sticky situations' is to confront it. Often Firestone's staff can adjust payment schedules and suggest ways to trim expenses and improve profits. "Customers who are receptive to our input will survive tough times, and when things turn around, they'll be considered for new loans," says Yaffe.

Firestone has had a dedicated Carnival team since the early 1990s. Yaffe says, "We understand the industry and the ups and downs that are part of it. The relationship between Firestone and its customers is a two-way street where communication is king. Both the customer and Firestone have responsibilities:

It's up to the customer to:

- understand the agreement terms that they signed.
- appreciate that Firestone's staff has rules and deadlines.
- realize that Firestone has commitments to its lenders.

Firestone knows:

- the customer has a business to run.
- moving and set-up days are especially hectic.
- weather, low attendance and other variables affect income.
- operators must invest to keep shows exciting and busy.

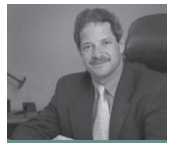
"It's all about relationships," says Yaffe. "If you're having a repayment issue, talk to us. We'd rather have a customer tell us that he is having cash flow issues rather than not return a phone call, as difficult as that conversation may seem."



Photo provided by by Rides-4-U, Inc.

A Message from our CEO

Firestone has money to lend... And we're here for the long haul.



David S. Cohen
President & CEO

Several weeks ago I had a call from a customer who told us the bank he'd been doing business with for many years suggested he "consider other sources of financing." He was especially surprised because he was on a first-name basis with bank executives and had never missed a payment.

As the world's financial situation changes, relationships between lenders and customers are also changing. One thing that hasn't changed: Firestone Financial remains committed to our customers in the Carnival industry, and continues to offer a value-added component: sound business advice in conjunction with equipment financing.

Unlike many banks today, Firestone is in a favorable position. We are not a broker. We have strong funding relationships and money to lend.

Just as we stay focused on what we do best, in difficult times it's crucial that you stay focused so you can manage and grow your business. Despite the downturn, *we encourage operators to invest now in new or used equipment.* You will reap the benefits in the form of increased show attendance and equipment ridership. Don't dwell on the negatives. Step back and recognize this is part of an economic cycle. Knowing that others are facing similar challenges doesn't fix things, but it helps to know you're not alone. While you can't control

the economy, you can and should do everything possible to plan for the near and long-term. Take advantage of opportunities that are presented to you!

Your Firestone Team is as close as your phone with a sympathetic ear and solid advice gleaned from years in your industry. I urge you to speak to our experienced staff whose average tenure is 11 years. In addition to equipment financing, we also offer sound business solutions. **Through two-way communication and open conversation, we can work with you to weather this downturn and help you come out of this stronger than before. You should invest in new or used equipment, keep your lenders informed regarding your ability to manage your debt burden, and protect your credit rating.**

Most important, on behalf of our entire team, I want to thank you for your business and continued confidence. We reaffirm our pledge to provide equipment financing for this industry, and we are committed to this business for the long term. As always, we remain "Big enough to serve, small enough to care."

On behalf of all of us at Firestone, warmest wishes for a healthy and prosperous 2009.

David S. Cohen, President & CEO

New Addition to Inside Sales Team

Sam Hermann Brings Experience – and Attitude

As the newest addition to Firestone Financial's Inside Sales Team, Samantha 'Sam' Hermann brings to her Account Manager post the right experience – and the right attitude.



Sam Hermann
Inside Sales Rep.

"I attended my first industry show, IAAPA in Orlando," she says. "Despite the economic situation, everyone was upbeat and people were buying equipment. It was great to meet in person so many customers that I previously only met on the phone. I look forward to working with them to grow their businesses."

For the past 1½ years, Sam worked in Firestone's Credit Department, handling loan contracts and titles. "I helped streamline the titling area which can be complicated since regulations for trailer-mounted equipment differ from state to state."

Prior to arriving at Firestone, Sam spent nearly nine years in outside sales with Guaranty Bank in Los Angeles. "I worked in wholesale mortgage sales where I developed my relationship-building and customer service skills I brought to Firestone."

Firestone's Inside Sales Team, created in 2005, works with existing customers and vendors, focusing on 'bringing in the deals.' Sam and veteran colleagues Pete Aldrich and Kurt Engelhardt coordinate all the details that go into simplifying the loan application and approval process. It's their behind-the-scenes work that can often make a complex transaction appear seamless for customers.

"Sam brings to our team the high level of personal service that our customers deserve and have received since 1965. We invite our customers to get to know her."

– Helen Mooney, Inside Sales Supervisor



Photo provided by by Rides-4-U, Inc.

OPERATOR SPOTLIGHT

Take the Wright Advice Successful Operator Shares Keys to Success

John and Barbara Ring operate Wright's Amusements, based in Elbert, Colorado. Since 1962 Wright's has provided year-round entertainment and excitement for carnival goers, at state and county fairs, malls, and at festivals and special events across Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Wyoming and Texas. In a recent edition of Colorado Magazine Online, John, who grew up with the Carnival, says his 29 rides can accommodate 10,000 riders per hour.



Carnival Owner,
John Ring and His
Daughter, Amanda

FF: How was 2008 compared with 2007?

JR: 2008 wasn't as good as 2007. We lost a couple of spots this year and Hurricane Ike hit us pretty hard. Rising fuel prices made it hard to run everything when we weren't sure if people would show.

FF: Would you care to make a prediction for 2009?

JR: 2009 looks positive because it can't be bad two years in a row. We always look for the positive – never to the negative—and we have God on our side.

FF: What's hot in your shows this year?

JR: During 2008 we invested in **Pirates Island, Fire Ball, Freak Out, Super Shot, Tea Cups, Fire Chief, and Hog Wild.** We also purchased new living quarters for our help, a new generator and a few new trucks.

