

The Power of Service: Enhancing Customer Loyalty in Commercial Cleaning

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SPEAKERS

Jeff Carmon, Tim Clagg

Tim Clagg 00:02

Here we go in 54321. Welcome into the Business of Cleaning podcast, your number one source for information on the commercial cleaning industry. We release new episodes monthly live from the janitorial manager studio, located here in Toledo, Ohio. I'm Tim Clagg, the marketing communication specialist here at Janitorial Manager and your host of the Business of Cleaning podcast this month, we welcome in Jeff Carmon, Director of Business Development with Frantz Building Services and coaching as a consultant with elite business coaching. Jeff, it is a pleasure to have you in this month's episode.

Jeff Carmon 00:40

Thanks, Tim. Thank you for the invite. I'm excited to chat with you.

Tim Clagg 00:44

And I know one thing you're certainly excited is I gotta give you kudos. Last month, you're an alum from the University of Tennessee, your volunteers won the College World Series for baseball, I've got to ask, Did you sing Rocky Top when they ended up winning that national championship?

Jeff Carmon 01:01

Yeah, I would say probably a dozen times that night. And then probably two times each day since that time, so my wife is kind of getting tired of it. But yeah, it was a pretty cool deal.

Tim Clagg 01:13

What an exciting time right now for that university. I know football is around the corner. I'm excited and looking forward to that. And I've got to ask too, you have a very, very extensive book collection on display behind you. I've gotta ask the story behind it. Because it is a beautiful piece of what looks like a lot of history.

Jeff Carmon 01:37

Yeah, well, thank you. I wish I could say it was my library. It's here at the office. It's our CEO, Jordan Tong. It's his library. And the bulk of the books that are back there are theology books. Jordan is a young guy that I think is a great theologian. So we have theology books and business books. So we're kind of interested in both those. I have a very, very, probably a 10th of the books. But I like the same thing. Theology and business books is mostly what I read.

Tim Clagg 02:05

Yeah, I'm continuing to add to my personal collection in my library at home, as well. You didn't start out as a young man in this industry. What was your background when you entered the commercial cleaning industry?

Jeff Carmon 02:19

Yeah, so I came from. What's interesting is I came from the medical practice management, career industry. I managed orthopedic practice here in Owensboro. And actually, Frantz Building Services cleaned the building where I was the manager. And so that's a little bit of the connection to Frantz. But I also went to church with Jordan Tong, so I knew him. Prior to that, I worked in a sports ministry, based out of Spartanburg, South Carolina called Upward sports. And then prior to that, I spent about 15 or 16 years in the natural gas industry. And so I guess the common thread, at least on the last, well, I guess, even in the natural gas business, was working in small businesses. When I entered the, when I worked for in the natural gas industry, initially, I worked for a large company. But for the last 25 years, I've worked in small businesses, and I've really, I've grown to love small businesses, there's a lot there that I love.

Tim Clagg 03:15

And that friendship, that networking with the Tong family, as you were mentioning, that allowed you to build a long, trusting long term relationship with Frantz overall.

Jeff Carmon 03:26

That's right. I knew them as the people that they were. And I didn't know that much about the industry, to be honest. And there's things that I've learned that I went, Wow, I didn't know that. But, they're they're fantastic people. They are. And it's just been wonderful to work with them.

Tim Clagg 03:46

For you, What continues to be the driving force personally, that keeps you day in and day out, working in the industry and coming and looking forward to work?

