

John Friedges

John Friedges of Lakeville, Minnesota has been in business – and building a fleet of equipment – for more than 40 years. He's only in his early 50s.

Whether he's buying or selling equipment, John says he values one thing above all: fairness.

John Friedges is a busy man. John owns and operates several landscaping, excavation, utility and equipment rental companies in the Lakeville, Minnesota area – as well as a golf course that he purchased with a partner at an unreserved Ritchie Bros. auction. Like most successful business owners, John started out small and built his company from the ground up. Unlike most people, he started at the age of 10 – a little more than 40 years ago.

"Growing up I had a choice: work long hours without pay for my dad or go out and get a job – so I started running a landscape business in summer and working at the ski hill in winter," John recalls. "The business was just my way of generating some money, but it was pretty big by the time I was 15; by then I was hiring my classmates to run the machines for me."

After high school, says John, "business just grew and grew." He started to do "dirt work" in addition to landscaping, mostly for builders, developers and public agencies. Offering underground services enabled the company to bid on larger jobs. In the past year – with residential development down – John has shifted focus once again, working less in the private sector and more with schools, municipalities and counties.

As John's business expanded, his fleet of equipment grew too – but he's made an effort to keep it up-to-date. "I'm always buying and selling equipment," he says. "We try to take out our older stuff and upgrade with newer machines." For more than 20 years, he's chosen to do much of that business with Ritchie Bros.

"My loyalty is to Ritchie Bros.," says John. "I have trust and confidence in them. They're a class act; they do things right. Ritchie Bros. doesn't play games: you don't have to worry that you're bidding against the owner of a machine and you know that if you're the highest bidder, it's yours and you paid a fair price. Ritchie Bros. put those rules in place years ago and they stick by them."

John sells his surplus equipment through different channels, including private sale, but selling through Ritchie Bros. "is the most headache-free method," he says. "I just consign a piece of equipment and Ritchie Bros. does all the work: they advertise it, they sell it and they deal with everything after the sale."

As for the returns? "Out of perhaps 400 pieces I've sold with Ritchie Bros., I've had maybe five that didn't get the price I was hoping for," John says. "That's not bad."



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Like many people, John has felt the impact of the recent economic crisis in the U.S. His plans to retire have been delayed – perhaps for a decade. So he'll continue to do what he's been doing for the past four decades: work hard, look after his equipment, grow his business – especially his equipment rental company. John expects he'll be a regular at Ritchie Bros. auctions for years to come, participating in person or over the internet.

"Online bidding is a great service: it's easy, it's comfortable. I can sit in my office and work on other business and keep one eye on the auction," says John. "Actually, I'm bidding online in Ritchie Bros.' Denver auction right now." He laughs – and then places a bid with a click of his mouse.



AUCTIONS DONE RIGHT.