John Reed, Betco, Discusses Sustainability in the BSC Industry

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Betco Director of Training and Sustainability John Reed believes that one of the biggest opportunities for the BSC industry lies within the ability for more companies to incorporate greener and more efficient practices in its everyday operations. Read more to learn what Reed says are the steps a business should take in becoming sustainable, as well as the biggest misconception about going green.

How long have you been in the cleaning industry?

I have been in the cleaning industry since 1976. My experience ranges from distributor street sales person to vice president of sales, to chief operations officer for a distributor — to my current role as director of training and sustainability at Betco. I have been with Betco for 27 years. During that time, I have also served as VP of sales and VP of national distribution.

How does Betco provide innovative solutions for its customers?

With our focus on specific product and market segments — we know we can’t be all things to all people. We have an active R&D department that utilizes relationships with suppliers, our sales force, our marketing department, and our distributor and end-user partners. If a new idea fits into one of our core competencies and will save our customers time, labor and money, as well as enhance health and the environment, we will aggressively pursue the opportunity. One of our
corporate goals is to have more than 30 percent of our volume from products and programs introduced within the last five years.

**What prompted your interest in green cleaning and sustainability?**

Betco has been actively involved in the idea of green since 1990 with the introduction of our Green Earth dispensing system. Our Sustainability Statement is based on the “triple bottom line” to balance people, planet and profit. Bottom line, it is the right thing to do for now and the future. Personally, I wanted to continue to grow in my professional career and achieved LEED AP and CIMS-GB certifications.

**What steps should BSC business owners take to becoming a sustainable business?**

1) Make a commitment.
2) Involve their entire organization when creating the program — products, equipment, procedures and training.
3) Determine the needs of their customers to be “sustainable.”
4) Communicate successes and changes internally and externally with their customers.
5) Consider becoming CIMS certified and market their company as a customer-centered organization that responds to customer needs.

**What do you think is the biggest misconception about “going green” and being sustainable?**

The biggest misconception is that customers believe that sustainability costs more! People need to evaluate the total cost of sustainability. It is more than just the cost of products but the total effect on the “triple bottom line.” Even if a cleaner costs more per gallon or in use cost but reduces absenteeism, it still could be the least expensive option. People need to evaluate all the potential benefits — water savings, energy savings, public perception, increased morale, less absenteeism, health care costs and worker compensation costs.

**What do you think is the biggest opportunity in the BSC industry today?**

Sustainability is the biggest opportunity. With the introduction of LEED-EB O&M version 4, BSCs will again have the opportunity to market their services as a valuable asset for building owners to achieve credits. This is followed closely by the health care market with tremendous growth potential due to the aging population. Finally, the education market is a viable market
due to governmental budget cuts. In all areas, the BSC can continue to offer a broader range of services including the sale and service of skin care, towels, tissue, liners, matting, etc.

What is your industry outlook for 2014?

Sustainability will continue to be an opportunity for growth. Cleaning for health is definitely another opportunity for growth when taking into account our aging population.

What has been the most challenging experience in your career?

When I first started in sales, I had cold call reluctance. I would take the rejection personally and wanted to avoid that feeling. After talking to successful sales people and reading a few books, I realized the rejection was not based on me; rather it was my product, the customers’ situation or something else entirely. Today I tell young sales people that the cold call is one of the easier calls to make because there is no real pressure. The goal is to introduce yourself, your company and start the discovery process to uncover customer needs. Your sale for this first call is an invitation to come back another time.

How would you describe your management style?

Participative — I ask people their opinions and what they will need to accomplish the task, research the situation and then make a decision and create a plan for implementation. I monitor the results and make appropriate changes after consulting with the team.

What is the best piece of career or personal advice you’ve ever received?

Worry about what you can control. Don’t waste time worrying about things we have no influence over. If you work hard and smart, good results will follow.

When hiring, hire a person with a good work ethic. You can teach them to work smarter, but you can’t teach a person to work.

Ask the customer what they want and need — don’t tell them what you want to sell them.