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contractor of the year

Editor's Choice: 2004 Contractor of the Year

BY JOHN MESENBRINK,
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After much deliberation, the editor's choice for the *Plumbing & Heating Contractor News* 2004 Contractor for the Year goes to Nebrasky Plumbing, Heating & Cooling, Monroe, N.Y., located in the Hudson Valley. The selection was based on criteria such as business growth, best business practices, successful marketing campaigns, customer service and employee morale.

Growing a business — Paul Nebrasky took over his father's ailing one-truck plumbing business in 1988 and built it up successfully over the years. Nebrasky Plumbing grew slowly at first, gaining its first employee in 1990. It picked up speed, however, in 1997 when Paul decided to add air conditioning installation to his list of services. Soon after, Nebrasky took the plunge into growing the business, joining QSC and several other building associations, and adding a new construction division. While trying to grow a prosperous business, Paul began to notice that several of his clients had questions and concerns about the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO).

With no other company in his area trained in CO detection and repair, in 1998, after nearly ten years of running the business, he decided to take on the challenge himself and implemented training and certification for each of the company's service technicians and staff.

Today the firm employs 37 technicians and has 22 trucks. In the new millennium, Paul continues



Paul Nebrasky

to grow the firm through the introduction of new, innovative home care products and services, such as the Nebrasky Home Generator. Membership in the Nebrasky Home Care Club continues to grow as more and more families in the Hudson Valley rely on Nebrasky Plumbing, Heating & Cooling for their home comfort needs.

"Our marketing clearly states our points of difference— the things that make us special and different and sets us apart from the competition. One of our important points is our bright blue booties that all our techs wear to keep our customers' homes clean..."

Nebrasky's business philosophies are solid and are implemented daily. The blueprint of running and growing a successful business can be gathered by listening to Nebrasky talk about these said practices.

Nebrasky stresses that a business will grow if it offers a unique, interesting product line that solves problems — like the instant hot water system and the home generator system. And, a business operator must combine the product line with excellent service. "Everyone claims it, but at Nebrasky, we do it and are known for it. We let our target audiences

know about all this through consistent, interesting, often fun-filled marketing," said Nebrasky.

Sales training — The importance of putting employees through sales training is so they can communicate the values of your business. Nebrasky believes in spending

money in sales training and this, in turn, will translate into a successful marketing campaign. "If you drive leads into the business, but your staff does not turn these leads into sales and provide excellent service, you are wasting your marketing dollars," stressed Nebrasky.

"When trained well, employees can professionally articulate the features and benefits of your unique product line and turn interest into sales." Good training also helps to stem turnover, often a problem in the plumbing and heating industry.

Nebrasky uses an outside expert, Robert Sinton of The Training Center in Conshohocken, Pa., to conduct sales training so that all of the sessions are current and the company can take advantage of all his experience across different disciplines.

Also, Nebrasky Heating & Plumbing is looking to take its business to the next level by currently working on implementing the FISH! program by the Charthouse Learning Corp. FISH! institutes some simple concepts in which companies should abide — choosing your attitude, being there for customers and each other, making their day and playing.

The FISH! Philosophy is a global phenomenon that is helping thousands of organizations in 28 countries become alive, engaged and more profitable. Companies like Target, Chevron, AT&T, Ford Motor Co. and Southwest Airlines are using the FISH! Philosophy to transform their workplace cultures as the experiences they offer their customers.

ChartHouse Learning is on a constant journey to discover new sources of wisdom, sometimes in unlikely places, that awaken people to live into their full human potential. To illuminate that wisdom, they create inspiring films and learning resources. ChartHouse then shares these creations to help build a community committed to lifelong learning and stewardship.

One of many successful FISH! Stories, Seattle's World Famous Pike Place Fish is an otherwise ordinary fish market that's extraordinarily prosperous. The work is hard and the hours are long—yet these employees make a personal choice to bring amazing passion, playfulness, commitment and a posi-



Employees and technicians of Nebrasky Plumbing, Heating & Cooling

Nebraska Plumbing recognized as 2004 Contractor of the Year

tive attitude to work every day, thanks to the FISH! philosophies.

