

# PULSE Interview: AMAR SAIN

## a candid conversation with Dalton Branch Manager

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*In 1958 a young man in New Delhi asked his father if he could go overseas to study. His father, a retired major, handed him enough funds to get to Rome. In Rome he worked part-time jobs until he got enough money to hitchhike through Europe and visit all the countries. He worked for farmers, sleeping in barns and sweeping floors for room and board until he could get work on a boat sailing to Canada. From Canada the young man went South. After writing to various organizations he finally got a scholarship from the Presbyterian Church for Vanderbilt University in Nashville. This was another working situation where he went to school a half a day and worked the other half. The year was 1961 and the young man was Amar Sain, and the time was right for him to choose a wife.*

*The girl he married had an uncle who was working for Wiley Equipment Co., at the time (the Clark Equipment dealer in Atlanta) and he gave Amar a job as an apprentice mechanic in the shop. . . working after hours sweeping the floors. Lift trucks were something new for the Indian; in his words, "I didn't know anything about them, I only knew if you wanted to move something you put it on your back." He didn't like working in the shop so he tried his best to get into some kind of clerical position. He was clearing \$33.00 a week. He was given a chance to keep the log on work orders as a service clerk and answer the phone. Amar was going to school nights at Georgia Tech and learning the rental end of the business during the day. In 1965 Atlanta became a branch operation and by 1967 Sain was appointed full fledged rental and leasing manager.*

*From there he went to manage the depot in Dalton in 1972 and by January 1974 Dalton became a branch operation and Amar became a branch manager. This is a long way from sweeping floors and sleeping in barns. For a minority person, with a mixed marriage, in the deep south it seems like an even bigger step. For a man with no money, no credit, no background in industrial trucks when he started as an apprentice mechanic we've gotta believe Amar Sain had a lot of guts and the 'internal' motivation that he feels is essential to a successful businessman. We wanted to know . . . so we asked him.*

**PULSE:** How did you feel when you first went to work for Wiley Equipment In Atlanta?

**SAIN:** All of a sudden I found myself sitting on a gold mine. A great company with a great product and really good people. People are the key to good business, don't ever forget that.

**PULSE:** What made you choose the rental end of the business to pursue?

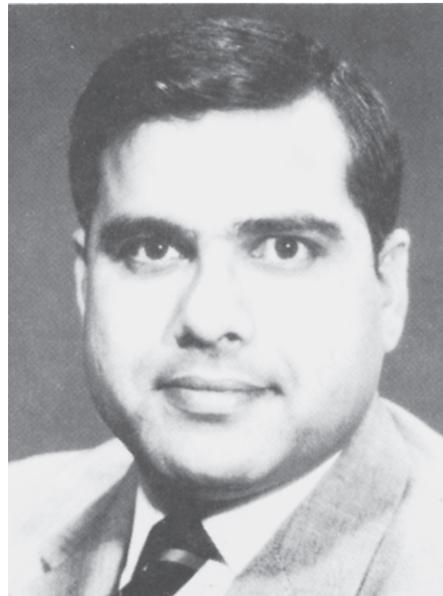
**SAIN:** At that time CRC was pushing their dealers to make the rental department a separate department in the dealerships. Instead of a part of the service department. They needed people who could develop good customer relations. I was very personal with the customers. I made sure that the machine they received was performing well, and if there were going to be any delays I called them ahead of time. I tried to put myself in the customer's position at all times and understand how that customer felt.

**PULSE:** How many rental trucks did you have at Wiley's?

**SAIN:** At the time the pool of trucks was seventeen. I remembered each and every serial number and item number. I kept them like babies and treated them like babies. I loved my machinery and I kept up with it. I gave the customer good service and they appreciated it.

**PULSE:** Then you feel it's the added attention or the second effort that made you successful?

**SAIN:** I feel that a good salesman or a good serviceman has to be born; you cannot make them. You have to be internally motivated to do a good job. You must have an attitude which cannot be shaken at any level. I like to think of myself as a good football player, who has been knocked down so many times but gets up again and again to make that catch. Look at O. J. Simpson; he has a whole defense



keyed up on him. He knows he can do it and he'll try over and over till he beats that other guy.

**PULSE:** Do you feel that this attitude got you the rental manager position in Atlanta?

**SAIN:** They wanted people who could hold the Clark Equipment Company name in high esteem. The job opening was there but there were other people I had to fight for it. There were American boys and old pros, but I just had to make my way... shove them all aside and keep on making my way. I made up my mind that this was it; and I was going to perform better than anyone. Sometimes I had difficulty getting along with others because my customer came first. I wanted my customer taken care of before anything else.

**PULSE:** Who had the most influence on you while you were learning this business?

**SAIN:** Ed Sperr was a great catalyst in my life. He had a kind of faith in me. He would see me still plugging away at 6 or 7 o'clock and he wanted me to be something. He taught me merchandising abilities.

