

ACHIEVING WORK-LIFE BALANCE THROUGH POSITIVE IMPACT

WRITTEN BY ANITA LIEN
RECREATION VEHICLE DEALERS ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

Chet Dillenbeck first learned about the RV service technician trade from a friend who was working in the field at the time.



Chet was surprised to learn that it is a licensed trade and one that is also very versatile. That opened the doors for him to work for Monaco Coach from 2001 through 2008, when the manufacturing facility closed. While pondering his future, Chet worked as a mobile technician for a year before working for a small dealership for several years. During his time working at a dealership, he became well-acquainted with Lippert by getting to know its product lines. He came to learn that Lippert's training department served to help reduce customer service calls and backlogs by training technicians to perform preventative care and troubleshooting diagnostics. Dillenbeck then became interested in training others and decided to work for Lippert as a Technical Instructor.

Founded in 1956 by Larry Lippert, the company began as a galvanized and aluminum roofing business for the manufactured housing industry. Today, Lippert is one of the leading manufacturers and suppliers of components to the recreational vehicle, marine, automotive, commercial vehicle and building products industries.

As a technical instructor, Dillenbeck's responsibilities include: training curriculum and content development; developing training aids; creating training videos; new instructor training; technician, parts, sales, warranty staff training; review of all technical manuals and guides.

In keeping up with industry and consumer demands, the product line is constantly evolving and requires Dillenbeck to stay informed of all changes.

When asked about the challenges, Dillenbeck says, "the biggest challenge for me is anything that involves writing as I am dyslexic. I take my time and make sure that I do my best." Dillenbeck credits his coworkers in helping him and he'll reciprocate when necessary. "We work well together and it's a real blessing to have my coworkers," said Dillenbeck. The other challenges that Dillenbeck face are trying to stay on the leading edge of training and finding new ways to offer instruction to technicians that keeps them engaged and interested to do their job well.

When Dillenbeck joined Lippert, he was assigned to the Dealer Relations and Technical Publications (DRTP) group. The job entailed acting as a technical advisor for dealers and offering assistance in all areas including: warranty claims, sourcing parts and troubleshooting an issue. As a group, they quickly saw there was a need to offer training to the RV service technicians on Lippert systems. This would help reduce warranty claims and reduce the time the technician needed to troubleshoot issues. From there, the first lesson plans were made. As the training was offered, more dealers would request training on different systems. "We spent a lot of time in meetings about how and what to teach. Over the course of those meetings, we found starting with the basics was the best approach. And then moving into more troubleshooting. We call it the crawl, walk, run method," said Dillenbeck.

As a seasoned training professional, Dillenbeck was enlisted by the America Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) to develop technician training materials. His involvement with RVIA stemmed from a collective need for more training, to which he was glad to be a part of. Dillenbeck's strong desire to help others is reflected in his involvement with Stronger than Addiction. "I grew up with a brother who was an alcoholic. There was no support mechanism and I felt very helpless. I became a volunteer to support those that share the same experience and to offer help in any way I can."

Working in an industry promoting the outdoor lifestyle does not always mean one can enjoy the outdoors during the summer months. When asked about his work-life balance, Dillenbeck believes that, "work, and life go hand in hand. I have no problem with getting a work-related call on my days off as it will help reduce their stress level, which in turn makes me happy. With the volunteer work, I hope the experience and expertise I have shared will positively impact others' lives and that thought brings me joy."



When asked what skills are required for his job, Dillenbeck provided a very long list including, "being open-minded, willingness to learn, ability to troubleshoot, patience, being a figure of authority, 12 volt, 110 volt and 240 volt electricity, carpentry, hydraulics, and good memory," just off the top of his head. To succeed in any job, Dillenbeck believes everyone should have these life skills, "a willingness to help others, an open mind, ability to control your emotions, conflict resolution and a strong desire to learn."

The RV industry is quickly expanding due to growing popularity. As more RVs are on the road, more trained technicians are needed. Dillenbeck believes the industry could do a better job promoting the career opportunities available to the younger generation.



“

WORK, AND LIFE GO HAND IN HAND. I HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH GETTING A WORK-RELATED CALL ON MY DAYS OFF AS IT WILL HELP REDUCE THEIR STRESS LEVEL, WHICH IN TURN MAKES ME HAPPY.

Finding and providing training to technicians is critical for the longevity of the RV business. Dillenbeck says that almost every dealer he speaks with needs three to five more good technicians. When asked if there are suggestions for recruitment, he believes there should be a summer internship program for high school students.

"We had an intern in our training group and it was a good learning experience for both. As a company, we learned that it was a good way to assess how to market job opportunities to students and where their interests lie. For the student, it was great to see the entire operation from behind the scenes and be able to ask questions." Similarly, Lippert offers a leadership development program to promote growth and career exploration within the entire

operation from behind the scenes and be able to ask questions.” Similarly, Lippert offers a leadership development program to promote growth and career exploration within the entire operation. In Dillenbeck’s department, a few of the trainers came from different departments within Lippert and discovered their hidden talents and ended up being good trainers.

Living and learning is a constant theme for Dillenbeck but there is some advice he wished he would have received much earlier in life. **“I would love to be able to go back and tell my younger self to get into the RV industry earlier and to learn as much as I could about the industry. I never thought this would become a passion of mine, but it has.** I would also tell myself to take classes in teaching and public speaking.”

Mentorship has received more attention in recent years as research has shown it is critical for employee retention.

Dillenbeck believes Lippert is exemplary in the RV industry in offering a great mentorship program and helping all new employees grow as an individual but also with their department and the company.

Looking around the RV industry, there are very few women. Dillenbeck believes women can really excel in all positions in the RV industry, “from the production floor to being an owner of a company or dealership, there are no limits in this industry. I was trained by some stellar female techs when I worked for Monaco. I have met many female techs at dealerships that are better than their male coworkers.” Dillenbeck does not believe there are many barriers that prevent women from entering the industry. “The opportunities in the RV industry are plenty for women but they simply do not know about them.”

The pandemic has prompted Lippert Technical Institute to resume the development of online training materials such as webinars, aftermarket and troubleshooting videos. As things normalize, in-person training will resume as hands-on training is preferred by everyone: technicians, parts and salespeople and support staff.

The future is bright for the RV industry. Things are constantly changing. Dillenbeck believes the pandemic has been a good thing in some ways. “It has shown us that spending time with family is something that we need to get back to. Too many people just focus on work and making money. The RV industry offers a way for families to spend time outdoors and still be close to home. I believe we will see the industry become more streamlined and RV manufacturing will be more like the automotive industry. With the way technology is advancing, the RVs are increasingly lighter and stronger with better quality for more people to enjoy.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE BRING FOR THE RV INDUSTRY?



“

THE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE RV INDUSTRY ARE PLENTY FOR WOMEN BUT THEY SIMPLY DO NOT KNOW ABOUT THEM.



RV Women's Alliance Drab to Fab Project