Jeff Carmon 03:59

Yeah, I would say this. And let me go back into different things that I've done in my past. And even my father, my father was a in the utility business, but he always stressed to me how important it is to take really good care of customers, which is kind of unique for somebody in the utility business. But he always instilled that in me and my brother, as we were, you know, coming through college and then into our careers. But the thing I guess that keeps, and then I've also worked at Upward and we did a really nice job, Upward Sports did a really nice job of taking care of customers. And so what I would say is, in this business, I think there's a lot of room to help. One for Frantz Building Services to do a really, really

nice job of taking care of customers. And then secondly, as part of being a part of elite BSC is really helping. And it's a joy to work with other companies who are like minded who are saying, hey, there's a lot of people in this space. There's a lot of companies here it's easy to get into this industry, and some companies they just don't do it that well. But it's really, it's a, I guess, a quest to say, hey, when a customer says, You know what, I've went through a lot of janitorial companies here, but when we got Frantz here, problems seemed to go away. And that's what kind of keeps me going.

Tim Clagg 05:18

Customer service, customer loyalty, that's going to be one of our central themes that we will be focusing on throughout the course of our conversation here today. And there's some simple questions. They may not seem simple, but they really are that every organization, really when they're getting started, no matter whether it's in the commercial cleaning industry, the service industry asking themselves a simple question that is, what is our purpose? What are we here for, as a company? And it's something that a lot of companies necessarily don't put that much thought or effort into. What can you tell us about what you guys have done, because, looking, hearing conversations and looking at your website, your guys' message is pretty powerful. And it's been effective.

Jeff Carmon 06:09

Yeah, and I would tell you this, step back and I'll talk about, there's a book that I read recently that's interesting, it's called winning on purpose, the unbeatable strategy of loving customers. And the author of that book says that there's one and only one purpose for businesses is it creates value for all stakeholders, and that is enriching the lives of customers. And in that book, he talks about kind of the golden rule, you know, in that book, and so I would tell you that I think it's difficult for companies to dig deep, and to say, why is it that we do what we do? Because it requires some thoughtful reflection on that. And I will tell you that here at Frantz Building Services, we spent a number of planning sessions over the years kind of honing this and refining this, and what popped out of that was our mission. And so we had kind of a long mission statement that was hard to remember, and didn't really stick. And then we came up with this. One day, we just came up with this, our mission really is to love and serve well. Love and serve well. And then we developed our core values that are humility and excellence, and integrity, and then being a good steward. And so I would tell you that our core values and our mission are driven by our worldview. And what I mean by that is, is that we understand that we're doing something more here than just providing a good place for people to work and cleaning buildings. What we're doing day in day out, or what we're trying to do is glorify the Lord with our work, we just know that there's a purpose here, behind what we do. And that's really what drives us every day. And so I think it takes stepping back and looking at and doing some reflecting to see those things. And I think that's why sometimes people struggle to get there.

Tim Clagg 07:59

Having that big picture view, what is the big picture? What is the goal of what we do, especially when, for instance, over 500 employees? How difficult can that be to monitor that these values, the mission statement, everything is being passed down to everyone at every level that works for the company?

Jeff Carmon 08:21

Right, yeah. I would say if, if one is easy, and 10 is very hard, it's an 11. It's really hard. I would say that pushing that message down to our cleaners, our line workers and people who do the work each day is extremely difficult. And there's two reasons why. One is our workforce is scattered. We're in three states. And so there's times that we I mean, corporately, we might not ever see an employee or one of our team members. And then secondly, the industry scene is fairly transient, there are people who will come and work, they'll spend some time pay off a bill and they'll go so our entire industry probably, in turnovers, probably averages probably 150%. And we run at about 100%. So we've got a lot of people who are coming through here. But the key I think, is to take that fire, if you will, and that's an image, take that fire and hand it off to the managers and say it's really your job to carry that down to the cleaner. And so I would say the key is spending time hiring the right people who get what you're trying to accomplish and mission and core values, and then investing in them so that they have the right resources and time to carry that message down to the cleaners.

Tim Clagg 09:42

You just mentioned obviously, the turnover. It's something that everybody has dealt with, continuing to deal with. When you have those conversations with possible candidates coming to work for the company. How important is it to kind of understand everybody's roadmap, right? Everybody has different goals, like you just alluded to, maybe they're trying to pay off a certain debt or whatever. Do you guys take that in consideration? And then you guys are giving them tools in the mission statement, and in the company core values. Not only, let's say it's a pitstop that they're taking with them elsewhere to another working environment, or out in the world.

