



## **Empower your people to help meet your goals.**

By JJ Lauderbaugh

To overcome today's challenging economy and its boosted levels of competitive intensity and reduced profitability, you need to build morale, reduce turnover and improve delivery of your contract cleaning services.

You can achieve this by empowering your managers and employees.

Part of this equation is building trust by allowing your cleaning workers to buy into the pride of ownership and true empowerment. If you do so, the outcome will be a win-win for your customers, your employees and your cleaning or maintenance business.

What you do today to strengthen your service team will determine how you bring service into the 21st century. You must empower your managers, supervisors and other employees to accept that they are all part of your customer service and marketing effort.

They influence the internal and external customer's perception of your service on a daily basis. They must be taught how to accept responsibility for the customer's experience, and give exceptional customer care, not just service.

Your customers are expecting more than ever before. To provide quality, you must create positive attitudes and high self-esteem in everyone on your team. It's up to you to help them be winners and establish goals that will keep your cleaning business improving.

### Attitude Adjustment

Your attitude and desire to empower and coach your people will make a difference in your employees' attitudes toward the customer.

During our research, we came across some valuable information on attitude. We found that most people believe other people control their lives, or that circumstances do. This is untrue -- we can control our lives. The problem is, we have not been taught how to do it.

We think in terms of images. When we walk into a room, we scan it and our minds gather information about who and what we see. We look for people who are winners, or people we want to get to know. As we scan the room, we pick up this information at 72,000 images a minute.

Do you believe you can tell a winner from a loser before a person begins to speak? Sure you can. You learned it in childhood when your mom or dad drove into the driveway. You looked out the window to see if they were in a good mood or bad.

Every customer who interacts with one of your associates can tell whether they are a winner or loser, and what kind of attitude they have.

### Be a Winner

The study of winners and losers in our society shows the average person gets up in the morning and lets everyone else control his or her thoughts. They turn on the television, and what's on it? How bad everything is: Recession, depression, rape, drugs, murder and alcohol abuse. Then they get the newspaper, and what's in it? It's how bad everything is.

It's no wonder people are in a bad mood when they get to work. They've let others control their thoughts, and thus their lives. This is not to suggest that you or your workers ignore the media and current news. But remember that what you do first thing in the morning helps determine the kind of attitudes you'll have all day long.

Our thoughts create feelings, feelings create emotions and emotions create motion. When you put garbage in, you get garbage out. Put good thoughts in and you get good thoughts out. For a better tomorrow, change the thoughts and attitudes you have today.

When researchers were looking for tools to give us significant power over ourselves, they found that methods of affirmation teach self-directed behavior. An example: "I (first person), am (present tense), empowering my front-line supervisors and cleaning workers to have pride of ownership when they interact with our customers."

I use this affirmation almost daily because I am constantly racing against the clock. When most stressed, I say out loud, "I have plenty of time to do everything I want and need to do." By the time I say it three times, I relax and it begins to happen.

Teach your front line employees to say, "I am solving the customer's problems as I should. I am meeting my personal and team goals today."

As the leader of your cleaning company's team, you must examine your own thoughts and beliefs if you are to lead effectively. Your attitude is noticeable in your management style. Inspired leaders have positive attitudes and the three D's -- desire, determination and dedication -- with strong beliefs and values.

### Setting Standards

As you empower your employees, you can begin to decide where the resulting growth should take you. Here again, it's important to involve your team members.

Decide what the goal will be and what standards you'll attach to it (see sidebar). The goal

may be as simple as reducing customer complaints in a specific area for three months.

Create awareness of present conditions. Designate a time frame in which to accomplish the goal. Provide the resources necessary to do the job. This may include additional training, daily "pep" talks as work begins, or coaching to change attitudes and raise self-esteem.

The goal must be challenging, achievable, participative, and it must involve well-selected and trained employees who know what is achievable. When your people are part of the decision-making process, they become empowered with pride of ownership and commitment. Everyone begins to experience team synergy helping each other, and goals are met with less effort.

Set goals with your associates' input and productivity will increase. Set daily, weekly, yearly and five-year goals. To accelerate achievement, say the goals out loud daily. Mark the goals on your calendar and read the five-year goals out loud once a month.

Those who follow this discipline will exceed their own expectations each time.

Your current challenges, whether they be low morale, high turnover or increased service expectations, are also creating a need to reset your goals. Your people will need coaching, empowerment and direction while rethinking their goals.

### Trust Will Come

Through the changes, relax and trust yourself, and your teammates will develop trust in you. When your team has trust, everyone joins the winners' circle.

To build trust, you must clearly and consistently set goals which include employee input. Employees must perceive managers as open, honest, fair and willing to listen. You must be decisive and stand by team decisions even in difficult situations.

Employees must have the confidence that their employer will treat them with sensitivity, support them even in delicate matters, and take responsibility for group actions. With a team built on trust, a manager readily gives credit to associates where credit is due. Trust also comes from doing what you say you'll do.

Today's businesses face many challenges, from high turnover among employees to an economy that forces business owners to squeeze every last bit out of employee productivity. By helping your employees improve their self-esteem, you can meet and overcome these challenges.

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