

Eric Weiner is a driving force in luxury ground transportation

Running a small business has been a way of life for Eric Weiner since the age of seven. After a spirited debate with his mother, Eric convinced her to let him forgo day camp and sell lemonade and iced tea in front of their house in Englewood, New Jersey. By the end of the summer, Weiner established a regular customer base and his business had expanded to include cookies, used Matchbox cars and toys. Over the years, Eric produced and directed garage-based theatre in his back yard, received outstanding newspaper carrier awards, and maintained a job as a bus boy. At sixteen, he was hired by a local movie theater. The following year he was promoted to general manager of the 650-seat single screen theater in Closter, New Jersey.

In 1989, Weiner moved to Providence, Rhode Island to attend Johnson & Wales University. One year later, he started All Occasion Transportation. While driving past a used car lot one day, Eric spotted a three year old, six passenger limousine. Weiner scraped together \$16,000 to buy the limo and stored it in a rental garage. He then posted flyers around campus and in downtown Providence parking lots to market his new business.

At first, Eric booked weekend jobs while in school, and was one of the first persons on the college campus to own a cell phone. He wanted to have an advantage over the competition. With a cell phone, Weiner would be readily available in the event a customer called.

By the time Weiner graduated from Johnson & Wales University in 1993, the All Occasion Transportation fleet had grown to three and soon opened a sales and administration office in downtown Providence. Over the past 17 years, Eric has managed to sustain the same controlled organic growth of his company that began with a single car operation in 1990. Today, All Occasion Transportation consists of a fleet of over twenty-two vehicles and offers service to over 600 cities worldwide.

In 2003, Weiner decided to combine the sales and administration office and vehicle storage under one roof. With the help of a \$235,000 SBA 7(a) loan from The Washington Trust Company, Eric purchased a building in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Weiner said that the expansion and growth of his company would not have been possible without the SBA-guaranteed loan. He is now considering an SBA 504 loan to purchase a larger building and storage facility for his growing fleet of vehicles.

From its inception, All Occasion Transportation has been dedicated to providing world-class customer service. Controlled growth and the use of cutting-edge technology have helped the company reach that goal. Early on, Weiner implemented cell phone technology to guarantee the company's ability to receive calls 24 hours a day. Today, All Occasion Transportation is on the forefront of the industry by using technology such as global positioning (GPS) tracking, digital vehicle security cameras, a state-of-the-art online reservation system. Additionally, all chauffeurs are issued the latest Blackberry personal digital assistants (PDA) to maintain seamless communication within the company.

Weiner and his team of professionals has been named "Best Limousine Company in America" by *Limousine and Chauffeured Transportation Magazine*, and has recently been recognized by the *Inc. 5,000 Index* as one of the nation's fastest growing private companies.

Weiner takes pride in providing a benefit package that surpasses industry standards. The entire staff is comprised of paid employees—not independent contractors, a common practice in the transportation industry. The benefits include monthly bonuses, paid vacation and sick time, health and dental insurance, retirement plan, discounted health club membership, and monthly awards to top-performing employees.

At age 22, in 1993, Weiner became the youngest board member of the New England Livery Association. He recently retired after fourteen years on the board as second vice president, and the longest serving board member in the association's history.

In 2003, Eric began a three-year term on the board of directors of the National Limousine Association. He is a frequent guest lecturer at his alma mater, Johnson & Wales University, and serves as a mentor to students. Eric also has been a guest speaker at business and industry seminars, as well as at trade shows and conventions in Atlantic City, Orlando, and Las Vegas.

Weiner has always balanced hard work with playing hard and taking time to give back to the community. He has managed an adult baseball team and enjoys numerous athletic activities including racquetball and basketball. Last summer, Weiner completed his third MS150 bike tour, leading Team All Occasion over 800 miles in two days and raising over \$8,500 for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

A focus on top-notch customer relations and innovative services are the main reasons the company has realized steady growth over the years. Despite the downturn in travel following the 9/11 attacks, the company realized a nearly 50 percent increase in sales between 2003 and 2006 and was projecting an 11 percent increase in 2007.

Regularly scheduled visits to clients, a customized hotel outreach program, Web-based customer service programs, worldwide partnerships and customer relations are given the highest priority.

From a single owner/operator in 1990, to currently employing over 50 people today, Eric Weiner and All Occasion Transportation owes its success to attention to detail, and prides itself on personal relationships to its clients and employees.

For his demonstrated success and innovation, the U.S. Small Business Administration is pleased to honor Eric B. Weiner, president of All Occasion Transportation as the 2008 Rhode Island Small Business Person of the Year.

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