Jeff Carmon 10:26

Yeah, that's right. And again, it goes back to our worldview, and that is we know there's no accidents, we know that everybody that comes to work for us is here, divinely. And so we look at that experience and say, hey, while that person is with us, we want to make sure that they understand that when we say love and serve well, we mean customers, but we also mean employees as much. And so is important to know that and again, as you've said, even if somebody is doing a little a little stop with us for six months, while they pay off a vehicle or fund a college fund or something like that for their kids. It's that we, that our managers, understand that we need to care for that team member, as though they were somebody that's going to stay with us for 25 years. And so yeah, it's important. And I think the other thing is, is understanding that we have all different generations that work here, we have Gen Z's up to baby boomers that work for us. And each one of those generations requires a little bit different approach. The way you talk to them and things that are important to them. And so we take all of that into consideration as well.

Tim Clagg 11:37

And especially too, that reputation, you're withholding it, it's going out there, and they may refer somebody in the future, or they had a great relationship with you guys and want to come back long term. So continuing to sometimes companies don't think about those long term, the big picture, aspect part of things. How would you encourage or what advice would you give somebody, new owner, listening to the show? What strategies would you give them towards achieving this? Because as you said, the conversations they're constant, you may have to, like they say sometimes, check the ego at the door, because there might be some tough conversations in order to get to the goal.

Jeff Carmon 12:27

I think it starts with understanding that most people who were in the job who, especially in the cleaning jobs, they didn't set out to do this, this is, for a lot of people, this is a landing place, maybe they've got something in their background that other people wouldn't necessarily hire them. And so they come to work for us, there are certainly people who like to clean, and this is there is some aspects of the work that we do is put in your air pods and do your work and go home. But I think initially on the front end is having a pretty good idea of what a successful, for lack of a better word, personality. That's going to make a good cleaner. For instance, somebody that's an extrovert, probably not going to turn out to be a great cleaner, people who are more introverted are the folks that are going to be that. So I would say start with thinking through as you're hiring people that are going to be right fit. And then secondly, and most importantly, is that you commit the resources. And when I say resources, have enough field managers to go out and visit these people often. So we've got a ratio of about, for every field leader that we have, they have about 20 people that are under their, I guess under their watch or under their supervision. So that allows them time enough to visit with them at least once a week, and in many cases two or three times a week. And so that custodian or that janitor can feel kind of isolated, when they show up for work, they clock in over a phone, they do their work, they clock out and they get back in their car and they leave. And maybe they're not seeing somebody for two weeks. Well, after a while, they're not connected to the organization as well. And so I guess what I would tell somebody is invest in managers, such that they can get out and connect with team members.

Tim Clagg 14:14

And that's an excellent point because I've heard that in numerous conversations from people in the industry that well, sometimes, like you said, it may be a week or two unless, you know depends on our staffing, if our managers actually having to go and join them at a location and help out in cleaning or other things come up. So that is ultra important. Everyone wants to build long term customers. That's one of the big goals. It doesn't happen overnight. However, if you build customer loyalty, something you guys have achieved and I know you've been talking about a lot. You can certainly achieve those things. And you had a pretty interesting philosophy you said that it's one simple purpose and solution that generates long term prosperity. What is that one? That simple purpose that you tell people?

