

CHRONICLES

TALES OF GREATNESS IN THE MAKING FROM AWARD WINNING INSPECTORS

TONY MARINO

PACESETTER AWARD



Tony Marino had worked in the same printing company for 25 years when higher-ups shut down his division despite solid production numbers. From that point on, he decided to take a new track – self-employment.

“If I was going to fall on my face,” he said, “it was going to be my own two feet I tripped over.” Marino had little experience running any kind of business. He and his wife, Donna, wanted to move to Florida. He also needed a flexible business he could build while caring for Donna. A spinal operation at age 19 left her fully disabled.

He started reading entrepreneurial

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- **Tony Marino** Safety Harbor, FL

books and focusing on home inspections, a career turn he thought might fit the bill. He contacted several different franchises but focused on National Property Inspections after talking with Julie Erickson.

“She told me I could call any of the NPI franchisees,” he said. “I thought, ‘What? Any of them?’ That hit me hard. If a company can trust that any, and all, of their franchise owners will represent them well, I figured I was on to something.” He called 10 or 15 franchisees, spent a lot of hours on the phone with Julie and eventually went with NPI. The Marinos sold everything they owned, including the home of their dreams, ignored the repetitive voices of their friends telling them they were crazy and moved to St. Petersburg, Florida, available NPI territory on the Gulf Coast.

“We drove into town, having never visited the area and said, ‘Ok, we’re home,’” Marino said. Two months later, he flew to Omaha for two weeks of training. He completed ride-alongs with an NPI neighbor and started implementing the NPI marketing program.

“The rest is history,” he said. “It took me less than a year to equal the pay scale I had achieved in more than 26 years at my old job (and I was well paid). Plus, no 7-day work weeks, no night shifts, and best of all, no bosses.”

Marino implemented his business plan by focusing on four things that seemed to jump out at him time and time again when he was reading all those entrepreneurial books: “Be honest, have integrity, treat people right and never stop going forward. Be persistent.” He also worked hard to build a solid referral base, focusing his marketing on reaching the more successful realtors in his area, the ones who sell despite fluctuations in the market.

Marino won the Pacesetter Award in 2006, less than three years after getting into the business. “That’s just the sauce on the pasta,” he said. “The reality is at age 46 I took a chance on myself, stepped out of my comfort zone and became my own boss. I am now in control of my own destiny. You don’t know how great that is until you are there.”