Mark Herbick, Pursant, LLC, Shares Insight on Hiring Executive Talent for Your Firm

Name: Mark Herbick
Title: Founder and CEO
Company: Pursant, LLC

Mark Herbick, founder and CEO at Pursant, LLC, began his career in the building service contracting industry when he acquired a $4 million cleaning company in 1996. He said that he grew the firm through follow-on acquisitions and managed organic growth. Though that is what he describes as his true start in the BSC business, his first real exposure to the janitorial industry was as a teenager buffing floors at the Playboy building in Chicago. "I am certain that my productivity was pretty low at that location," he said.

Now, with more than 25 years of experience under his belt, Herbick owns and operates a leading professional service firm dedicated to the facility services sector. Read on to see what changes he’s seen in the industry since his days as a building service contractor as well as his ideas on what BSC owners should look for when hiring executive talent.

Why did you decide to start Pursant?

As a BSC operator, I found it difficult to find professional service firms that knew the janitorial sector and other facility service industries. Other industry peers, including myself, needed a firm that could provide white-collar services for blue-collar companies. Due to the lack of these firms, my company started to become internally proficient at buying and selling companies and sourcing talent. After selling my operating companies, I decided to use my owner/operator experience and my learnings from higher education universities like Harvard, Northwestern and the University of Chicago as the knowledge and experience foundation to form Pursant. By surrounding myself with a talented team, we fill the professional service firm void in the facility services sector.

Before becoming a professional service provider, you were a BSC. What have you seen change in the BSC industry since you’ve become a service provider?

Since I first became a BSC, I have seen many things change in the industry. There has been an increasing demand by the marketplace for a higher level of professionalism and expertise from a BSC. You can no longer compete and grow by simply telling the market your company is a “good company.” Green Certified, CIMS Certified, CBSE, RBSM, etc., are just some of the accomplishments you will need to build credibility as a true professional BSC. In addition, the complexity of
onboarding an employee has increased immensely. It used to be that hiring an employee was as simple as an application, I-9 and W-4. Now it’s all of that in addition to a number of various releases, background checks and increasing work authorization requirements. Additionally, the labor pool has become much more litigious than it used to be 20 years ago.

What should BSC owners look for when hiring executive talent?

Finding the right executive talent can be as elusive as finding the right life partner. Aligning resumes to job descriptions is easy. Before you can begin sourcing someone to be part of your leadership team, you must first understand yourself, your management style and your company’s culture. Making a fit with these elements determines whether someone’s success is portable to your organization or not.

How should BSCs prioritize finding and keeping new talent and running their business?

Jack Welch said that a third of his time is dedicated to sourcing talent. In business and especially a service business, the single largest barrier to success is talent deficiencies. If you have the right leaders in your organization, you can spend less time working “in” the business and more time working “on” the business.

In your opinion, what are some key traits a leader should possess?

It depends on who you ask, but here are the most common top leadership traits I hear from CEOs around the world:

- Must be able to engage people and hold people accountable
- Have good communication skills
- Be a team player
- Be able to collaborate effectively
- Be adaptable
- Deal with ambiguity
- Drive and lead culture
- Seek positive and negative feedback

How would you describe your management style?

My management style is very chameleon-like. It changes with the prevailing circumstance. A good leader knows how to move between variations of an autocratic and permissive management style depending on who they are managing and the situation at hand.
What is your personal approach to customer service?

I have a couple thoughts on customer service. First, you must choose a customer that you are capable of servicing well. In a desperate attempt to grow top-line revenue, many businesses take on customers that do not align with what the company is best at. You try to please everyone and end up pleasing no one. Second, once you have a customer, it is not enough to simply provide the contracted scope of work. Customers’ needs are ever-changing, and many times they don’t know what they need. You must maintain an intimate relationship with your customers so that as their needs evolve, your service evolves with them. Otherwise, you run the risk of becoming obsolete.

What is the best piece of advice you’ve received in your career?

Do what you are passionate about and you will never have to “work” a day in your life.