



Dan Hogan

CEO of Crane Hogan Structural Systems, Inc.

*"Don't give up, don't ever give up."
Jim Valvano*

Dan Hogan's turning point would occur only after he thought he was well on his way into a promising career. What at first seemed like an experience that would totally derail his plans and set him back indefinitely, instead gave him the opportunity to reevaluate his entire perspective on life, giving him an all new approach that enabled him to achieve the great success he currently enjoys.

Dan grew up in a fairly idyllic childhood, with a good family and good friends as he recalls it. He always assumed that he would secure a white collar job, as that was the sort of thing that was expected at the time. He attended Le Moyne College after an early graduation from high school and finished in 1968, earning a degree in Accounting.

Before he could choose between attending law school or entering the workforce, Dan was drafted. Faced with the prospect of joining the Army, he instead heeded some advice that he received from a Navy Recruiter, and joined the Navy's Seabees Construction Battalions instead for a two year enlistment. After basic training, Dan was sent to Vietnam on a tour of duty that lasted for nine months.

He had initially dreaded the experience, but in many ways he now regards it as one of the most

important formative experiences of his life. His service with the Seabees and his time in the field has taught him values such as focus, responsibility, maturity and perhaps most importantly, it taught him the value of specialization and channeling his ambition towards a specific goal that needed to be filled. Witnessing the way the military was organized, with each person doing a related critical job and doing it well, Dan realized the importance of teamwork and finding a niche.

When he returned from the service, he was 24 years old. He was eager to find a new identity for himself and get back to work to make use of his new skills, but he found that the subtle changes imposed upon his life in a war zone had left him well behind his contemporaries. Dan realized that all kinds of technological and procedural changes had taken place in the white collar game, that he was just now experiencing for the first time.

"I was two or three years behind ... I had to ratchet it up in order to make up for lost time, and I was also eager to use my new energy and focus rather than my old complacent college perspective."

He began to look for a new job, interviewing for both accounting positions and construction positions, feeling that his two extremes of experience made him suitable for either line of work. In the end, however, he felt that accounting would offer better opportunities, so he resolved to take that avenue. He interviewed with a company and quickly secured a job with a national accounting firm. But after only two days, he began to rethink whether this was what he wanted to do with his life. Convinced he had taken the wrong direction, he resigned from the accounting job and scheduled another interview for a late Friday afternoon with a construction company located in Syracuse, NY. He was hired immediately, and they asked him to start that evening and work the weekend. This was in November 1970, and the firm was Congel-Reuter Inc., the parent company of the Pyramid Companies.

It wasn't long until Dan figured out how Congel-Reuter's culture worked. He began working fifteen hour days, six days a week. Before long, he was noticed and he began to step up his game even more. Dan worked from 7 in the morning until 10 or 11 at night, stopping only then because he was running up on sixteen hours, and it was against company policy to accrue more than two days' pay on only one shift. During his second week at the job, Dan worked 28 hours straight estimating a construction project.

In Congel-Reuter's training program, Dan loved to be sent out into the field where he could demonstrate his work ethic. He would work hard, barely sleeping, for 2-4 hour periods at a time. Of the 80 people he began the program with, Dan was one of maybe ten who survived it successfully. After about six months of working with Congel-Reuter, they gave him the opportunity to oversee a job all on his own, with the only guideline being a certain monetary return that he was expected to earn during that time. Dan not only succeeded, he tripled the expectations of the company. Dan acknowledges that he had a great team working under him, but it's clear that this experience had a powerful effect on him: the belief that someday he could start his own company.

Eventually, the management at Congel-Reuter began to go in a new direction. After two and a half years with them, two of their partners who were also dissatisfied with the new direction broke off to start their own company, and made Dan an offer to come along with them and receive a 6.5% share in the company. Dan eagerly did so and found himself energized by getting out from under the authority of his first employer. He enjoyed the newfound freedom, and although he and the other two partners had a parting of ways after two years, the experience gave him the focus and courage to start his own business. Finally, Dan thought, he had found what he was meant to do.

Drawing upon his ability to focus his convictions towards an objective and his knowledge that a niche is crucial for success, Dan started his own company performing specialized coating, concrete projects and rehabilitation jobs

on parking garages in the city of Rochester. Whereas other companies would simply replace failing structures at massive costs, Dan used the expertise he had acquired throughout all his years in the industry to develop a better means to repair rather than replace. This gave him a significant edge over the competition and to this day, he still remains one of the most successful contractors in the area. He later expanded his niche to performing his similar structural rehabilitation services on dams and bridges, to name a few; something that at the time no one else anywhere offered.

As Dan has gotten older, he says that the most rewarding part of his job is watching young people like himself come into the business and helping them to develop their skills and gain direction in their life. His own two sons have been successful on their own; his oldest opened his own engineering firm in Boston and his youngest is an entrepreneurial finance major. No matter which direction his sons or the young people working for him want to take, Dan is always quick to remind them about the importance of having the ability to focus on something, and finding your own niche where you are able to perform better than anybody else. As Dan likes to say, "**self satisfaction and fulfillment equals success.**"