Jeff Carmon 15:11

Yeah, it's in his book, this guy talks about it. It's enriching the lives of customers. And so what we, a lot of times, I think that it's that we can begin to think about all of the things that we do and how we do things. Like for instance, things like doing inspections, in our industry, we think that's really important, and it is important to do inspections on work. But at the end of the day, the customer really doesn't value, the inspection, what the customer values are three things, and I would say they're all equal. And the first is, they want reduced distractions. They're very busy. And they have a lot of stuff on their plate, and they don't want to be interrupted with things like, hey, there's no toilet paper in the ladies room. So it's reduced distractions, there's peace of mind, I've heard many customers say what I want to do is I want to go home at night, and know that the cleaning companies can come in here and do their job. And the next morning, I'm coming in and all the trash has been emptied, and everything looks nice. And then I think there's a last thing and that is is reputational assurance, that's probably not the best way to say it. But it is that when someone hires us, or any cleaning company, they're kind of putting their neck

out. They're saying, Hey, I have made a decision to bring this cleaning company in. And if it's done well, then people kind of applaud them and say, Hey, good choice. But when it's done poorly, it's a reflection on them. And so we've got those things, as companies, those are the things that we need to strive to do in order to create loyalty. And so we just talk about that a lot. And we spend time talking about that with our managers and talking about how a lot of times we think that we're doing inspections and cleaning buildings and those things, but really, what we're doing is we're giving somebody peace of mind and reducing their distractions.

Tim Clagg 17:02

Absolutely, the last thing somebody wants, especially a father, you're at a dance recital, or Little Billy's baseball game, you get that call, it pops up on the caller ID, you have to take it you have to remove yourself and step away, you could miss out on those crucial key events in children's lives.

Jeff Carmon 17:24

That's right. And it's difficult to get managers in our industry, it's kind of difficult to get people to see that. But really, in any service industry, you have to work hard at getting that message out to say, Hey, today, what we're doing is we're doing some tasks, but see that practice manager, when she leaves and gets in her car and goes home, she doesn't have to worry, she can go home to her family, and spend time with their family. And she knows when she comes in in the morning that the building is going to be cleaned the doctors and the providers and the staff are going to be happy with the way the building looks.

Tim Clagg 17:58

And when you have happy customers that allows you something that sometimes may get overlooked generating more business, from those happy customers. Typically they're more willing to be able to share their experiences with others, which everybody loves those everybody wants to gain and build more customers and more contracts.

Jeff Carmon 18:19

Right. That's right. And loyal customers, just a number of things that flow out of having loyal customers. And you mentioned one, it's loyal customers are generally much more willing to talk about you in a favorable light. I've said from a sales or business development standpoint, There is no tool that is more valuable to me than a list of satisfied customers. I mean, because I can talk a lot about the value we bring and the things that we do. But if you say hey, here's a list of 15 customers, just give them a call. And they'll tell you and so there's that referral piece. The second thing is, is most people if you're doing a good job for them, they'll say, Hey, we've got other things here in the building, that we'd like for you to do project work additional services work. They're more than willing to pay you and pay you well to do that work. I mean, once they know that you're going to do work, they're not as concerned about the price of stripping and waxing floors or or cleaning carpets. I would say the other thing is, is when it comes renewal time and it's time to go to them and ask for a price increase. Again, that loyalty comes into play and they're more willing to do that increase as well.

Tim Clagg 19:28

How have those conversations that you've had? How are those normally perceived? Is there a percentage in your head when you have had conversations when it is renewal time to get those asks whether it's raising your price to meet the demands of customers with everything right now as expensive as it is? How easy or how stressful can those conversations be?

Jeff Carmon 19:56

I would say this, I would say it's a whole lot less stressful when you're servicing them well. And so when the service is mediocre, it's a really difficult conversation because it's you go with the same message, and really, most of the price increases that we're asking for is just to keep up with the wages and give our team members increases. I mean there's some times that we're trying to increase a little bit of margin, but most of the time, it's just to keep up so that we can keep paying our people and pay them a market wage. But I would say this, the conversations are easier when you have spent the time with the customer developing a relationship over time. And we do that one of the ways that we do that, is we do site visits. But then we also do, in most cases, with our large customers, a monthly partnership meeting, and that's just a, hey, we're getting together, we're sharing some things that have went on with our team and things that are coming up. And so we're being proactive with the customer, to say, hey, what are some things that we can improve on? And here's some things that we think we can improve on. So when you kind of line those things up. And then we're pretty transparent with what we're paying our team members. And so we can go in and say, Hey, we're paying our people \$14, \$15 an hour, and we probably need to bump them 2% to 3%. Those are the things that help. And then the last thing I would say is when you go for a price increase, we try to find out when a customer budgeting season is and try to catch them three or four months in advance. There's nothing worse than asking customers for an increase after their budgets done.

