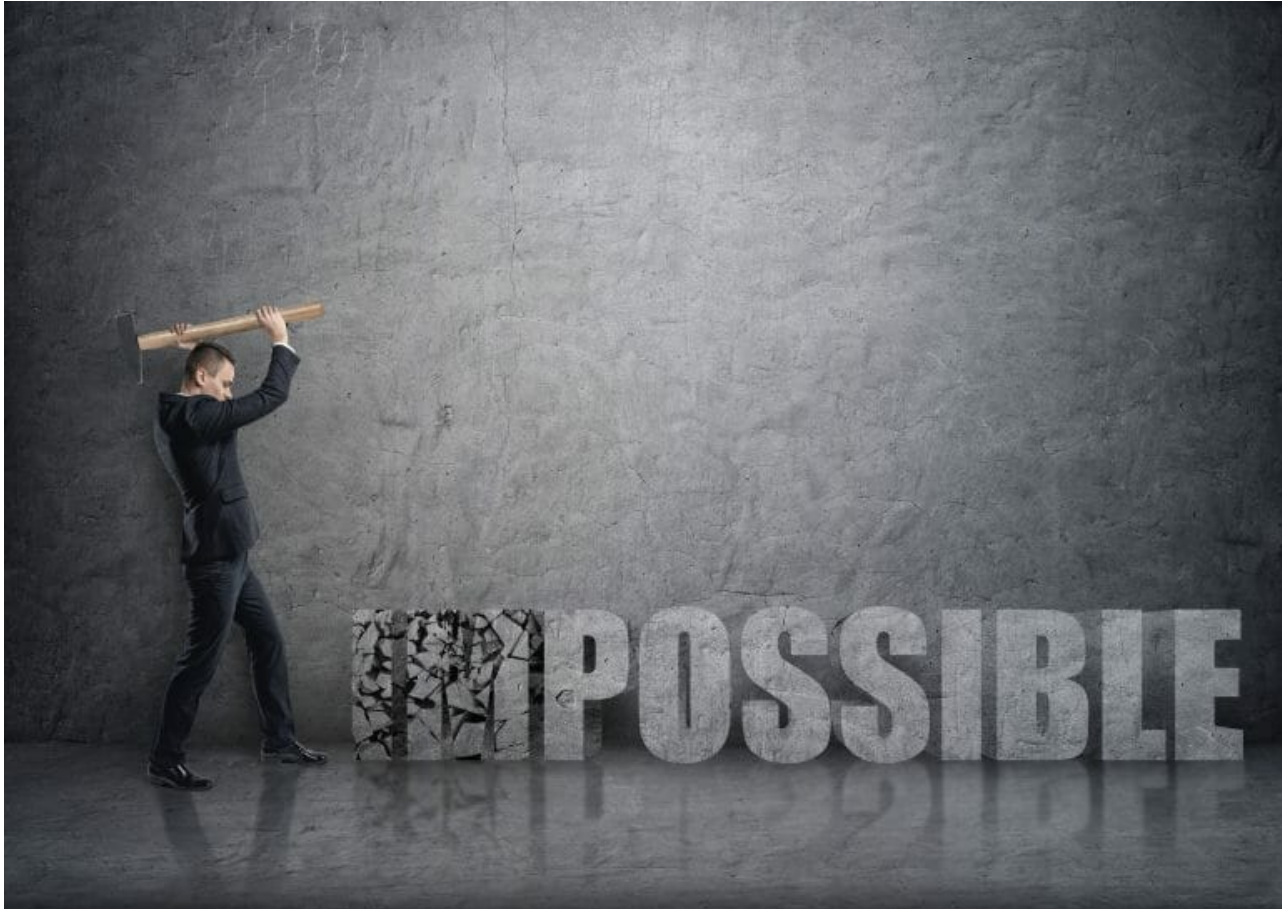


Larry Neal Multi-Unit Michigan Owner



“I wish we would have done it earlier,” says Larry Neal, speaking about his experience with Our Town America, the nation’s premier new mover marketing franchise. Neal and his wife, Paulette, became Our Town America owners 12 years ago in Detroit, and they haven’t looked back after making the life-changing decision.

“I have no regrets,” says Neal. “Our Town America is a different company. The franchisee/franchisor relationship is extremely strong. Corporate will do anything and everything to help fuel your success.”

Neal, an avid reader, says the Our Town America business model is just one of several factors that play to his success. He is quick to give credit to his Christian beliefs. “Our faith in Jesus Christ directs us in everything we do,” Neal says.

