

Bug Out Service Honors its Customers, Employees and Brand



Curtis Rand knows the success of Bug Out Service has less to do with him and more about the people around him. Last summer he became president of the company, which offers sustainable solutions for termite and pest control, and lawn care services around Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia, and has focused on keeping customers and employees happy alike. The result? A company that continues to successfully grow in sales and reputation. Here, he shares the formula on how Bug Out Service makes it all work.

Q. Tell me how your company has grown in the past 5-10 years and what specific ways have you maintained that success.

A. Bug Out Service has experienced consistent growth over the past 10 years, building on a 52-year commitment to teamwork and family values. Our top priority has always been delivering superior customer service. Partnering with Environmental Pest Service* in 2014 enhanced Bug Out's ability to provide quality customer service. The partnership gave us the bandwidth to hire more employees to expand our service area, and allowed our leadership team to work with other experts from Environmental Pest Service to exchange ideas and best practices.

Our strategy for success is maintaining a balanced combination of organic growth, and mergers and acquisitions. Bug Out has had double-digit growth over the last 12 months — this is a result of focusing on customer service, enhancing brand recognition through community involvement, and expanding to new service areas through strategic mergers and acquisitions.

Q. How do you define success as a business owner?

A. I think there are three ways to measure success.

- 1. Customer retention and growth.** High levels of customer retention are a direct reflection of your customer service, and satisfied customers will refer you to new customers.
- 2. Employee retention and growth.** Employees who are fairly compensated and satisfied with their benefits will want to stay with your company and contribute to its success and increase revenues.
- 3. A suitable profit.** Your main goals should be to keep employees and customers happy, and that will lead to a profitable business. In return, this profit will allow you to continue to grow your customer base.

**Environmental Pest Service (EPS), the parent company of Bug Out Service, recently was included on "Inc. 5000," a list from Inc. magazine of the fastest-growing, private companies in the United States based on revenues from 2011 to 2014 (408 percent increase). EPS also placed No. 6 on Tampa Bay Business Journal's "Fast 50" list and were the only pest control company on the list.*

Q. What's your top three business tips and why?

- A.**
- 1. Know your people.** Frontline employees and administrative staff have the most contact with customers. You need to know what motivates them and how to help them deliver the best possible service.
 - 2. Know your financials.** You should have a deep knowledge of profit and loss, how each revenue stream impacts the bottom line, and which expense line items are in your control. Pass this knowledge to your employees so they understand how their jobs impact success of the entire company.
 - 3. Promote and protect your brand.** Every aspect of your company is important and should always be represented positively. A negative brand reputation can ruin a good company. At Bug Out, we try to connect our brand with local charitable organizations and community groups.

Q. What do you look for when you hire employees?

A. I want employees who are driven and ambitious. Someone who just wants to get a paycheck isn't going to help your company grow. We want employees who are committed to bettering themselves and contributing to Bug Out's success. It's also important that you hire employees who will make a good first impression, and can effectively communicate with the customer, co-workers and supervisors.

Q. How do you distinguish yourself in the industry?

How do you promote your business?

A. Bug Out's philosophy on pricing is a strong differentiator. We try to price our services so they can be a comfortable part of a customer's monthly budget, and not a big-ticket item. As for promoting our business, community involvement is a focus of our efforts. We partner with local causes and organizations that show our commitment to the community. This helps customers form personal relationships with Bug Out when they see that we support causes such as Relay for Life and that our team is passionate about the same things they are.

Q. What do you wish someone had told you before you started your career?

A. Every business is a people business, and building relationships is the key to success. It doesn't matter what industry you are in, you need to be able to work well with people, whether it's coworkers, customers, employees or supervisors.