Running successful advertising campaigns (print & TV) — Professional marketing gives Nebraska a professional image. “Our marketing clearly states our points of difference — the

Nebraska stresses that a business will grow if it offers a unique, interesting product line that solves problem- like the instant hot water system and the home generator system. And, a business operator must combine the product line with excellent service.

things that make us special and different and set us apart from the competition. One of our important points of difference is our bright blue booties that all our techs wear to keep customers’ homes clean — our marketing always includes the tag line ‘Just gotta love those booties!’ And, ‘Peace of mind is one call away,’” said Nebraska.

Marketing needs to be consistent. Ad campaigns run in the same papers on an ongoing basis — with product ads during peak season and smaller top of mind awareness ads during off seasons.

Additionally, it is important to use a media mix



to reach prospects through electronic media (e.g. cable TV) as well as print. Nebraska chooses TV stations to reach his target audience (fixed spots on Trading Places, HGTV, Lifetime and Cable News during the presidential campaign).

The company also issues press releases to local papers, which keeps the company name prominent because even the smallest blurb carries the credibility of the newspaper.

QSC membership — According to Nebraska, p-h-c contractors across the country should belong to QSC because of the constantly changing business challenges that they face. QSC, founded in 1994, is an international association that serves plumbing, heating and cooling contractors, offering members state-of-the-art technical and business management training to enable contractors to better serve their clients.

“QSC strives to help its members run their businesses more effectively and efficiently,



increasing profitability, enhancing image and improving client relations,” said Clint Andrews, segment business specialist-HVAC, Grundfos Pumps Corporation. “As a premium supplier of the most advanced pumps and the broadest, deepest, product line in small circulators, we value the opportunity

to educate this outstanding group of decision makers about the advances being made in pump technology.”



QSC members benefit from its Business Management Coaching, Peer Group Programs (featuring networking and mentoring support), Fast Trac Plumbing Technician Continuing Education Program, the

Q-list, which allows members to canvas other QSC members for new ideas, QSC webinars (Internet-based seminars) and its newsletter, *The Advisor*.

Paul began to notice that several of his clients had questions and concerns about the dangers of carbon monoxide. With no other company in his area trained in CO detection and repair in 1998, he decided to take on the challenge himself and implemented training and certification for each of his service technicians and staff.

“It is difficult for any one person or company to keep on top of everything that they need to. This goes back to the saying, ‘there is strength in numbers.’ QSC as an association can certainly provide more to its members than just about any one individual or business could do on their own,” said Nebraska.

Establishing good relationships with manufacturers — “Manufacturers are our partners. Not only do they provide us with state-of-the-art products, good terms, on-time delivery, etc., they are often willing to partner in our marketing through coop advertising dollars. They provide reliable brand names, that combined with the Nebraska name, known for

Top employee training, customer satisfaction net Nebraska success

local service, make a powerful offering,” said Nebraska.

Grundfos Pumps, of Olathe, Kan., is a great example. Nebraska Plumbing & Heating prominently features the retrofit Grundfos Comfort Series instant hot water recirculation system in upcoming advertising because the company felt the product is exciting enough to draw new accounts. The system has become an instant add-on sale when technicians are on routine service calls and mention the water-saving, comfort-enhancing benefits of the product.

Attending trade and home shows — “As part of the marketing mix, trade shows give us a chance to reach our target audience in person. Audiences at these shows are often a qualified target audience, looking to buy,” said Nebraska.

Trade and home shows are a good place to introduce new or unique products and to perform demonstrations. “We’ve found great success in marketing the Grundfos instant hot water system by calling attention to the wait for hot water that is common in large homes. This seems to drive traffic and referrals,” added Nebraska.

At the home/trade shows, Nebraska speaks to consumers about solutions to problems they thought were unfixable.

Nebraska Plumbing & Heating was recognized for its versatility, flexibility and ability in business operations. Nebraska excels in business practices, marketing campaigns, customer service and employee morale, which translates into Contractor of the Year. ■



Currently, Nebraska employees 37 technicians and has 22 vehicles, from automobiles to fully equipped trucks.