Q & A with Board Member Scott Stevenson

Scott Stevenson, president and CEO of KleenMark in Madison, Wis., grew up learning about and working in the commercial cleaning and facility supplies distribution businesses. In 1994, he became president of KleenMark, a company started by his father. Continue reading to see what Stevenson thinks about the importance of employee experience and “proving it.”

What are some current trends you’ve noticed in the BSC industry?

Green cleaning is continuing to grow in importance. A growing number of facility managers are interested in partnering with BSCs to help them meet their environmental goals. Another significant trend is benchmarking performance against industry best practices. This “prove-it” model has become critical to building and maintaining strong customer relationships.

How do you think BSCs should position themselves so that they can better address the growing number of facility managers who want to be “green”?

It is important to understand what it means to be “green” in our industry. BSCs need to educate themselves so they can be a strong resource for their customers. It’s critical to use green cleaning methods, as well as possess expert knowledge of environmentally preferable products. In addition to helping customers meet their environmental goals, BSCs should build and support a corporate culture that embraces reducing its own environmental impact.

How important do you think it is to perform according to best practices?

We are in a competitive industry where many customers are looking for outstanding results—at a lower price tag. By performing according to best practices, a BSC can provide superior quality, while increasing productivity and efficiencies. This brings great value to customers.

So what do you consider as some of the challenges in the BSC industry?

People, people, people. Finding quality, professional managers, sales representatives and administrative staff is critical to a company’s success. It is often a time-consuming and difficult process to find the right people for the right job. Turnover is also an issue that continues to affect BSCs.

How are you working to address that in your company?

One of our 2011 initiatives is to enhance the “employee experience.” We are developing a task force comprised of our top managers and supervisors to seek ways to motivate and inspire our cleaners, as well as improve productivity. We also offer all-employee BBQs, supervisor appreciation events, bonuses, referral incentives, Employee of the Month awards, Employee of the Year awards, holiday lunches for our corporate staff and more. Our goal is to build relationships with all of our employees and create a culture of appreciation.

Aside from working to enhance the employee experience, how would you describe your management style?

I believe in rewarding my employees verbally, financially and by giving them more independence. Making sure my employees know they are contributing to the success of the company is important to me—it keeps the stream of creativity flowing.

What is your approach to leadership within your company?

My approach to leadership is to offer ample and strategic guidance to my team, allowing them to become leaders themselves. I want to empower my team to be innovative and creative problem solvers—success will follow.

What do you think is the most important lesson that you’ve learned in the business?

Building strong relationships with your customers and employees is the only way to success. Our growth is possible through impactful referrals from current customers and a low employee turnover rate. This business is all about growing and maintaining strong relationships.