

Harry Fry, whose business celebrates 20 years in the crane and lifting finance sector in 2015, talks to **D. Ann Shiffler** about how to survive in a cyclical business.

Harry Fry said the reason for his company's success in financing cranes is focusing on long-term financing and long-term relationships.

A focus on the long term

In 1995, Harry Fry formally left the corporate world of finance and struck out on his own. Twenty years later he is a leader in the realm of crane and lifting equipment financing, known for his industry knowledge and acumen for financing and leasing equipment.

"I left the corporate world because we were getting transferred every couple of years or less, and I promised my daughters once they got into high school no more moving," he said. "We started out on our own in January 1995 as an agent for MBCC/Debis (Daimler-Benz Inter-Services). We were formally incorporated in April 1995."

Prior to starting Harry Fry & Associates he worked as general manager of executive operations for Mercedes-Benz Credit Corporation (MBCC) in Norwalk, CT. Prior to that he managed operations for MBCC, handling car and truck financing for the New York/New England territory. He held several other positions for MBCC in other regions and states.

Striking out on his own has been a labor of love, and over the past two decades, he has witnessed a changing market in the lifting industry that included banner years and really bad years. We

caught up with Fry to talk about the current state of the crane industry and the strategy he employed for growing his company.

WHEN WERE THE BANNER YEARS FOR CRANE SALES?

Our best years were 1995 through 1998 because we were the first to offer up to 10-plus year financing. We recognized cranes are a long-term asset and offering at least a term equal to about one-third to one-fourth of their expected useful life made sense.

AND WHAT ABOUT THE DOWN YEARS?

The 2008 economic collapse was the hardest time I have ever witnessed. Typically in an economic or catastrophic event, six to nine months later business shows some signs of life. Even way back when the 1979-80 economic collapse happened, there were ways to move forward. In every prior economic situation, at the very least, businesses could get loans. They may have been expensive but money was available. Between 2008 and 2012 money was extremely tight, in my opinion, due to regulations and banks uncertain of the effect of regulations on their capital requirement. To this day credit is not easier, but most companies' financial results have improved.

>24

“ Basically, customers know where to find us, and we do not disappear from the market when things are bad and reappear when things are good. ”

HARRY FRY
Harry Fry & Associates

WHAT IS IT THAT YOU LIKE ABOUT WHAT YOU DO?

The old saying is do what you love and the money will follow. In our case we love what we do by helping companies reach their goals. We enjoy the customers we have met over our 20 years and many, if not all, we consider friends.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN THIS BUSINESS?

Like everyone else, the biggest challenge is riding the economic roller coasters.

WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY?

I have believed two philosophies my entire business career. Treat everyone as you would want to be treated, and when a deal is complete (funded), everybody involved should walk away with a smile of contentment.

THERE ARE MANY OPTIONS FOR EQUIPMENT FINANCING BUT YOU HAVE SPECIALIZED IN THE CRANE SECTOR. WHY IS THIS?

When I started the company there were opportunities in other industries, and there was briefly a thought to combine industries. But after analyzing the crane industry, realizing the long-term value of the crane asset and seeing long-term financing was not being offered, I realized the crane finance market was the perfect industry choice for me. Besides I am a kid at heart, and I've always liked watching cranes work since I was young.



The Harry Fry & Associates team includes Cheryl Fry, vice president; Harry Fry, president; and Tonya Fry, assistant vice president.

WHAT DISTINGUISHES HARRY FRY & ASSOCIATES IN THE MARKETPLACE?

We are a consistent and constant source of financing/leasing options for the crane and lift industry. Basically, customers know where to find us, and we do not disappear from the market when things are bad and reappear when things are good.

We have stayed the course through the worst of times and believe our experience allows us to have a clear understanding of our customers. HFA is a family owned business, and therefore, we can relate to many of our customers, and can appreciate what it takes to run your own company. Additionally, we have owned equipment in the past and can appreciate, to a small degree, what our customers may experience.

Also, it's about our service. Our goal

has always been to create a long-term business relationship with our customers. We achieve this by giving the customer a competitive deal and making the transaction as easy as possible for them and the vendor. In addition, we continue to stay in touch with our customer and the equipment vendor long after the deal has closed. Therefore, our customers have come to believe in our knowledge of financing and the crane industry as a whole. As a result, we have become their business partner rather than just their finance source. Our customers continue to call us not only for questions regarding their transactions, but also in regards to other things that pertain to their business.

WHAT SHOULD A COMPANY LOOK FOR WHEN IT COMES TO FINANCING CRANES?

Everyone's needs are unique. They should not just assess their financing needs just when things are going well but consider the "what ifs" of the future. Rate is an important part of every evaluation but structure and conditions should be evaluated in equal terms as well.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR LEISURE TIME?

No. 1 is spending time with my five-year-old grandson Brock and three-year-old granddaughter Gia. I enjoy golf, the outdoors, reading and/or watching American history. ■

Harry Fry & Associates provided financing for the J.F. Lomma Terex CC 2800-1 that lifted the Space Shuttle Discovery on top of a Boeing 747 Shuttle Aircraft Carrier. Fry said the first crane his company ever financed was a 1995 Krupp KMK4100 for Donna Stevenson of Stevenson Crane & Rigging, based in Chicago.

