Michael Jenkins, CleanTelligent, Talks Growing up a BSC

Name: Michael Jenkins
Title: President & Owner
Company: CleanTelligent Software

It’s not every day that you hear a story about a 23-year-old becoming president of a company, but this is the case for Michael Jenkins, president and owner of CleanTelligent Software. Jenkins spent most of his entire life in the building service contracting business, following in his father’s footsteps, and rising quickly in the ranks. A lot has changed for him since then. Read on to see how his career evolved and what he thinks a service provider should consider when trying to gain new business and retain clients.

How did you get your start in the BSC industry?

I have been in the BSC industry for more than 30 years. It has been my life. My father had nine children and owned several cleaning companies to supplement his income from working for our church. He got started in the cleaning industry in 1971 after discovering that there was money to be made in this industry. I got involved [at a young age] and even quit sports to work for my dad. I was uncomfortable hiring and firing people and bidding at such a young age, but it gave me some great experience.

I became the vice president of our cleaning company at age 18, then president at 23. We started franchising in the 1990s where we helped others start their own cleaning businesses. In 1993, we sold our cleaning company in Kansas City, which was grossing more than $2.3 million, and moved to Utah, where I started another cleaning company. Again, we helped others start their own cleaning businesses and quickly became the fourth largest in Utah.

Why did you decide to leave your commercial cleaning business and focus on developing the CleanTelligent software?

While running our cleaning company in Utah, our niche became a log book we would put in each account that would be a direct communication between franchise owners and our clients. We thought this was the best thing ever. Well, it turned out to be the worst thing ever. The communication between the franchisee’s cleaners and the clients were not professional and sometimes not at all due to language barriers. And it kept us out of the loop. So, with our amazing growth in a short time, we started to have quality control problems and lose business. We had to do something different.
I had a friend in the software industry and asked him to help. We started creating an online client communication portal for our customers. As soon as we gave this to our customers, our client retention increased by 300 percent, and our sales quadrupled with this new niche we had. In 2003, we decided to split the company into a software company and a cleaning company, totally separate from each other. We now have thousands of CleanTelligent users in seven countries in four languages, and we have more than 46 personnel working for us.

**What are some of the benefits of using janitorial software in the BSC business?**

The biggest benefit is winning new business. It helps differentiate companies from competition and helps them win business because of the benefits it offers their customers. CleanTelligent helps their customers increase revenue, save money, increase productivity and give them pain relief. Some more benefits include increasing productivity and client retention.

**What should a service provider consider when trying to gain new business and retain clients?**

A service provider can gain new business and retain clients in two major ways: by providing good benefits to their customers and showing those benefits to their prospects, and by being able to differentiate themselves from their competition in terms of those benefits.

The “5 P’s” of benefits are: profit, prestige, pleasure, pain relief and preservation. Anything a cleaning company can do to provide benefits to its customers helps with new business and client retention. In a recent presentation, I discussed the difference between features, advantages and benefits. Cleaning companies must transition how it provides and explains its services in terms of benefits, instead of features and advantages, in order to gain new business and retain clients.

**What is your personal approach to customer satisfaction?**

My personal approach to customer satisfaction is the main reason why we developed CleanTelligent software. Client retention and subsequent sales depend on the level of current customer satisfaction. A cleaning company must always be available (through automation processes), must prove performance (through tracking and reporting), and must have all issues resolved (through effective communication and surveys) in order to protect its accounts from competition.

**How would you describe your management style?**

My management style is to organize, delegate, motivate and train. It is what I learned in my youth, and it has served me well through all of my business growth. Our core management team meets weekly for accountability, collaboration and training. We trust our people, give them room to be creative and reward them well. We also have a strategic excellence position and mission statement, along with a vision statement with goals that drive our daily activities and decisions.
What book are you reading right now?

Our company management team reads books together and shares ideas each week in our meetings. We just finished “Crucial Conversations” by Kerry Patterson, and we are now reading “Indispensable by Monday” by Larry Myler. Both books have given us great insight to how we can improve ourselves and improve our company.

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

There are really two pieces of advice that have really helped me in my companies — “Handle a piece of paper/email once,” and “Take care of the people, and they will take care of the mission.”