

A man with a shaved head, wearing a dark grey button-down shirt, is sitting at a wooden desk in an office. He is looking towards the right side of the frame, where a computer monitor is visible. The desk is cluttered with papers, a keyboard, and a mouse. The background shows a white wall with a calendar and some office supplies.

A Day in the Life

Brian Meek

Operator-Turned-Sales Representative

THIS MORNING

Before sunrise: Check job server for potential new projects to bid on. Start working on bids.

Brian Meek has always been fascinated with heavy machinery. He seemed destined for a career in the lifting industry. “When I was a kid, I used to ride my bike to construction sites. This business — it’s been a passion for me since I was little.”

It was the spark that piqued the young Meek’s interest, but it takes years of dedicated experience,

training and a commitment to become a trusted advisor in any industry. This is the journey that Meek continues daily at the ALL Erection & Crane Rental Corp., where he is a newly named sales associate.

Meek came to ALL purely by chance. Or was it fate? In 2004, he was booked for a one-day assignment at ALL. That day, they saw something in the young man’s character, and soon he was joining them as an apprentice, beginning the four-year process of becoming a crane operator. In his 10 years as an operator, Meek preferred heavy-lift mobile cranes — machines that have the ability to traverse both smooth



“I think that to work here, you have to want to be the best,” said Meek. “It takes a certain kind of person. You’re working toward a common goal. And sure, as an operator, you’re on the road a lot, sometimes upwards of 150 nights a year. It’s not just a career, it’s a lifestyle.”

Meek admits that his years as an operator were exhausting, but is quick to point out the many rewards. “You make a lot of great friends, and you get to see a lot of fascinating projects, but if you want to work with the larger cranes, you’re going to be on the road. It’s like that all over the world with this type of work. But it wasn’t work to me. I really enjoyed what I did.”

“My goal is for a customer to trust in me. I want to be a lift advisor, not a salesman.”

— *Brian Meek*

People within the company saw Meek’s growing potential. They saw his ability to communicate with his peers and to choose the most effective equipment for any kind of job. Eventually, they decided it was time for a change. In fall 2014, they tapped him to move into a sales position. Who better to serve customers than someone they trusted from previous work and who knew what equipment worked best for each type of job? Someone with the experience and tenacity to overcome every challenge, planned or unplanned.

But Meek came to the position with some conditions. “If I’m going to be a sales person, I’m going to give customers my best. I take pride in what I do, and I want to work with customers who feel the same way. You can’t just come here for a paycheck. You have to value yourself.”

In the early part of his transition to the new position, there was good-natured razzing from his fellow operators, but they also realized that they would have more of a representative voice when jobs were being put together. Meek was someone who could truly represent their interests and who knew exactly what the work entailed. The sales staff also saw the benefits

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roads and uneven worksite terrain. These cranes pack a powerful punch, offering strong lifting capacity in a relatively compact and mobile machine. He threw himself into the work with the passion he had felt since childhood.

THE DAY BEGINS

Sunrise: Arrive at first job site of the day. Ensure that customers are happy, equipment is working, everything is going as promised.

An operator’s life can be a tough one, but it’s the kind of hard work that people like Meek — and other ALL employees — enjoy putting their shoulders behind.

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of his joining their ranks, as they could call upon him for technical advice in putting together their own bids. It was a win for both sides.

Enjoying the work, having a strong work ethic, and taking pride in what you do are characteristics shared by many ALL employees. One of Meek's mentors is Chad Rados, the son of Meek's boss, Norm Rados. Chad Rados is also a former crane operator who now handles project management in Indiana [Read "A Career for Life," page 1]. "He loves this industry," said Meek. "He was an important part of my success here. A good mentor has the ability to do three things: *know* the way, *show* the way, then *get out* of the way. That's what I try to teach apprentices now. I know things, I can show them how to do it, but then I have to get out of the way."

“He moved further ahead in his career because of his passion for the business. When you have that attitude, you can become successful very quickly.”

