

Trucking entrepreneur chosen as cohort for leadership program

- **Bugle-Observer**
- **Tue Jun 7 2016**
- **Page:** B4
- **Section:** Business
- **Byline:** Cody McEachern

The owner of a local trucking company has been chosen to be part of the ninth cohort of the Wallace McCain Institute's Entrepreneurial Leadership Program.

Richard Boone, owner of Professional Carriers in Hartland, was nominated for the program, and has been selected with 15 other entrepreneurs from around Atlantic Canada.

He started his company 12 years ago, and currently runs Professional Carriers with his son, said Boone.

"We are a trucking company that does shipping for primarily refrigerated goods across Canada. My wife and I started the company in 2004 with only 12 trucks. Now, we have 58 trucks that travel across Canada and to areas of the states."

His interest in the program initially peaked after his son participated in the second-in-command program, and showed him the content of it, he said.

"My son was in the 2IC program, and was bringing back all of this information and knowledge from it. The quality of the program, the speakers, and the changes he was making to how he ran stuff really got me interested in it. I wanted in on it too."

He saw what the program did for his son, and wanted to be on the same page as him when it came to running the company, said Boone.

"Right now, I run the company with help from my son, but I know as time goes on, we will be transitioning, and he will be running the company with help from me. I wanted to be on the same wavelength as him, so no matter which one of us is running the company, we will be able to understand what each other's thought process is."

The Wallace McCain Institute is located at UNB, and strives to help entrepreneurs who are at a crossroad with their company build their business judgement, and give them the knowledge needed to push their company further.

The institute provides three programs for entrepreneurs who are either in charge, or will be in charge of the company, said Nancy Mathis, executive director of the Wallace McCain Institute.

"We have three different programs for entrepreneurs here. The program Richard was nominated for is meant for entrepreneurs who are in leader or owner positions in their company. We also have the second-in-command program for the runner up of the company, the assistant managers,

VPs and such. Our third program is the EChO program, which is for those in a family owned entrepreneurial business, and are the next generation in line to run it.”

The Entrepreneurial Leaders Program brings leaders from across Atlantic Canada together to help each other with business issues, and also exposes them to a network of peers, she said.

“Our ELP program introduces entrepreneurs to like-minded people from different fields, and gives them the opportunity to learn from each other in a group setting. During meets, they will listen to guest speakers from different areas of business, such as HR, finance and marketing. They will also have time to discuss issues or successes they have had in their companies with the group, and together they can share tips and suggestions.”

Creating and accomplishing goals is a big factor of the program, and all goals are discussed as a group, said Mathis.

“Another aspect of the program is to help the entrepreneurs set goals for themselves. In their groups, they come up with a goal they want to achieve, and they set out to complete it by the next meeting in a month. At the next meeting, they must report to the group if they have succeeded. Goals that aren’t achieved are usually from either procrastination, or from changing times, making them no longer relevant to the company. The group then discusses how to get over the procrastination or difficulties of the goal, so it can be accomplished.”

Each year, 32 finalists are selected to attend The Choosing, a weekend event where they meet and a group of 16 are selected, she said.

“We usually have around 350 to 400 nominees each year. I personally talked to 150 of them this year, and singled them down to the top 60. From there, the candidates are reviewed by a panel of judges, and the top 32 is selected to attend a weekend gathering in Saint John for what we call The Choosing.”

Each finalist gets a 15 minute face-to-face interview with the judges before they decide on the finalists, said Mathis.

“At the end of the weekend, our panel of judges choose a group of 16 from the 32 that made it to the finals to be the new cohorts. The results are announced in realtime to the finalists, almost like a reality TV contest, and is a lot of fun.”

Boone had been nominated in January 2015, but was not selected last year, she said.

“The way we decide who makes it into the program is from the 32 finalists, the judges pick the best group of 16, not the best 16 finalists. The group must have chemistry, must not be competitive, and needs to be co-operative and tenacious.”

He has only met the group once during the weekend of the choosing, but has high hopes for the group, said Boone.

“So far, we have had one weekend meeting to select the newest group, but so far it seems like a great bunch of people. We all come from different backgrounds, but there was chemistry instantly between the group. Not everyone is the same age either, as it ranges from people in their 20’s to their 50’s, so we get to know how to work with different generations, and get to see stuff from their perspectives.”

The group will meet on a regular schedule, where they will listen to presentations and discuss issues they are having with the group, he said.

“We will meet once every month for two or three days in a quiet place in Upper Oxbow, and will have a presentation or two by a speaker, as well as time to discuss stuff as a group.”

The benefits Boone and his son will bring to their company from their programs will help them greatly in the future, said Mathis.

“Richard’s son George, who nominated Richard, was already in the 2IC program, and now that Richard is in the ELP program, it is going to benefit their company even more. When you have more than one party in the program, it builds a trust in each other that no matter what happens, either of you can deal with the situation. It is also good because not only will Richard gain insight on how to make his business better than it already is, he will know when he hands it to George, it’ll be in good hands.”

As for Boone, he plans to continue meeting with his group long after the first year of the program, as it provides a good network of peers to company owners, he said.

“Most of the alumni still meet every once in a while after the first year, I’m told. A lot of people in a leadership role tend to be alone when it comes to making decisions, especially in privately owned businesses, or as some people put it, it is lonely at the top. Having a group of like minded people in the same position as you to meet up with helps deal with that.”