When Terry Sambrowski started her career at National Service Alliance (NSA) in 2001, she said that she didn’t have experience in the building service industry. “What I did bring to the table was diverse experience from other industries and a vast interest to learn all I could about the building service industry. This is not the first time I went into a field with no experience. Finding long-time careers in fields where I have no experience just seems to be how I operate.” Now, one of her favorite parts of her job is meeting with BSCs and working with them on different levels. Read on to learn what trends Terry sees in the industry and what she learned from the challenges she’s faced in her career.

“\textit{I always enjoy meeting new building service contractors at different events to learn what their hot buttons are.}”

\textbf{As VP / executive director at NSA, what are your responsibilities, and how do you interact with building service contractors?}

I oversee all the day-to-day operations of the NSA and report back to the owners. I am responsible for the financial projections of the company and then making it happen. That includes everything from hiring and training staff, to the daily interaction and problem solving. I do interact with our BSC members at different events or if they reach out to me with a question. I always enjoy meeting new BSCs at different events to learn what their hot buttons are.

\textbf{What are some trends that you’re seeing in the building service contracting industry?}

New technologies for one; there are so many tools to help BSCs become smarter and more efficient, such as using smart devices for timekeeping, GPS tracking of employees, and alerts when a site is short-staffed are instrumental in keeping customers satisfied and payroll costs down. I’d say another is education. When I first started in the cleaning industry, everything was a big secret. Now, people are willing to share their knowledge and help to teach others. This is great because we can all learn from someone else.

\textbf{Fact:} Terry has been at National Service Alliance for 13 years.

\textbf{Fact:} Some of Terry’s hobbies include reading, learning about wine and making pottery.

\textbf{Name:} Terry Sambrowski  
\textbf{Title:} VP, Executive Director  
\textbf{Company:} National Service Alliance
How do you drive innovation at NSA?
By listening. I want to hear what others are doing and why, and then see if I can use it somehow.

How would you describe your management style?
Circumstances are always changing, so you have to be flexible. I like to lay out expectations and see what people will do with them. They often exceed when given the freedom to make a solution their own. I strongly believe in self-management and achieving the final goal, not so much how you got there.

What do you think makes for a good company culture?
Open communication and a comfortable place to work with all the necessary tools at your disposal.

What has been the most challenging experience in your career?
The biggest challenge was when things started to take off, and I could no longer do everything myself. This is a big issue for any growing company. I don’t think I handled it so well at first. I hired people based on skills alone and not whether they were a good fit, attitude and personality-wise. I was so intent on getting people on board, I rushed the decision.

How did you handle it?
Now I understand how important it is to not rush a decision. If you don’t meet the right candidate for the job, just wait a while — the right person will come along. We have a great team now, and I am happy that I learned to wait it out. I also got some input from a third party that did not have the emotional attachment, which was a big help.

What is the best piece of advice you’ve received in your career?
Make a recommendation. I like to ask for others’ opinions or suggestions, but when dealing with a large group, it is a much quicker process to make a recommendation and get consensus. It certainly changed the way I operate, and it can speed the process along.

What book are you currently reading?
I read many books — fiction, mysteries, cooking and “self-help” books. What I love is that whether I am reading to escape the brain drain, or if I am learning a better way to communicate, I always learn something. My favorite phrase is “focus on the solution, not the problem,” which came from a fictional series written by Terry Goodkind.