



## **Brian Finkelstein**

**Vice president of sales | Max Finkelstein Inc. | Age: 28**

### **What was your first job in the industry?**

My first job in the industry was working in hot, sticky, distribution centers during summer, helping our team load trucks, unload trailers, and pull tires. This taught me to appreciate things and built a foundation from which to learn about our business.

### **What attracted you to the industry?**

I was attracted to the industry throughout my young adult career and growing up with the exposure of the family business. My brothers and I represent the fourth generation, and I began working during my high school summers in the warehouses and then calling on dealers in between college classes. Through this framework I discovered a passion to carry the torch and felt a sense of loyalty to our family, employees, vendors, and customers.

### **What is the biggest challenge you've faced in your career?**

The biggest challenge I have faced in my career is keeping up with time and the personal relationships I have developed with employees, vendors, and customers. As my network has expanded, there are still the same number of hours in a day and days in a week. Balancing time and organization while being focused with priorities is crucial, especially as my responsibility within the organization has grown. Having a healthy work-life balance is equally challenging,

but extremely important as well. While it's good to be aggressive, not everything gets done overnight.

**Who has had the biggest influence on your career?**

While I have learned and listened to many people in the industry, if I had to narrow it down, I would say that my family, and if I had to pick one member, my grandfather, Harold, has had the greatest influence in my career. He is a wealth of knowledge, experience, and encouragement for me and was the force behind much of our company's development. While it would take pages to put it all on paper, I would say that I have learned to be humble, to surround myself with good people, and to protect our good name and reputation at all times. I am very fortunate to be working with the two previous generations of our business, and we look forward to continuing to grow our company for another 97 years!

**What is your biggest accomplishment in the industry?**

My biggest accomplishment in the industry is being part of a team that has grown our business immensely in a very short period of time. Our family is proud to employ nearly 400 people, have 200 trucks on the road, more than 7,000 customers, and 13 distribution centers covering 13 states within the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast with over 1.2 million square feet of space. However, numbers aren't the only indicators of our success. This is a result of hard work and dedication from all of our employees, and loyalty from our suppliers, the biggest being Goodyear (we are their largest independent distributor in North America). Additionally, as we have adapted with the changing demands of our customers, we have become a program partner and have developed strong bonds beyond just doing daily business.

**What do you expect to be doing 20 years from now?**

Twenty years from now I don't expect to be doing anything too much different than what I am doing now: working in our successful family owned business. I'm sure the industry landscape will be different, but I'm confident our company will have the same virtues that we live by, despite the continued growth and expansion. Who knows, maybe a fifth generation could be in training by that time.

**What's the biggest issue facing the industry today?**

One of the big issues that the tire industry faces today is recruiting and retaining talent. Millennials aren't drawn to this industry in particular, and we all know that the key secret to the recipe of success comes down to personnel. That paired with having succession plans and being involved in your business are important for the independent tire dealer.

**What's the one thing you wish someone would have told you before you entered the industry?**

One thing that would have been helpful to know is how you can't always be sprinting, but once in a while need to jog or walk. Not everything gets done overnight, and things are constantly

changing. This is a long term race, and time management and organization need to be pillars of everyday routine.

**How do you encourage others to enter the industry?**

There is nothing better than seeing the current, previous, and next generation work together and pass the torch. I would voice optimism that the industry is relatively stable, growing, and still profitable if you do things the right way. If you can connect with people and treat your employees, customers, and vendors well, all other issues should fall into place.

**Tell us about your family.**

Our family is close knit and in constant communication. We have three of the four generations working together. The business started in 1919 with my great-grandfather and his brother, and has since been growing, adapting, and developing throughout each generation. Our slogan, “family owned and operated since 1919” is branded everywhere. I know it isn’t too common anymore, especially at our size. All of this coupled with the loyalty of all of our team members is what keeps us successful.

**What’s your favorite weekend activity?**

You will start to notice a theme in my answers: Family. Spending time with my wife, brothers, parents, grandparents, in-laws, and more. Between my wedding last year and house hunting, weekends certainly aren’t like they were a few years ago! Something tells me that won’t change. I do enjoy following a few New York sports teams as well as spending time in the great outdoors of upstate New York.

**What keeps you up at night?**

Thinking about all of the things that are going on at any given time! It isn’t easy to give it a rest when you are constantly thinking about better ways to grow, improve, and better the business.

**Tell us something about yourself others might not know.**

Others may not know that I have a Harley Davidson, although I must admit, it doesn’t get too much mileage.

**Name a talent you wish you had.**

I wish I was more talented with technology. I know it isn’t common for someone my age to say this, but I am a little “old school,” and could do better with it.

**What’s your favorite food?**

There is nothing more satisfying to me than a good Chinese restaurant. Hibachi works too.

**If you could have dinner with anyone, living or dead, who would it be?**

My great-grandparents who I either don't remember well or never met. I value the foundation that they built for my family and would have liked to listen to them and learn about their lives and the times in which they lived.

**If we took your cell phone away and said it would cost you \$1,000 to get it back, how long would you survive until you paid the ransom?**

Being that I just lost my cell phone recently and the stress that has come out of it, I would probably not be used to enjoying the peace and quiet and pay it fairly quickly, especially if there was information, notes, and contacts on their that I wouldn't be able to retrieve. We are very dependent!