Bill Cates, senior manager team leader – national accounts at Kimberly-Clark Professional, has worked with building service professionals for almost 20 years, and through that time, he has seen the industry evolve in many ways. Continue reading to see what he is excited about in the BSC industry, as well as what he believes makes for a good working relationship with customers and how he works to drive innovation at Kimberly-Clark Professional.

“To have a good company culture, you have to commit to leading the way.”

How long have you been working with the building services industry?
I have been engaged with building service contractors since January 1997 when I moved from New York to Atlanta to work the office building market. I am in my 21st year at Kimberly-Clark Professional, where I manage a team of five national account managers covering commercial real estate, building service contractors, lodging and high traffic. My primary role is to support my team and grow market share with new and existing clients.

How do you drive innovation?
Through sales and marketing collaboration, we uncover insights by looking at trends, data and unmet customer needs to create innovative solutions to meet them. We work together to educate our distribution partners and end-user customers on the latest products and services. One example is that we’ve introduced products that contain natural, non-tree fibers to the North American market. Alternative fibers such as wheat straw and bamboo meet the USGBC’s definition of “rapidly renewable,” meaning they are able to regenerate themselves in less than 10 years. This shorter harvesting cycle reduces the amount of land required to support demand, which is just one of the ways we are bringing our customers innovation to drive change in their markets.
What are some things you are excited about in the industry?
Building service contractors are acting in a much more consultative fashion based on the ever-changing marketplace. One example is packing more workforce into less space and the work-loading process, plus social networking to reinforce their value.

What do you believe makes for a good working relationship with customers?
Understanding their business, having strong relationships, being clear on what the needs are and good communication and follow up.

How would you describe your management style?
I'm a team member as well as a manager. I don't expect my team to go it alone. I am the type of person who pitches in to ensure the work gets done when needed. At the same time, however, I make sure that people are able to complete their jobs to the best of their ability and if they cannot, I work to find a solution to help them. I'm a good listener, and I am always ready to listen to my team when they experience problems and need help.

What tips do you have for employee retention?
My tips include the following:

- Foster an environment of accountability that empowers each team member.
- Remember that nothing can replace “thank you.”
- Find out about employees’ hobbies, favorite sports teams, family, etc.
- Develop an “attitude of gratitude.”
- Recognize everyone, and make it sincere and timely.

What do you think makes for a good corporate culture?
To have a good culture, you have to commit to leading the way. Be responsive to the needs of your employees, and provide ongoing development that relates to their positions. Also, give honest feedback.

Are there any technologies you use in your job day-to-day?
We use our devices to stay connected as well as our iPads to FaceTime with remote team members and bring a virtual experience to our customers. We also use Salesforce.com to manage our business opportunities.

What is the best piece of advice you’ve received in your career?
Give 100 percent every day, believe in yourself and treat others as you would want to be treated.