

Marching to the Beat of a Different Drum



Lisa Chretien's award-winning firm is driven by her passion and experience with adversity.

Making Moves

By Tanya Isley

For **Lisa Michele Chretien**, founder and president of **EventMover**, a childhood filled with poverty and adult responsibilities provided her with the tremendous strength and resolve needed to build a successful event transportation business in an industry traditionally dominated by males.

"It stemmed from being 15 years old, raising a brother and sister [that were] 10 and eight years younger



Chretien

than me—having to survive. It drove me to never want to be there again," Chretien says.

Chretien held sales management and operations positions with major transit companies, including Atlas and Mayflower. However, her frustration with what she calls "diluted" services in the transportation industry, at that time, spurred her to start her own, EventMover, one month later.

She's experienced tremendous success since then, but starting with limited business and financial knowl-

edge made the first year of business particularly maddening. If given another opportunity, Chretien says she would do things differently.

"I would never have pulled the trigger and started EventMover if

I'd known what I was going to experience, particularly in the first year. I would have done a lot more research. Like what's the difference between a C corp and an S corp? And an LLC? What do I need to know? What do you mean payables and receivables? And profit margin?" she says. "I didn't have the knowledge that I really needed from an ac-

counting standpoint. It never dawned on me that you might need to have a relationship with a bank."

Despite those first-year growing pains, EventMover has become a major player in the event transportation industry, providing specialized services in response to the unique transportation requirements of major clients in the trade show, auto show and special event industries. EventMover services major clients worldwide in a variety of industries and only handles the transportation

of assets to tradeshow, special events and promotional tours.

When Chretien launched EventMover, which she calls a non-asset-based transportation provider (as opposed to a broker), she targeted the automotive industry. And today, the company is a specialist when it comes to transporting auto show exhibits and concept vehicles during the six-month auto show circuit, and for various photo shoots, dealer meetings and special events.

At the recent Detroit Auto Show, EventMover handled 12 pre-production and concept vehicles between Nissan North America and its Infiniti Division. From wearing white gloves and surgical booties to removing all jewelry, belts and phones, this massive undertaking involves strict attention to detail and careful planning by Chretien and the EventMover team.

“We’re heavily trained on the front end when we receive the vehicles and then, while those vehicles are in the U.S., only the EventMover team and one person at Nissan Design America can touch or handle those vehicles. We have people who will actually fly to where the vehicle is, take it off of the stage and put it in the truck. And they will be at destination to take it off that truck and put it in position for them,” Chretien says.

It is this attention to detail and excellence that Chretien has embedded in the fabric of EventMover and has led to the company’s exemplary performance and stellar customer service record with its clients.

“We are the only company, authorized by Nissan North America to handle their pre-production and concept vehicles. I think it’s because of the quality of service that we’re providing and the respect that we have for our client’s product,” she says.

Building a successful company, particularly in today’s challenging economy, often requires the support and advice of a powerful team of staff, advisors and mentors. At EventMover, Chretien has built a team with more than 115 years of combined experience in the event transportation industry. It includes her husband of 19 years, Jim, the company’s vice president and chief operations officer.

In addition to her EventMover team, Chretien utilizes a network of supportive colleagues in organizations such as Vistage, the Women Presidents Organization and the Women’s Business Enterprise Council (WBENC). She has found that participation in these types of organizations is important to her professional development and the growth of her business.

“I rely on my WBE sisters and my minority business sisters heavily, collaborating with them. Picking up the phone and saying ‘Have you run across this issue?’ Sharing with each other and never leaving each other behind, I think, is the best thing you can do,” she says. “Don’t try to do everything on your own. At some point, someone else has experienced this. I always try to learn from something else that’s happening to someone that’s not going very well.”

Recently, Chretien’s success resulted in her being named one of WBENC’s WBE “Stars”—an accolade for excellence awarded to exemplary women

business leaders. Chretien is one of 14 women business owners to be honored at this year’s WBENC’s annual Summit & Salute in New Orleans. The magnitude of this honor is not lost on Chretien.

“I was so stunned when I was told that I won the award. I think it’s great recognition. For corporate America, the 14 women on that stage just got another chapter in due diligence. So I think that says a lot about you and your company,” she says.

When faced with the challenges and the stereotypes associated with a woman leading a company in a industry that’s dominated by males who often control who gets the big contracts, Chretien, a former Harley-Davidson driver, relies on the same fire and tenacity that carried her through a difficult childhood to grow EventMover.

“It’s a good old boy network and it’s very hard, sometimes, to go up against them. Fortunately, as my mother would say, ‘Don’t ever tell her she can’t. And don’t ever tell her ‘no.’ Because that means ‘yes’ and she will.’ So am I afraid or intimidated to go up against them? Absolutely not. I will and I do every day.” ♦

Tanya Isley is an award-winning journalist with over 20 years’ experience in traditional and online news media. She has managed the overall news media content strategy for more than 50



web sites. Tanya’s work experience has included stints at The Manna Network, Cox Communications, Cygnus Business Media and WT-VD-TV. Tanya

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