

Tom Keefer

PROMOTED TO DSPC

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR



Port Illustrated's Interview with Tom Reveals a Customer-Focused Approach

Last year, Diamond State Port Corporation promoted Tom Keefer, Director of Marketing and Trade Development, to Deputy Executive Director. This June, he will celebrate his second anniversary with DSPC. Port Illustrated recently visited Tom in his office and spoke with him about his evolving role at the Port of Wilmington.

Q: What are some of the greatest accomplishments at the Port of Wilmington since you have been with DSPC?

A: A very significant event was renewing the Volkswagen lease. From the moment I arrived at the Port, I recognized it as a key objective – one, for the beneficial economic impact it would have on the Port and region and, two, for the long-term, 25-year relationship we have with this very important customer. I am pleased to advise that the new lease agreement is for five years, which is longer than the previous two leases, so that's very gratifying.

Another important event for us was the decision by Australian meat carrier C&S Shipping to consolidate

its shipping operations and use the Port of Wilmington as its U.S. East Coast distribution hub. This decision comes after a trial year of C&S splitting its cargo between Wilmington and another Delaware River port, comparing costs and services. We couldn't be more pleased with C&S's decision to sign a 3-year contract with the Port of Wilmington, effective with the first vessel arriving in June.

Finally, business retention at the Port is an ongoing priority for me. I realize that we can be successful only when we help our customers to succeed. We have excellent customers at the Port of Wilmington – and I'm pleased to note that, during my time here, we've achieved 100 percent retention.

Q: How do you see your new role transitioning over time?

A: First and foremost, I'll continue with existing marketing and business development responsibilities. However, when I arrived at the Port, I brought with me a diverse background and a broad range of experience in both the maritime and real estate industries; in disciplines

such as business development, operations management, human resources, property lease, negotiations, management of labor relations, and risk management. I look forward to contributing in those areas in the future and to being involved in developing strategic plans for the Port; identifying business opportunities; planning infrastructure improvements; and, re-engineering some of our systems and procedures. So, at the end of day – wherever Gene Bailey, our Executive Director, believes I can apply my prior business experience to achieve the best return for the Port is where you will find my involvement.

Q: From a developmental standpoint, what do you view as the Port's greatest opportunities?

A: Our greatest opportunities exist in discovering ways to deliver more value to our customers. We have a fantastic group of "partners" and each has expressed interest in growing with us. It is our challenge to find creative ways to keep pace with their growth and to find ways to return added value.

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TOM KEEFER

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Q: How do you balance providing good customer service with expanding business opportunities here, at "The Port of Personal Service"?

A: The two objectives are intertwined. Only when we provide good customer service can we expect to increase business. We have a lot of money invested in infrastructure, equipment and technology, but our people are what give us an edge in the marketplace. We trade on our reputation for providing personal service and the ability to anticipate and serve our customers' needs.

Q: What would you like the Port community to know about Tom Keefe?

A: I would want the Port's community to feel welcome at any time to talk to me about their needs at the Port – to stop by, call or e-mail me. I want to know what's on their minds so we (DSPC) can respond and come away with a better understanding of each other's needs.

I really enjoy problem solving – whether it has to do with growth issues, warehousing, or planning – it gives me a lot of satisfaction to work toward mutually agreeable solutions. I am interested in identifying opportunities to increase the regional impact the Port has on the economy, and would welcome their thoughts

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