

IMPRESSING CLIENTS WITH THE ALOHA SPIRIT OF SERVICE

HONOLULU-BASED DUKE'S LIMOUSINE INC., WHOSE SERVICE STANDARDS INCLUDE GREETING CLIENTS WITH LEIS, IS INVESTING IN LARGER VEHICLES FOR A GROWING CONFERENCE CLIENTELE.

By Michael Campos, LCT associate editor

HOW THE COMPANY WAS BORN: Duke and Tanya Tiet started in the transportation business as taxi drivers in Honolulu. Their high level of customer service and knowledge of transportation helped them build relationships with tour operators, coordinators and other members of the transportation industry. Because the island lacked an adequate number of luxury transportation companies and vehicles at the time, clients and tour operators encouraged the Tiet family to start their own limousine company. "They wanted to be able to count on someone who was both reliable and affordable," says their son, Brandon Tiet, operations supervisor at Duke's Limousine Inc.

WHY HE GOT INTO THE BUSINESS: Tiet observed the growth of his parents' company and was inspired by their success. "The business relationships and people I get to meet have made this a really enjoyable ride so far," he says.

START-UP COSTS AND METHODS: Tiet's parents started the business with money they had saved up. They bought two white Lincoln Town Car limousines stretched under 100 inches. They ran the business from a small desk in their high-rise Honolulu apartment and parked the limousines across the street in a private lot.

BEST MARKETING STRATEGY: "Of course, we advertise and have a website, but nothing moves a company more than word of mouth," Tiet says. "I believe that a client sharing his or her experience with others will bring in more business than any other marketing strategy." Duke's Limousine reaches out to local businesses that may need transportation and other limousine companies to build its affiliate network.

BIGGEST MISTAKE: "We've made some pretty expensive errors in judgment and purchased limousines and vehicles which we really didn't have a use or clientele for," Tiet says. "There are a lot of cars out there that look cool to stretch into a limo, or would be awesome to own, but not having the clientele for it will turn those nice cars into dust collectors for which you have to shell out car payments, registration, insurance and other costs."

BIGGEST SUCCESS: Seeing a smile and hearing a "Thank you" from clients.

UNIQUE APPROACHES TO CUSTOMER SERVICE: Clients are treated to a "Hawaiian style of service" that includes lei greetings and taking clients to eat food found only in Hawaii. Tiet says this "Aloha Spirit" sets Duke's apart from limousine companies on the U.S. mainland.

ADVICE TO OPERATORS: "Listen to your clients and do things that make your company special to set you apart from 'the rest of them,'" Tiet says. "Admit errors and learn from mistakes. Fix things that need to be worked on. Times are uncertain for our industry, so think things through and make decisions wisely. Most of all, do not be afraid of success."

FUTURE PLANS: Duke's Limousine is looking to grow its minibus business and fleet, and add to its sedan and SUV fleet to accommodate the growing number of executives traveling to Honolulu. "Many more conventions are being held in Honolulu as the world recognizes the importance of Hawaii as a meeting place," Tiet says. "Being in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, Hawaii offers a more centralized meeting place, especially between the U.S. and Asia." **LCT**



Operators Duke and Tanya Tiet, with their son Brandon, run a limo service that includes a 2012 Chrysler 300 stretch. They offer a unique, friendly Hawaiian approach to service.



FAST FACTS



DUKE'S LIMOUSINE INC.

LOCATION: Honolulu, Hawaii

FOUNDED: 1994

OWNER: Duke Tiet

MAIN SERVICE REGION: Island of Oahu

TYPES OF VEHICLES: Chrysler 300 stretch, sedans, SUVs, minibuses, Rolls-Royce limousine, triple-axle Hummer H2 stretch limousine

FLEET SIZE: 9

EMPLOYEES: 15

ANNUAL REVENUES: Under \$1 million

WEBSITE: www.dukeslimo.com

INFORMATION: (808) 738-1878