

# PROVIDENCE BUSINESS NEWS

YOUR LOCAL SOURCE FOR BUSINESS NEWS IN SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND

## Arpin the standard for environmental stewardship

BUSINESS  
EXCELLENCE  
AWARDS  
**2010**

BUSINESS LEADERSHIP  
**Peter Arpin**  
Arpin Group - Executive Vice President  
Arpin International - Partner

BY RHONDA J. MILLER  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

One important element of Peter Arpin's business leadership is apparent in his conversation about his work as executive vice president of **Arpin Group Inc.**, a global moving company with headquarters in West Warwick.

Peter Arpin speaks with a constant "we" that includes the board of directors, teams across the company, dedicated employees, and his brother, David Arpin, CEO of Arpin Group.

"It's all about team," said Peter Arpin, who works mostly in what he describes as "a tiny little cubicle" in an office shared with two other employees. He prefers informal communication and being in the midst of the business. "I don't have my own office. I can hear everything."

Peter Arpin's entrepreneurial spirit helped the business grow from a single company with annual sales of \$5 million to a group of companies with more than \$180 million in revenue. Arpin Group, Inc. is the holding company for Arpin Van Lines, Arpin International Group, Arpin Broadcast Network and Creative Storage Solutions.

Peter Arpin's impact on the 110-year-old family company has earned him the Business Leadership award in Providence Business News' 2010 Business Excellence Awards.

"We have pretty ambitious goals," said Arpin, who joined the company in 1989 as a partner of Arpin International Group. "We're transforming the transportation industry, starting with us."

One of the most visible ways Peter Arpin is leading change through challenging times is in his role as president of Arpin Renewable Energy, a company created in 2008 as a research and development arm of Arpin Group.

Peter Arpin has been instrumental in implementing green initiatives to reduce the carbon footprint of all Arpin companies.

"One of my passions in life is conservation and environmental stewardship," Arpin said. "We hired environmental consultants. We're doing initial testing with our own vehicles to reduce emissions."

The company is conducting tests with solar collection devices and miniature wind turbines in anticipation of retrofitting its

fleet of trailers with innovative systems. Research on using solar collection materials to eliminate truck idling and to recharge batteries has been promising.

"Ultimately, we want to introduce innovations to the entire marketplace," Arpin said.

Peter Arpin's leadership in environmental initiatives extends beyond the company.

In August, Arpin Renewable Energy teamed up with Card's Furniture to introduce the first public car-charging station in Rhode Island. The two companies are underwriting the cost and providing the recharging service for free. The recharging station for plug-in electric and plug-in hybrid cars is located at Card's Furniture in West Warwick.

"We're working with Project Get Ready to get 10,000 recharging stations in the state," Arpin said. "We need an infrastructure for plug-in cars. Our goal is to ultimately get this state into the forefront of hybrids."

In the Arpin Group's wide-ranging efforts to make environmentally smart practices profitable and sustainable, Peter Arpin is credited with leading the charge.

The moving industry has inherent environmental considerations with cardboard, paper and other specialty products used to protect household goods and personal effects from damage.

The company's green initiatives include buying cardboard and paper products only from companies that support sustainable forestry.

The corporate headquarters in West Warwick initiated a zero-waste plan, recycling cardboard and paper products from all moving projects it services.

Moving toward paperless operations, Arpin Group invested \$2 million in information technology upgrades and nearly eliminated printing in its dealings with customers and vendors.

This year Arpin Van Lines completed retrofitting its headquarters and warehouse in West Warwick. New lighting and sensors save energy and reduce emission of greenhouse gases. The initiative will be implemented across all Arpin Group companies.

To encourage employees to be personally involved in the company's environmental



PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

**MOVING ON UP:** Peter Arpin, executive vice president of Arpin Group Inc., attributes teamwork to the firm's success. The group nets roughly \$180 million in annual revenue.

stewardship, Arpin Group initiated its Green Loan program, offering low-interest loans to employees who want to purchase hybrid automobiles or make energy-saving home improvements.

Environmental initiatives are one part of Peter Arpin's leadership. He emphasizes the collaborative mission to successfully grow the business in many directions. Teamwork is a quality that's been priority, Arpin said of the moving and storage company founded by his great-grandparents in 1900.

Peter's father, the late Paul Arpin, was a World War II veteran who was particularly adept at expanding service to military customers. Paul Arpin passed down the company's work ethic, approach to leadership, acceptance of risk-taking and enjoyment of the business, Peter Arpin said.

"I think of my dad as an amazingly good listener," Arpin said. "He connected with people. He worked with customers to find what's important for them and to put together the right team to satisfy what they're looking for."

Arpin said his father handed down his respect for employees, vendors and clients, along with a passion for the business.

"My dad was still working when he was 85. He was very involved with drivers and operations," Arpin said. "He worked on the morning of the day he died."

Peter Arpin said his father's passion for the business included perspective on taking risks, with this advice: "Don't be afraid of mistakes. Just getting it right 51 percent of the time makes you a winner."

Arpin said the company's first attempt to open an international office in New York in the 1990's was a failure.

"We had the wrong manager, the wrong employees, it wasn't a good fit. We closed it down," Arpin said. "We had an opportunity to reopen it five or six years later. We learned from our mistakes and now it's our

most successful office in the U.S."

That experience provided a lasting lesson.

"We learned it's OK to fail and retreat and not give up totally on an idea," Arpin said. Arpin said leadership includes expecting the unexpected.

"BP was our biggest international, commercial client," he said. "We were moving their employees worldwide."

Then came the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

"There's a situation where our business went away quickly," Arpin said.

"Our military business, moving military families, is probably going to shrink, too, with the cutbacks," he said.

Having good communication with customers is important in responding quickly to changing market situations, Arpin said.

"Unlike a lot of companies, we don't work with long-term plans," Arpin said. "The world changes too fast for us to make predictions. We focus on executing goals on an annual basis."

It's a style of leadership that requires being nimble and prepared.

"We never sat down and said we're going to open in the UK, Singapore or Hong Kong," Arpin said. "We opened in China sooner than we expected." Arpin International Group opened an office in Shanghai in June.

Despite the difficult economic climate, the company continues to gain market share in the shrinking relocation market. Its offices in the UK, Ireland, Germany, China and Singapore are experiencing rapid growth.

In the community, Peter Arpin is also recognized for leadership. He serves on the board of The Arctic Mission, a West Warwick nonprofit assisting people with housing, employment, education and life skills. ■