Tim Clagg 21:27

Put it on their radar, but that extra layer of communication, so important, you hear sometimes the communication layer slipping through the cracks, that's when things kind of start to happen start to build up, but I love that idea of that monthly meeting with those customers. And you can be aware of let's say, Well, we have a specific event in our location, you guys can be prepared to be extra insightful in your guys' operation for that particular time.

Jeff Carmon 22:03

That's right. That's right.

Tim Clagg 22:04

Everybody's focused on, from a sales perspective, KPIs, but have you seen anyone doing a deeper dive? More extensive research at a deeper level? For customer satisfaction, customer loyalty?

Jeff Carmon 22:21

I would say I see some of it. I think that at least in the in the people that are in our late group, most of those folks are doing some type of a customer survey. We a year or two ago, we started doing the Net Promoter Score, it asked on a scale of zero to ten, how likely are you to recommend us to a colleague, and that gives us really good feedback. It's a survey that a lot of companies use. But I think there's a lot of room in our business to do that. And I think the key is, and we experienced this when we first got our

feedback. So we get our feedback back, and some people didn't rate us as highly as we wanted. And so the initial reaction from the managers was, Oh, they're just a complainer. No, no maybe they are. But let's turn them from a complainer to a raver.

Tim Clagg 23:18

Yes!

Jeff Carmon 23:19

We want them to that cross that bridge. And so I think there's room in our industry to do a bit better job on that. And as a company at Frantz, we're working on that as well.

Tim Clagg 23:32

During our introductory call, you mentioned that your wife works at Chick fil A, and, boy, if I can put anybody on a pedestal right, as far as customer service, customer loyalty, how they continue to be the perfect example of redefining their service. I gotta imagine you guys have had some great conversations, that you've been able to take away items and implement them into practice at Frantz.

Jeff Carmon 24:00

Yeah, yeah, it's been nice to have her and you kind of peek behind the curtain. And you wonder is behind the curtain the same as it is out front because it looks really good out front on stage at Chick fil A. And what you do when you pull this curtain back, you can find it's as good or better. And I would say a couple of things that I've noticed is one they are meticulous with their processes. And so they figured out that if we do these things a certain way, then we're going to have success. And that's why you can go into a Chick fil A in Seattle and go to one in St. Petersburg, Florida. And it's the same experience. We frequent Chick fil A a lot, and I've never really had a bad experience and it's consistent across the board. And then I think the second thing that they do really well is they push that culture down to the end team member and so we all know the phrase that they'll say, "my pleasure." And if you have a family member that works at Chick fil A, they'll say it at home. And my son worked there as well and he says "my pleasure" still.

Tim Clagg 25:00

It's a part of life!

Jeff Carmon 25:01

It is. And it's, what they do is they take the time to say, This is why we say "my pleasure." They don't just say, Hey, say "my pleasure." Here's why, this is our purpose, this is our mission, this is what we're trying to create in terms of a customer experience. And when we say, "My pleasure," it's showing that person, it truly is my pleasure to serve you. And yeah, there's tons of stuff that I've learned from Chick fil A.

Tim Clagg 25:25

The one that gets me it's so easy, right? Sometimes we have a bad day, you would never know it from them. So being able to still service your customers at an ultra high level, is just something I commend them and something that is challenging, whether it's a cleaner who might be having a bad day gets

asked by a manager that's in the location, they're working at something. So there's some opportunities that can help improve in that area as well. Yes you do.

