

Patricia Ziska Celebrates 30th Anniversary with MCI

by NBT Staff and Friends
Photos courtesy of MCI



In December of 2006, Pat Ziska celebrates 30 years with Motor Coach Industries. While she has become a fixture at MCI's Chicago area office, she has certainly not been taken for granted. MCI has named her vice president, chief customer officer. MCI's customers have repeatedly complimented her attention to customer support and customer needs.

Customer-centric did not exist as a business term when Patricia Ziska joined the Chicago office of Motor Coach Industries' Hausman Bus Sales on December 6, 1976. Today, she defines it. "Pat will always get the problem solved," said Ron Bast, president of Riteway, Richfield, Wisconsin. "Her dedication is legendary. Time and again, if I'm at a standstill on an issue that needs to get resolved, talking to Pat always gets the job done."

As vice president of marketing and major accounts, Pat Ziska will take on a new role in 2007 as vice president, chief customer officer. It is a new position at MCI and for the industry. "We created this position and title to demonstrate MCI's on going focus on the customer," said Larry Killingsworth, MCI's

vice president of sales and marketing. "Pat has focused on the customer for the past 30 years. Now we have a position that is solely responsible for finding new ways to win for the customer. Pat has put her own stamp on the industry in a way that very few executives have been able to do. This position gives her a chance to get even closer to the customer as we begin to roll out a number of new initiatives." In this position, Ziska will also take on a bigger role with industry associations.

"Pat brings class, dignity, professionalism, good humor and grace to our industry," said John Crowell, president of Crowell Bus Lines, Williamsburg, Ohio, who has known her since her earliest days at Hausman. "Even then she stood out. As

she rose through the management ranks, Pat never overcompensated or changed; she has been able to keep her style. She's unique because she demonstrates unwavering loyalty to the customer, her company, coworkers and to the industry – all at once. We who know her are blessed."

"She is the backbone of the industry, and respected by all of her peers," said Victor Parra, president of the United Motor Coach Association. "There's really no one else like her."

Coming to the industry with shorthand and secretary training, Ziska easily won over Hausman executives. Her tenacity, determination and intelligence quickly brought her more achievements along with more

responsibilities. By 1985, she was managing all of the service coordinators who supported customer orders through the factory. She was named a vice president in 1996, managing the central regional sales team. She became vice president of marketing and major accounts in 2000.

In new-coach sales, Ziska has managed many of MCI's top tour-and-charter accounts, accounting for a significant percentage of MCI's sales revenue. Under her leadership, MCI's open-house customer events have expanded to well-attended road shows that give customers a chance to see MCI's latest models and learn what innovations are on the horizon. Over the course of her career, she put famed basketball legend Michael Jordan in a D-Series coach when he played for a minor league baseball team in Birmingham, Alabama; has managed MCI's relationship with its celebrity spokesperson John Madden through all five of his MCI models; and played a major role in the launch of the Renaissance (E4500), the J4500, the new-look D4505, the D4005 and the ultimate LX model.

Responsible for MCI's marketing efforts for much of her career, Pat's reach extends to advertising, public relations, trade shows and events. She leads MCI's participation in celebrations such as AASHTO 50th Anniversary of the Interstate, the MCI Go Green campaign and press events, managing a marketing staff responsible for advertising materials, sales literature, the MCI website, and FYI from MCI, a customer e-newsletter that has grown from a few hundred customer subscribers to well over 4,000.



Over the years Pat Ziska has been an MCI spokesperson with customers and at industry events. She promoted MCI's local Open House events and is usually on hand for most major industry events. Here, Pat meets with the Beach Boys in October of 1996.

"Pat's possesses good insight," said Ken Russell, MCI vice president of aftermarket customer support, which includes MCI's Fleet Support parts and field support. "She's there for her coworkers as much as she is for the customer. You can ask her all the 'when, why and what-for' questions, and she has the answers. We need her out there assisting with new coach sales, warranty, training, parts and service. She does a lot of that every day. She's a huge asset to MCI. She has a tireless work ethic.

"Pat is one of the most dedicated and sincere people I know," said Greg Lukas, MCI vice president of regional sales on the East coast. "She is 100 percent for the customer and is everything that the industry should be about. It is remarkable how much

Pat knows and remembers regarding each and every account. It is a privilege to work with her."

The company has undergone many changes over the past 30 years, but Ziska's passion, commitment and pride in the product remains steadfast. "I love MCI," said Ziska. "I'm extremely proud of what we've accomplished. When I see an MCI coach going down the road, I feel a great sense of satisfaction that all of us at MCI contribute to the confidence our customers have in our brand. Operators know they can send an MCI model out with groups of people to get from point to point with peace of mind. We're trusted."

Ziska learned successful salesmanship from her father, Thomas Delaney, a building material salesman who would always say, "Take care of the customer. That's what good salesmanship is about; nothing matters if the customer isn't satisfied."

Ziska's mother, a teacher, gave her a deep appreciation for knowledge. Ziska earned her Bachelor of Science degree from Mundelein College while working at MCI. She has also completed several Executive MBA courses through Northwestern University's prestigious Kellogg School of Management.

She and her husband, Jim, have three boys and a daughter. Sons Jim and Matthew both study at the University of Illinois; Jim will graduate in December with an engineering degree, and Matthew studies Urban Planning. Her youngest son, Mike, is in high school with a full schedule that includes baseball, tennis and piano lessons. Daughter Kaitlyn, eight, so far plans to follow in Mom's footsteps, having announced, at age four, that she wants to "sell buses."

MCI ran a pair of coaches coast-to-coast to support the recent AASHTO convoy marking the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Interstate system. Expectedly, Pat Ziska was on hand to meet the convoy and spread publicity for the bus industry and MCI. After the convoy arrived in Washington, Pat poses with Peter Pantuso from the American Bus Association (left) and MCI Bus Driver Dave Kane (right).



There's no telling if there's a Ziska dynasty in the cards, but the Ziska legacy is assured. It is one of commitment, skill, customer focus,

savvy and charm, and it has become as much a part of MCI as Ziska herself.

Larry Plachno, the editor of NATIONAL BUS TRADER commented: "I have known Pat for most of the 30 years she has been with MCI. She is the type of staff member that makes other employers jealous. Pat supports MCI with hard work and unquestioned loyalty. She goes out of her way to make customers happy and solve their problems without hesitation. In addition, she will share a smile with her friends and business associates. There is no question that our industry is a better place because of her." □

Pat Ziska provides that all-important link between MCI and its customers. In this photo MCI showed off its new look "D" series coach at the UMA Expo. Louisiana Coaches purchased the display coach. *Left to right:* MCI's Pete Cotter, Louis and Don Sanders of Louisiana Coaches, Pat Ziska and MCI's Rob Lessor.



From the
January, 2007
issue of

National Bus Trader

9698 W. Judson Road
Polo, Illinois 61064

(815) 946-2341

www.busmag.com