Ron Segura Talks Disney, Customer Satisfaction and Growing Up in the Business

Name: Ron Segura  
Title: Consultant & President of Segura & Associates  
Company: Segura & Associates  
Quote: “I have always felt that the day when our children tell us that when they grow up, they want to be in the janitorial business – and we do not feel that we have failed as parents – then we will have arrived as an industry! I think we have arrived!”

With 46 years in the industry, it’s safe to say that Ron Segura, consultant and president of Segura & Associates, knows a thing or two about building service contracting. Having grown up in the industry working with his father cleaning bars on the weekend, Segura found his career niche at an early age. He said, “I really credit [my father] with developing one of the first incentive-based programs. He did not pay me, but he said that any money I found on the floor, I could keep! I found that the cleaning industry was a good way to make extra money. I have never left.”

Check out this month’s Executive Insights with him to see his tips for consulting success, why education is still important to him and the lessons he took away from his time at Disney.

You spent a good number of years as a manager of janitorial/document services for Walt Disney. How would you describe that experience?

The years I spent at Disney reinforced to me that many of the ideas and processes that I used working for people in the contracting side of the business, and were not accepted as good practices, worked! I started managing 96 in-house janitors, and 10 years later, I was managing more than 4.5 million square feet of outsourced services and 107 janitors. I managed a department in charge of storing more than 6,000 boxes of documents, storage of all original scripts for all Disney companies and oversaw a copy center that produced more than 2 million copies a month. Prior to leaving, I had the opportunity to be a member of six strategic sourcing teams. I also had the opportunity to develop people working for me to the extent that several were promoted when I left.
The best lesson learned was that as management, we always need to know the abilities of our staff. Identify those who have a desire to move up and provide them the tools to achieve their goals. Create that type of environment, and you will have a great organization.

**When did you start Segura & Associates?**


**What is the best piece of advice that you’ve ever received?**

When I left Disney and started my company, I received this back-handed advice from two other consultants: “Stay at Disney. [People better qualified] than you have tried to be consultants and failed!”

**What are some tips you have for working successfully as a consultant in this industry?**

First, be knowledgeable of the needs of the industry. Second, each organization has a different personality, so be adaptable. Third, be a contributor to the advancement of our industry and have fun. Lastly—network, network, network!

**How do you manage the relationships of the international network of facility management associates you work with?**

Being a monthly and semi-monthly contributor to two magazines in the UK and one in Australia has created the need for more use of the latest technologies. Email, conference calls and Skype are used a lot. A few years back, I created the “Janitorial Management Group” on LinkedIn (40,003 members) and this is now another way to keep in touch.

**When working with a client, what do you do to ensure optimal customer satisfaction?**

First, I make sure that they are solving and completing all customer requests or complaints. Second, is there a follow-up procedure with the customer? I want to know how often the customer is visited, because if your competitors are contacting your customers more than you are, then obviously you will not have that customer for very long. [I also like to] ascertain if the BSC knows the difference between customer service and customer satisfaction.

**What do you think is one of the most important trends right now in the building service contracting industry?**

I would say the development of both sustainable cleaning programs and programs that offer multiple services. Prospective customers need to achieve sustainable goals and reduce facility costs by single sourcing multiple services and/or locations.
It is very important to at least have a green cleaning program, but even more important to address sustainability initiatives of the market. It is not enough to have just a green cleaning program, which is only a part of a sustainable program. I encourage all my clients to not only become a member of their local U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) chapter but also get involved with it!

**As a founding member of Tripod Learning Associates, how important do you think it is for BSCs to continue learning? How do you suggest they go about gaining that new knowledge?**

Tripod was formed by Dick Ollek, David Holly and I to fill a need that was lacking in our industry. Training needs to be state of the industry and taught by individuals that know the business and will not just teach theory. BSCAI is on track, listening to the needs of its members, and I would encourage new and past members to reexamine what is now being offered.