

An Alumni Spotlight: Robert Zmudka '89

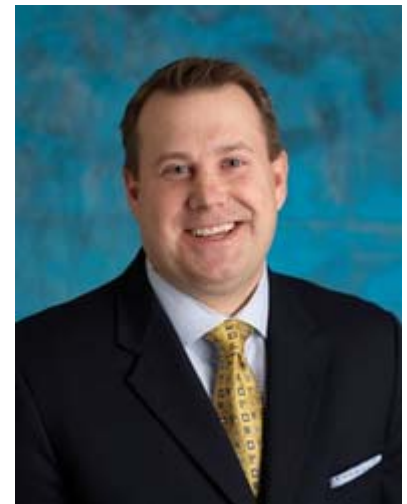
by student writer Colette Kuk

Rob Zmudka '89 (MKT) is Vice President and Executive Director of Strategic Sales for GATX – the largest railcar leasing company in the world. He recently shared an update with us about his career and GATX's commitment to service.

Q: How have you leveraged the key skills and understandings you acquired at ISU as you've advanced your career?

A: My ISU business degree provided the foundation for building my future career. My marketing classes taught me to not only consider how your company is being represented but to think also about how you are being represented and how you are representing your company, important considerations not only in my professional experience but in my life in general.

Beyond my career-specific classes, the academic experience at ISU taught me the value of teamwork, gave me confidence in public speaking and presentation (skills that I continually refine and enhance) and the importance of strategic planning -- the ability to think beyond myself and today, and to also consider the longer-term and consequential effects of a particular action or strategy. And perhaps equally important, my ISU experience gave me life-long friendships that continue to this day.



Q: How would you describe your day-to-day responsibilities at GATX?

A: At GATX, we have more than 125 different types of railcars that can be configured to carry hundreds of different commodities for nearly 1,000 different customers. One of the key reasons GATX has become the largest railcar leasing company in the world with more than 160,000 railcars is our decades-long customer relationships.

It sounds simple -- our success lies in providing our customers with the right railcar at the right time at the right price. But in order to make that happen, it is critical for me and the rest of our commercial team to listen to our customers' needs, understand the dynamics of their business, provide them with our technical expertise and training, work with our internal fleet management group to anticipate trends in demand and ensure our customers have a reliable railcar to meet their business requirements. To accomplish this, I spend approximately two-thirds of my time on the road. The travel can occasionally be grueling -- nothing like being stuck Fargo, North Dakota in the middle of December to make you wish for home! But railcar leasing is a "hands on" business -- has been for 111 years -- and I'm proud of the strong customer relationships we've developed and the friendships I've made over the years.

Q: What would you tell current students and fellow alumni about the role of service leadership and corporate responsibility in today's business environment?

A: GATX encourages our employees to take an active role in serving their communities, whether its through local volunteer activities, company-wide "days of service", donations to charities of choice doing work to strengthen families, care for the environment or improve education. I'm extremely proud that GATX is the largest donor to the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Illinois, a status the Company could not



have achieved without the generous donations of our employees. Each October GATX employees enjoy the "fun" in fund-raising. In addition to pledges, employees on all levels of the Company get involved in raising money through prize donations, sales, auctions, raffles and a month of fun events, including a tailgate party, a bags competition, a pie-in-the-face contest and *Are You Smarter Than A CEO/CFO?*, pitting local Make-A-Wish children against GATX's management

team. GATX employees also see first hand the life-changing impact of a wish as they meet Make-A-Wish children when hosting quarterly send-off parties at GATX headquarters.

Earlier this year I had the opportunity to be directly involved in developing a "rolling billboard" for Make-a-Wish together with one of our important customers, PotashCorp of Saskatchewan. This "billboard" is a specially decorated railcar designed for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Illinois and painted a brilliant blue, featuring the Make-A-Wish logo and tagline: *Share the Power of a Wish®*.