FF: What's the secret to Wright's success over the years?

JR: We make our shows look nice and create a family atmosphere so parents like to bring their children to have FUN. And we try to keep our prices low.

FF: How do you stand out from the others?

JR: The great ride of the year was Freak Out. When it sits by the highway and people see that ride running, they pull off the highway just to ride the Freak Out. When you see that ride in motion at night from a distance it is the sight to see.

FF: How did you finance your new equipment?

JR: Firestone has stood behind us and financed a large portion of our show. We are very proud to have a great financial group like Firestone backing us.

Guidance and Insights for Carnival Industry

New Assistant VP Predicts A Good 2009

This past year the world at large changed, and the financial world will be a different animal during 2009,” predicts Tony Costanza, Firestone’s newly-named Assistant VP – Sales.

Tony explains: “Since Firestone isn’t a bank and wasn’t caught up in the banking crisis, we have money to lend. In speaking with operators, it seemed that many had a very good year. The economy certainly affected some, but overall this industry seems very healthy to me.”

Tony offers suggestions and makes some predictions to help those in the carnival industry during 2009 and beyond:

Get Your Ducks in a Row

Are your records in order? – Accurate records and details about the financial side of the business will continue to be important as costs may continue to increase. Tracking revenue trends will be an important tool in working with show committees.

Pay Attention to Taxes Due and Liens –

Taxing authorities will continue to be pressing for their pound of flesh. Take them seriously, as the “Tax Man” usually wins.

Credit Scores – Lenders will be looking at credit scores more closely. Do your best to keep those scores up. Review your credit score periodically.

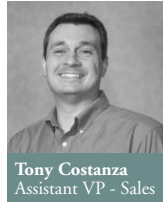
Set up a reasonable payment plan and stick to it – for all your debts including loans from Firestone.

Positive Results – Making it Happen

- Historically, in tough times people stay closer to home and the carnival industry does well. They seek less expensive entertainment (vs. a trip to Disney World, for example). Firestone is the acknowledged expert in carnival equipment financing.
- Most Americans have faith in the new Administration and want President Obama to succeed. Hopefully there is a renewed feeling of confidence that will trickle down over time.
- To maintain fair and carnival locations, operators must keep committees happy. They want to see new equipment or good-condition used equipment that’s exciting and will attract crowds. Borrowing to update or upgrade your midway should be viewed as an investment. It could pay off in greater revenues over time.

Tony Costanza is Promoted to Assistant Vice President - Sales

Eleven-year Firestone Financial veteran Tony Costanza has been promoted to Assistant Vice President – Sales, according to Larry Yaffe, Senior Vice President – Sales & Marketing.



Tony Costanza
Assistant VP - Sales

Tony, who started in Collections, moved to Sales in 1999 with a focus on the carnival industry.

Larry Yaffe notes, “Tony is a tremendous asset. He has built great relationships in all the industries we deal with and has played an important role in implementing new procedures to better serve our customers.”

Sales Vice President Jim Hines says, “Tony has an unusual level of energy and drive. Nobody is more passionate about or a better advocate for our customers. He has developed a level of trust, both by phone and during in-person visits to customers across the country. Tony sets the bar high for himself and others, viewing his job as much a ‘relationship manager’ as an ‘account manager.’”

A graduate of St. Bonaventure University in New York, in his spare time Tony enjoys coaching his two sons’ baseball teams.

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An Interview with Sam Hermann

Inside Sales Representative

Q Did your bank experience prepare you for your new position at Firestone?

I worked for Guaranty Bank in Los Angeles for 9 years. As an Area Manager I gained valuable real world experience working one on one with brokers to resolve issues related to structuring deals and how to get past seemingly insurmountable problems.

Q Prior to Inside Sales, you spent 1½ years in Firestone’s Credit Department. Is that experience helpful?

Knowing my way around the ‘inside’ operations helps me know how to get things done, how to push a deal through. I also know when it’s

appropriate not to ask. I enjoy working through issues, problems and personalities to get a deal closed on time. It may not always work, but I always give 110% on behalf of customers.

Q What do you do when you’re not helping Firestone customers?

I’ve been active with the Emblem Club, the women’s community service version of Elks. I’m a big music aficionado so I’m always talking to people about what they’re listening to and learning about new artists. I’m also an animal lover. I have two dogs, a pit bull and a wolfhound. Both were on their deathbed when rescued. Rescuing animals is a passion. When I lived in LA and saw strays, I’d pick them up.

Through my connections I placed at least 50 dogs in loving homes. One year I connected with a morning TV show that put two strays on TV with a plea to adopt them. We quickly found them a permanent home.

Q Some might ask why you left sunny LA to return to New England.

Although I miss the warm sunny weather in LA and relaxing in my pool in December, I’m an “East Coast Girl” at heart – and having my family near again is priceless.

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About Our Company

Founded in 1965.

Owned by the management team, Firestone has built a reputation with its customers and employees as a company that is “big enough to serve, small enough to care” (a motto coined by a customer).

Lends money on all types of equipment – amusement and video entertainment games, carnival games and rides, food concession trailers, all full-service vending equipment, coolers and freezers, food service machines, OCS equipment, bulk vending equipment, non-bank ATM machines, video lottery terminals and gaming devices.

Dedicated to growing the businesses of route operators. Firestone is one of the leading providers of secured installment loan and lease financing in the amusement, carnival and vending industries.

Serviced over 16,000 operators and distributors in the last 40 years. We have funded over 10,000 contracts since 2000.

Finances route expansions and acquisitions, giving operators the financial flexibility to grow.

75% of customers are “repeat”, exemplifying our mission of building long-term relationships with our customers through quality service to help them grow their businesses.

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