Q & A with Board Member Brad Klein, CBSE:

“To Be a Good Business Leader, You Must Be Definite and Firm”

Brad Klein, CBSE, president of Building Professionals of Texas Janitorial Service and BSCAI board member, has been in the BSC industry since 2001. Read on to see his perspective on leadership, what he thinks is the best quality in employees and the most important thing he learned in the business.

What advice do you give building service contractors in acclimating to a changing economy and new trends?

I do not have to give them any advice. If they do not acclimate to changes in the economy, then they will not be in business long enough to heed the advice. But for those that listen, I tell my management to watch our clients’ industries. Read the business journals and the newspapers. If we can notice things and come to our client with it before they come to us, then we become a much more valuable and indispensable resource to them.

What are some of the trends that you are noticing?

After attending an incredible convention with an outstanding trade show, I would say the two biggest trends I noticed were the move to automation and green, as well as the adaptation from janitorial services to facility maintenance companies.

What are some of the challenges?

Downward pricing during these tough economic times and turnover in the client side employee base. It becomes a bit of a challenge to form quality relationships if they have a revolving door on their end.

What are some of the legislative happenings that you think BSC professionals should be aware of?

I do not believe these have changed for a while. It is still immigration, living wages and health care. The one trying to sneak up on us is the union organization work that is being orchestrated by the current organization. That may not be a big issue in certain parts of the country, but in Texas, it could become a huge problem.

What would you say is the most important lesson you’ve learned in the business?

Lead and listen. Put down your phone. Quit texting. Ignore your email. It’s our job as business owners to lead the company and present them the big picture. If you want them to go to battle for you, you must show them that you are willing to fight for them as well. I will cancel an account if I feel the client is being overly unfair to a member of my team.

Describe your management style.

I run a benevolent dictatorship. One thing with being a leader is that the decision making rests solely on your shoulders and you have to live with the consequences of your decisions. You may have a great team, but they are not going to make the decisions for you. All they are going to do is render advice. To be a good business leader, you must be definite and firm in your decision. You must also be quick in making your calculations and arriving at a conclusion.

What is the most important quality in an employee?

Balance—you can take any characteristic too far. There’s a point at which attention to detail can become obsession or calm can become unemotional response. As a manager, they need to be able to balance these characteristics, getting the most of them without going over the edge. You also have to decide how to balance your work and home life.

What tips do you have for employee retention?

The golden rule: Treat others as you wish to be treated. We succeed as a team and fail as a team. We were named as one of the 100 fastest growing businesses in Houston for the fifth year in a row. One member of my sales team started talking about how great our sales were. I had to remind them that we do not grow if our operations team does not keep the business.

What has been the greatest takeaway from your membership in BSCAI?

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, it’s the relationships. I have met some brilliant people and everyone one of them has been willing to pass on whatever information I might need. I have taken that information and built my business, and now I try and pass that information on to others as well.

What book are you reading now?