— Chad Rados

“His first day on the job at ALL was with me,” said Rados. “We were both young, but he seemed very well put together, very professional. He jumped right in and said, ‘What can I do? How can I help?’ I started to give him tasks, and he didn’t want to stop working. Then I wanted to teach him more. I called the office and said, ‘We have to find a place for him here.’”

The Day Shift: On a typical day, Meek travels to work sites and contractors’ offices to visit customers, and takes and makes countless phone calls. Meek’s territory spans over 150 miles in Ohio, including Summit, Portage, Ashtabula, Trumbull and Mahoning counties.

In his sales position, Meek advises customers as to which crane is most practical for each job. He meets with contractors throughout the day. Sometimes it’s at a job site, to make sure everything is going

as planned. Sometimes it’s to discuss planning a new job. But rather than being focused on “selling,” Meek feels his job is to be a lift advisor, matching the right equipment to the job and making sure not to “overcrane” or “undercrane” the work. He wants the customer to get just what they need. With the size of the fleet and the support of the company behind him, Meek is able to operate with a great attitude that is driven by service, value and experience. “I was taught that there is always a way to get every job done. You just have to use your resources. I believe that ALL has better resources than any other crane company in North America. I enjoy working with my customers who have the same determination — to always find a way to get the job done.”

Developing and maintaining good relationships with contractors and other customers has been a big part of his new job over the past year. Many of Meek’s customers know him from his days as an operator, and now he brings that experience to the table in his capacity as an advisor. They trust him.

That’s a feeling you can’t put a price tag on. But price does factor in.

Bidding on jobs is a regular part of the day. Putting together quotes for contractors is a delicate balance. Recommending the right equipment for the job is crucial, but bringing experience to the table and knowing that the job might change after you are awarded the work is also important. You have to anticipate how you would deal with particular challenges on a job and explain the elements of the package you present. ALL believes in transparency for their bids, adding a measure of trust for their customers. They break down costs so that customers can see exactly what they would be paying for.

Transparency, quality, experience, and a deep fleet that can be leveraged to address unforeseen challenges and complications — these critical pieces can really make a difference on a job, no matter how big, no matter how long or short the duration, no matter the weather conditions or physical challenges.

FOREVER AFTERNOON

Afternoon: 100 phone calls. 100 emails. Or more. His phone rings almost nonstop. Meek rents the full line for his customers — crawler cranes, truck cranes, tower cranes, aerial lifts, and other machines, and it’s a continuous cycle of monitoring current jobs while planning for the next job. If not at a job site, he’s at his office, working on bids for jobs.

“I want my customer to sleep well the day before a job starts and the day after a job is completed. That’s my goal.”

— *Brian Meek*

“I’ve only been in this role for a year,” said Meek. “But I think my biggest success so far is in maintaining the relationships we have with our great contractors, helping to retain what others have worked so hard to do in these positions before me.”

The good days are many: successful jobs, happy customers and winning bids for future work. But you can’t win every bid. Sometimes low-cost providers undercut competitors in price alone — but possibly also in quality. “There’s no value or price you can place on morals and trust,” said Meek. “I feel that trust is tied directly to quality. We offer mechanics, service, the whole package.” Quality can also include the reliability of the equipment. ALL works hard to ensure that equipment is kept at top operating condition for maximum uptime. ALL’s ability to offer quick service and a deep fleet of machines if a backup is needed can also factor into minimizing downtime. And then there’s the body of experience ALL brings as a team.

“We support each other,” said Rados. “If I have an issue or I’m not sure of something, Brian’s one of the first people I call. We bounce ideas off each other all the time. I think he’s doing an excellent job. He doesn’t get let himself get too comfortable. Once he has one job or sale completed, it’s on to the next.”

EVENING: THE SUNSET

Evening. Meek arrives home. Although his job usually allows him to be home at a reasonable hour, the work is always on his mind.

“I’m always thinking of what we will bid on tomorrow,” said Meek. “I need to make sure the (operators) are working consistently. I was one of them, once.”

The end of every day sparks the anticipation of a new one. Whatever that day might bring, Brian Meek is clearly up to the challenge — with the backing of his mentors, his company, and his solid experience. ▼



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