

SelfInformed

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NASE Member
Alan DeValerio

Member Spotlight



Retiring To Self-Employment

Alan DeValerio is the Founder of White House Memories located in Frederick, Md. Alan joined the NASE in 2005. He first joined for the discounted dental insurance and has continued to enjoy the various benefits the NASE offers. Alan worked as a contract butler at the White House in Washington D.C from 1980 to 1989 and began giving presentations about his experiences in 2012.

What inspired you to enter the field you are in?

When President Obama was elected in 2008, there was an article in the Washington Post about former Head Butler and Maitre d' Eugene Allen and his 34 years of service at the White House. Gene was my boss and his story really caught on. You might recall the movie *The Butler*; it was made about Gene's life. As I began to enter my retirement years, I was thinking of

how I wanted to continue to work and I thought that people might be interested in my story as well.

When and why did you start your business?

I started my business in 2012. Because I had previous experience as a public speaker and performer (I did a one man show as legendary entertainer George Burns), I knew that I could tell my story in a compelling and interesting way that audiences would enjoy.

**What challenges have you faced in your business?
Have you overcome them?**

My biggest challenge right now is trying to reach a wider audience. I would like to do some corporate and/or association events, but the competition is fierce. I haven't reached that stage yet, but I try to explore every possibility to get the word out.

How do you market your business?

Right now I've been marketing to senior centers and retirement homes. It's a ready-made market that's easy to reach through mailings. It works out great because the audiences are eager for the presentations and the facilities talk to each other and share my information.

How often are you giving presentations and how far do you travel for them?

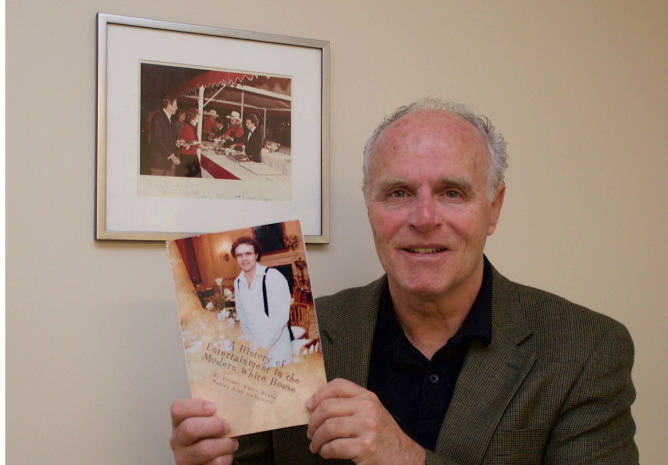
I average around 6 to 8 presentations a month. I have traveled as far south as Florida and as far north as Massachusetts. I will be doing a presentation in May in Pittsburgh (farthest I've been west).

How many hours per week are devoted to your business, how do you spend your time?

I'm semi-retired, so if I'm not doing some kind of marketing for my White House presentations, I'm out hiking or I'm reading. I also work part-time as a substitute teacher (maybe 1 or 2 days a week). I try to do some marketing at least 2 to 3 hours a day. That may involve looking for potential new clients, sending out postcards to new clients, and contacting old clients for repeat business.

**What role does technology play in your business?
What roles does it play in your presentations?**

Technology plays a HUGE role. I don't think that I could market effectively without the Internet. Almost everything I do marketing-wise is technology related. I search for clients, order business cards, advertising and keep track of upcoming presentations online. And, of course, I use GPS to get me where I'm going! If a client has the capacity, I will do a slide show along with my talk. That adds a lot to the overall presentation.



What's the best compliment you've ever received from a client?

The best compliment is when a client asks you to come back. I've had several clients who have requested me to return for repeat performances. It is gratifying knowing that the audience and facilities are enjoying my work.

What is the best thing about being self-employed?

The best part about being self-employed is the independence and the ability to call all your own shots. As a semi-retired individual, the flexibility in my schedule is almost priceless.

What's the most important piece of advice you would give to someone starting their own business?

Make sure that there is a market for what you intend to do before investing too heavily in your time and money. Understand what the start-up costs will be first before moving forward. Take advantage of any tax breaks meant to help the self-employed.



Learn More in the NASE Small Business Locator

Learn more about Alan DeValerio, White House Memories, and other Self Employed businesses in the **NASE Small Business Locator directory**. You can add your own company to the NASE Small Business Locator in up to three categories at no charge – it is a free benefit to NASE members.