

## LARRY ALFORD

Senior Vice President of Sales

Axis Promotions, Powered by HALO

The long story is that I learned when I was young that “it tastes better if you make it yourself.” So getting a part time job when I was young is a big part of my history. In 1982 I worked summers at Fenway Park as a souvenir vendor, falls and winters at the Boston Garden. When I look back on this, it was the best job a kid could have, except for the time when someone threw a hotdog with mustard at me from the bleachers while I was selling hats on Landsdowne Street, and the time after a Bruins win when I got punched in the face because someone wanted a free hat and I said no. In hindsight, had I known I was going to get punched, I would have gladly given him the \$ 3.00 hat! That job lasted 5 years.

I ended up selling custom hats to my high school for the 900 student graduating class in '84 sourcing from the same resources that we got the Red Sox hats from – so my first promotional item I sold I was 18 and made about \$800.00 – not bad in '84 and it repeated for 4 years. Selling and entrepreneurship had always been in my DNA; during my Jr. year in college I started a company “Watch-It” selling logoed watches to my school, Skidmore College, and other schools, organizations and country clubs in the NY Capital region. In 2 years Watch-It sold close to \$7K! But even more importantly, I was invited to the Premium and Incentives Show at the Javitz Center in NYC. I was off and running; working for a distributor was my first real job 6 months out of college and I have been at it since 1988!

I love what I do, I love the life it has allowed me and the freedom it allows.

Fast forward a bunch of years (like 33) the flexibility this job offers meant that I never missed a family dinner when my girls (now 22 and 18) were young, this is critical to me. When I die, I really want to be eulogized as the person I am and not the job I had. Again I love this crazy business – but I love what it has allowed me to do more.

In the work we do, if you are not nimble and able to respond to change (and be comfortable with not being in control), you may be in the wrong place. It is critical that you know we are not in control. Ultimately, it is all about the power of the relationships we develop both with our clients and our suppliers and factories. I actually prefer to call both my partners. None of us succeed unless we can work together. I am often heard explaining to a partner that this job allows me to be schizophrenic. When I am on a call with the client I need to be channeling the factory and when on with the factory I need to channel the client. And I need to be channelling Axis/Halo at the same time. All this just adds to the fun.

So my Typical Day –

I wake between 4:00–4:20 every day usually without an alarm anymore. Coffee, stretching, a bit of news, check emails, respond to emails (NEVER EVER send clients emails that early, I do not want them to think I do work at 4:30am!) and 5–10 minutes of daily meditation readings. Second cup of coffee and by 5:15–5:30 I am working out. 9 months a year I am outside cycling. I will ride for 2 hrs (30–35 miles or so). Home, 3rd cup of coffee (decaf at this point) check email again shower, breakfast, catch up with my wife of 31 years! And the kids if they are up or home. Most mornings lately we will take our 16 month old Pandemic Puppy Zoey for a walk or run in the park.

I like to be working by 8:30. I have been working from home since “shut down” and have recently started to get into the office. I miss the collaborative nature of being with my team and other colleagues.

8:30am–6:00pm. The only thing routine is I eat a salad every day for lunch. It is always brought from home and loaded with whatever is in the kitchen that morning. The rest of the day flows with the needs of the business. We will often have vendor meetings, company meetings and calls and certainly client calls. Even when I have a ToDo list for the day I need to be flexible with it and prioritize. 90% of the time I get through it but there are some bullets that are there labeled, “if I can get to it.”

It is really hard to provide an hour by hour breakdown of the day – I personally do not think this job allows for it. I can often be heard saying when someone asks what I am working on I tell them what is in progress and finish up with, “I have no idea what calls or emails I just missed while we were talking.”

When life was normal – I would leave the office around 6, be home around 7. Check email again. Dinner hopefully with as many from the family who are home. Nights are pretty relaxed for me (remember my day started at 4am) – I will read, hang out with family, walk the dog, watch TV – depending how tired I am the TV sometimes watches me! Oh and check email.

A few email and productivity notes:

- I never like to go to bed or end my work day with more than 25 emails in my inbox.
- All emails that are in my inbox have been opened and read.
- I have a personal rule to respond to all emails within 2 hours of getting it. I may not have a response to the request, but I will always acknowledge receipt and set expectations.

If you ask me what I miss since Shut Down:

- Working with people in person
- Live music
- Riding my bike with people (this is beginning to come back)
- Wearing Shoes – I currently have more than 129 pairs of shoes – most are Dr. Martens – [here is a video](#) that is about 4–5 years old. I have not bought a pair in 14 months and it is killing me

Silver Linings of Shut Down:

- My family got closer
- New friends that I got closer to
- Zoey
- Learning that I can be nimble and we can all get through something like this
- Did not spend a lot of money
- Got out on our tandem bike a bit more than in the past
- Volunteer Work