

# Allan Block

*Always Better* Wall of Fame  
**2024**



allanblock.com



## Michael Baker

Reading Rock  
Cincinnati, OH

How does one measure what has been accomplished on this road we call life? If we are fortunate, we are blessed by more than what can be measured on based on material goods, but rather for the positive impact we have on our family, friends, and what the meaningful work we do in our chosen profession. Twenty-four years ago, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2000 to

be precise, Allan Block was fortunate to have Michael Baker join the team at Reading Rock to pioneer new frontiers for Allan Block. Gordy Rich, President of Reading Rock, and his senior management team determined if they were going to be successful in Louisville, Kentucky they were going to need to invest in opening a Regional Distribution Center in Louisville. For this plan to work, they needed to find a player coach for their new farm team away from their home base of Cincinnati. Michael, aka "Shake and Bake", was hired to make it happen, and that he did.

Now the year 2000 may seem like a lifetime ago and the industry was fifteen years in process with many successes registered, but with many untapped opportunities as well. And of course, in addition to all of the nay sayers that stand in the way of progress for anything new, there was also plenty of competition both within the Segmental Retaining Wall world, and from more traditional retaining wall solutions as well. Michael not only



had to become the market specialist able to deliver to the needs of his potential customers, but he also had to build a local business from the ground up.

Quite a challenge for a young person just starting his professional career. Let's see, he needed to learn the technical and practical side of how the product works to answer the questions of his new customers. He had to be able to sell the value that working with him, his company, and Allan Block would bring value to his customers. And he had to make the dream of a new



Reading Rock Regional Distribution Center a reality. You know the old saying, “nothing ventured nothing gained”. That sums up the way Michael described his decision to accept the challenge.

Michael has many outside interests and one of those is sports. He can break down a game plan and look at the strengths and weaknesses of both teams and how they can match up and what the expected outcome may be for an upcoming game. This ability comes from his curious nature of being more than a casual observer. When he would talk about coaching his son’s basketball team he saw and communicated how the pieces all fit together. So, when he was tasked with becoming the player coach for the Louisville market, he approached this new challenge in the same way. He listened to his customers, he listened to those in other markets that were having success, he evaluated his competition, and then he created his game plan and went to work. Each day over the last twenty-four plus years he epitomizes the Allan Block moto of *Always Better*. He has built a successful satellite business for Reading Rock; he has become the answer man for his customers. Ryan Miller, VP of Sales for Reading, describes Michael as knowing his customers and the market so well that he has answers before his customers even know they have questions.



Most people plateau out after being at a job as long as Michael. But as you might have guessed, that was not the case. The fact that he now has two kids in college, and all the extra costs associated with that fact of life, may be a contributing factor to.

After all these years of success, he has now guided their business to two more very strong years of growth. When many other markets around the world have retracted since the Covid growth bubble in our industry no one has told Michael he should see sales retracting a bit. By knowing his customers, working the Go to Market strategy that has been developed to build new customers and opportunities; while servicing a stable of great loyal customers, Micheal has once again been a pioneer blazing a new trail forward.



From all of us at Allan Block, we extend our sincere appreciation and respect for you leading the way forward and helping us be “*Always Better – Always Allan Block*”. For us to have had the honor to work with someone like you, it inspires us to follow your lead and listen and learn so we too can become the market specialist at what we do.