

Building a dream workforce



BY MARK MAYBERRY

I've worked extensively in the green industry, and hear one comment over and over from green industry professionals: "How do I motivate my team? How can I get them to take ownership?"

Taking ownership is more than just words on paper or a badge. On my way to a speaking engagement, I went into a convenience store in Illinois. As I walked up to the counter, I noticed that the sales clerk had on a badge that said, "I'm an owner!"

"Shazam!" (Since my last name is Mayberry, "Shazam" fits!) Here was a company that understands my concept of team members taking ownership! I looked at the clerk and excitedly asked, "What does that badge mean?"

The clerk looked at me, looked down at the badge, looked back up at me and said, "I don't know. They just told me I had to wear it." Not exactly the response I was looking for!

To build a dream workforce, you must get your team to think and act like entrepreneurs WITHIN your organization. They must take ownership.

Here's my definition for an "entrepreneur within an organization." Entrepreneurs are enterprising, Customer-focused risk takers, who don't know how to think small, hold themselves accountable for everything they do, make work fun for themselves and everyone else, and keep learning until the day they die.

Let's analyze that definition, one part at a time:

Enterprising. Every sports turf professional understands that "profit" is a good thing. Every one of your team members must realize that their job is part of a bigger picture, and that picture is funded by a profitable organization.

Customer-focused. You may have noticed that I capitalized the word "Customer" in my definition. Customers deserve all the attention we can give them. In my book, "Building the Dream Workforce," I talk about a company that puts "Brought to you by our Customers" on the flap of each paycheck envelope. That's who brings you and your team your paychecks—your Customers!

There are two types of Customers, Internal and External. The Internal Customers are your team members. How you treat them helps them understand how to treat your External Customers, the ones responsible for your paychecks! Treat your Internal and External Customers with respect, appreciation, and responsiveness—with plenty of Shazam!

Risk takers. To improve, you must get your team to change. Not for the sake of change, but to break out of your comfort zones. Your team probably resists change, but you must get them to try new things.

always seeking improvement. If change did not happen, we'd still be pulling a mowing device behind a mule.

Don't know how to think small. A group of retired rental industry professionals was invited to speak at an industry event. Each of the four panel members on this panel had run a very successful rental company. The discussion was terrific, as each panel member answered questions from the moderator and the audience. The last question was the most important question of the night, and the moderator wanted each panel member to give an independent answer, not one that was based on what his or her fellow panel members said. So, each panel member wrote his or her answer on an index card. The question: "What is the biggest mistake you made in business?" Without seeing each other's answers, every panel member had exactly the same answer! "I did not think big enough!" Is your team thinking "big enough?"

Hold themselves accountable for everything they do. There is a fine line between "blame" and "accountability." I have clients in a wide variety of industries and I usually find too much blame, and rarely find enough accountability. Everyone must be held accountable. There is no room for blame.

Make work fun for himself or herself and everyone else. Are you having fun? Is your team? Working with nature must be terrific; however, any job has moments that are not fun. As a leader, you must make sure that your team is having fun. Not to the point that work doesn't get done, but so that everyone is more productive by having a smile on their face.

Keep learning until the day they die. Most of your workforce looks just like I did when I graduated from high school (and college)—bored of education! It took me years to realize how important it is to be a lifelong learner. About 15 years after I graduated from college, a business partner gave me a set of tapes about negotiation skills. I did not want to listen to the tapes for two reasons. First, I did not want to spend time listening to a series of business tapes because I knew I would be bored to death. Second, I already knew everything I needed to know about negotiation. But since my partner had spent \$70 on the tapes, I listened. To my amazement, the tapes were fun and educational. And I did NOT know everything about negotiation. I heard things that my New York and Los Angeles vendors were using on me that I was not even aware of! How can you get your team to be life-long learners and have fun doing it?

Your crew could be the best place to work in town. By teaching your team how to act and think like entrepreneurial thinkers and doers, you will build a dream workforce. Recruiting and retaining team members will become easier, as this entrepreneurial culture grows. And you won't need a badge to prove it!

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LONG-LASTING GENERATOR

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Visitor

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The TEMPbadge Time Dependent ID prevents unauthorized re-use because it changes color automatically, going from white to red when it has expired. These badges might help you control ID badges for visitors, vendors, contractors, or temporary employees.

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