Around 1965 Joe Costa came to play a big role in my life. He started coming to the branch to hold meetings with sales people and he knew I had potential and he pushed me. I learned a lot of my business sense from Harry Otis. I thought I wanted to step into a branch manager's shoes but the force and momentum I created made people think I was stepping on toes. Harry drilled into my mind day in and day out the same thing. He said, "Work like hell, know your job and get along with people; this is the secret of a successful man." Ever since he left I have been working on getting along with people.

**PULSE:** You sound like it was a one man rental operation in Atlanta, is this right?



# Interview

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**SAIN:** It started with one man in the rental department. When I left there we had 25 to 30 people in that department. From 1965 to 1970 the fleet of seventeen trucks grew to six hundred. The billings went up almost 200% in that five-year period.

**PULSE:** When did you move to Dalton?

**SAIN:** In 1972 I was asked to run the Dalton operation. At that time there were five people at the depot. We covered 16 north Georgia counties. In 1974 when we became a branch we were covering 27 north Georgia counties.

**PULSE:** I was under the impression that we only had branch operations in big metropolitan cities and outlying areas. Can you tell me why we have a branch operation in such a small APR?

**SAIN:** I think that the philosophy behind small branches is that we want to come closer to the customer. Have you ever noticed how many automobile dealers selling the same make there are in one town? It's closeness, they want to be more personal with their customers.

**PULSE:** Why not a dealership?

**SAIN:** That is determined on the lift truck population in the area. In our 27 county area we have more than 1500 trucks.

**PULSE:** How many salesmen do you have in Dalton?

**SAIN:** 36.

**PULSE:** 36? I only counted 4.

**SAIN:** There are now 36 employees in this place and everyone of them is a salesman. Even my controller is a salesman. If I am out and the salesmen are out on calls, the internal sales coordinator may be out too so one of the girls will handle the customer. If the girl cannot sell it, she will give it to the controller and he will sell it. What it all boils down to – and everyone knows it – is, unless we sell something no one has a job. Service, parts, short term rental, and long term rental business will come only if we sell the new trucks. That's the key to the market and we are going to capture that market. I don't mean to imply that we want to rule the market, we just want the biggest portion of it. The bigger it gets the better for us.

**PULSE:** I understand you have 57% of that market now, do you feel that is a pretty good share?

**SAIN:** 57% is a good figure, so is 67%, so is 77%. Why not 80%? With creative selling we can do it. With the people we have, with the energy and the ambition we have, we can do it. The people in our sales department do one hell of a job. We don't have to work any harder . . . just smarter. It's that old second effort that makes selling creative.

**PULSE:** You feel very strongly about the people who work for you, don't you?

**SAIN:** They are gold - they are diamonds. They believe in Clark and they take their jobs very seriously. A guy who is overhauling a truck, for instance, takes a lot of pride in what he is doing. One guy takes a truck and a bucket of bolts, he steam cleans it, he takes it apart, he gets the parts for it and then he puts the whole thing together and he paints it himself. The same guy follows the whole job through. . . it's his baby and everyone here knows it. When we send an overhauled truck out of here we take the guy's picture next to it before it goes out. He is proud of the job he has done and he sure doesn't want it to come back for any reason.

All of our people are great!

**PULSE:** What percentage of turnover do you have with your employees?

**SAIN:** Zero! We have never lost anyone since we have been here in Dalton. We have added new people but no one has left.

**PULSE:** Do you have any women in key positions in your operation?

**SAIN:** We have five girls and all five of them are in key positions. We could not do without them. They are the backbone and the catalyst of this place. One runs the accounting department, one runs the parts department, one runs the service department and one runs the rental department. Plus that, they answer the phone. Run the teletype and ring the bell when someone sells a truck. When we go out and blitz the territory next month. These girls will go right along with the men calling on plant managers and vice presidents of companies. . . talking to anyone they think might be able to use our product.

**PULSE:** Do you have any internal sales contests to motivate your people?

**SAIN:** You don't need that to motivate this kind of people. They just need direction. Loyalty starts from the top. Clark is the only thing I know and my people believe that Clark is the best. Even our competition

believes it. . . they know it. We have the Cadillac of the industry and we act on that. It's not enough though to get a good share of the market, you have to hold it once you get it. That's another game, you can't sit back and relax or you lose it. Our people know that and that's all the motivation they need.

**PULSE:** You just won the Powrworker contest which is the first leg of the current sales campaign. How did you manage that in an area where sales have never been good for Powrworkers?

**SAIN:** Let's give credit where credit is due. Again, our sales department did one hell of a job. They went to the meeting in Atlanta held to kick the contest off and they told Atlanta that we were going to beat their brains out. We told them we were going to do better than Atlanta was going to do . . . and we won! But there is more to it than that. Our sales manager came up with a whole new application for the Powrworker. We have about 200 carpet mills in our APR and Jack Wright found that the Powrworker could be used as a transporter for wet carpet as it comes out of the dye and is put into 15 foot buggies. It was good timing. Business is like sports, timing is important.

**PULSE:** Speaking of sports, I see you have some very impressive tennis trophies, you must play very well.

**SAIN:** I love sports. Tennis is much the same as business is for me. You take one stroke – one point at a time. And then don't relax. You finish the game and you don't worry about what happened in the past.