In the early 1960s, Neal made the decision to leave his small town of Ironton, Ohio, nestled along the Ohio River bordering both Kentucky and West Virginia, to enlist in the Army. “In my family, no one went to college,” says Neal. “Very few people in my high school went to college. Graduation from high school meant either working

at the steel mill or a life in the military. I chose the Army.”

Neal spent three years in the Army, including one year in Vietnam, just as the war was escalating. “I was just a little boy, 17 and you think you’re a grown man,” he says. “You don’t know anything. My experience in the Army was eye opening. The culture, it opened my eyes and showed me there was more to the world than just a little town in southern Ohio. I enjoyed the experience of the Army.”

After leaving the Army, Neal worked for a giant multinational chemical corporation in sales. Several times he was able to avoid layoffs, but after 25 productive years he decided to take a retirement package. That didn’t necessarily mean he was retired. Neal had already begun building homes as a part-time job. Now that he was “retired”, Neal was able to focus on building homes on a full-time basis.

Like any successful journey, Neal encountered a few bumps in the road. For Neal, it came during the onset of the Great Recession in the 2000s. “I was building homes and then the economy started to take a turn for the worse,” Neal says. “Paulette and I couldn’t afford not to work. I knew at my age that it would be hard for me to get a job. We made the decision that we would have to go the entrepreneurial route.”

The Neals consulted with a franchise broker who gave them a few options. Those options included a bagel franchise, a fire, water and restoration franchise, and Our Town America. The Neals quickly decided on Our Town America.

“Our Town America was very inexpensive with very little overhead,” Neal says. “It fit my sales niche, it didn’t require a physical building or any employees, I was able to run my business the way I saw fit. Our Town America is a phenomenal organization.”

In 2006, the Neals became the proud owners of their first Our Town America franchise in Detroit. Now, the couple has three franchises under their belt.

“Detroit gets a bad rap,” Neal says. “Sure, there are bad apples, but that doesn’t represent what I’ve grown to love about the metro area. You need two things to be successful as an Our Town America owner: movers and businesses. There is an influx of movers moving in. And there are thousands of businesses in the Detroit metro area that I haven’t stepped foot in. The potential is unlimited here. Detroit is a great blue-collar town because of the Big Three (Chevrolet, Chrysler and Ford).

It's a great place to live and a great place to own a business."

Larry handles the sales and customer service. Paulette oversees the back-end work. The pair is thriving, both professionally and personally.

"I can easily say I love her more now than I did 40 years ago," Larry says. "Operating a business together isn't all peaches and cream, but I can't imagine ever doing this without her. She is my rock and support. When I've had a bad day and I feel that everything is going wrong, she comforts me. She'll boost my confidence."

After 12 years as an Our Town America owner, Larry's confidence is as strong as the steel produced in his hometown. That confidence is the sum of hard work, perseverance, and faith.

"I would leave my house the first two-and-a-half years of owning the business at 8:30am and wouldn't come home until 5pm," Larry says. "I was knocking on doors, trying to get appointments or making presentations. In our first year we earned the 'Rookie of the Year' award. At the end of our second year, we won the title of 'Franchisee of the Year.'"

Having the right work ethic and being a self-starter is a must, according to Larry, if you're interested in becoming a franchise owner. Larry says Our Town America's business model set him up for the success.

"I'm a firm believer that you have to have sales experience to be successful. It takes years to be a good sales person, but Our Town America will give you all the support you need. It's a great organization. We have so many tools to make us successful. If you're struggling in any way, the corporate office is there to give you support. When you talk with other franchise owners, you'll learn that the relationship between franchisee and franchisor is surreal. You don't have that friction with franchisees here at Our Town America."

Larry has the utmost respect for Our Town America's corporate headquarters. And he says the respect is mutual.

"It is truly like family," Larry says. "Both with the franchise owners and the corporate office. There are few companies where you can pick up the phone and call a CEO and go to a ballgame. But you have that relationship here at Our Town America. It's a much different atmosphere than what I previously experienced in

the corporate world.”

Family is important to Larry. The Neals are now regional developers for the Orlando market. One would suspect as they approach retirement, they are preparing to settle in the Sunshine State. That’s not the case for the Neals. Michigan will remain home when it’s time to retire. “We like to visit Florida in the winter months to visit our grandchildren and great-grandchildren, but our children live in Michigan. That’s where we’ll remain.”

Do you want to realize your own business ownership dreams, like Larry and Paulette Neal? Does the Our Town America franchise opportunity sound like it could be for you? If so, learn more at <https://www.ourtownamerica.com/franchise-us/>.