Jeff Carmon 25:58

That's right. And one thing too that I would say that Chick fil A has done very well, and that blends over here is they have determined through customer surveys, I suspect, or I know, and that is they found things that people value when they come to Chick fil A or any restaurant for that matter. And so if you go to Chick fil A, you'll notice that the drive thru can be like a mile long, yet you move through really quickly. And so I had an opportunity to go with my wife down to Atlanta to headquarters, and they've got a mock up drive thru inside a building there and they're all the time playing with that and figuring out how they can do that. And so they found something that's valuable to a mom or a dad or anybody who's coming through there, their time is precious. Let's get them through the drive thru. And so you know, when we think about those things it's, again, I'll go back, it's important to do things like inspections, and it's important to do site visits. But if we can continue to focus our, especially our managers and our cleaners, hey, when that person, when that practice manager or that maintenance manager comes in, it's important that they can hit the deck, they can start their day and not have to go well, I need to go around and check to make sure all the commodes are clean and have to make sure that all the trash was emptied. So it's just pressing upon them that we're delivering this value. And I think, again, I think Chick fil A does that really well.

Tim Clagg 27:22

Jeff, I want to shift gears. You had so much success bringing in millions of dollars yearly in new contracts. What key strategies do you employ to identify and target potential clients in the commercial cleaning industry?

Jeff Carmon 27:40

Yeah. And you said the right word, target. One of the things that we did when I got here is we built out a sales process. And we started it with this question, who do we want to serve? What type of customer did we want to serve? And we kind of narrowed that down into saying, hey, let's look at where they're located. So geography, what size they are, how many people are in the building? And then lastly, what kind of business are they in? So for instance, as a company, when I think about what kind of business you're in, as a company, we found out that we're probably not the best for most governmental agencies, there's a lot of emphasis on price. And as a vendor, we're not that price sensitive. So once we determined what types of customers that we wanted to pursue, and that has changed over the years, and we reflect on that every single year, once we determined who it was that we wanted to serve, the heavy lifting began and the heavy lifting was we've got to create a prospect list. So we've got to do prospecting. And then once we've got those prospects, we need to develop a system to reach out to them and help them find us. So we employ mostly an outbound marketing strategy, but we do some inbound work as well.

Tim Clagg 28:48

One of the most effective ways to identify and approach new markets or industries for commercial cleaning services. I know right there, we were just talking about how you guys kind of pinpointed maybe government agencies, government jobs aren't for us. What kind of things can people do to kind of fast

forward that process and find really, where their company may be best suited for, especially as a smaller businesses, as we've talked about?

Jeff Carmon 29:19

Yeah, yeah, I think one thing is to pull out your customer list or create a customer list, and, you know, Excel spreadsheet and go one column with customers and the next with revenue. And then the next with profitability and just go through your customers with your with your operations folks and say, Hey, which of these customers which of these types of customers, do we feel like that we do really well in or, which are the ones that kind of create challenges for us? And we've got some members in our group who say, hey, we only want to work Monday through Friday, we don't want to work third shift. Well, that kind of defines what type of customer that you're going to serve. So you're probably not going to do maybe large manufacturing facilities, but that's okay. And that's perfectly fine. But the way to do that, I think, is to pull out your customer list and then just talk internally about the type of, what it's going to mean for a company operationally to serve different kinds of customers and just decide on that.

Tim Clagg 30:15

How do you tailor different pitches to different types of clients? So for instance, you're going to pitch a smaller business versus a large corporation, as you alluded to, how does that change from your perspective?

Jeff Carmon 30:29

I would say this, I would say there's not a ton of change in our in our pitch, in that we're always pitching value. So we're always going to go back to those three things I just talked about, we're gonna make you look good. We're gonna give you peace of mind, we're gonna reduce your distractions, whether you're in a small medical office or a large manufacturing facility. But I would say what does change is as we're approaching larger customers, I've got to prove that I've got the resources and the expertise to serve that that particular customer. And so we've crafted different messages. So for instance, if I'm approaching a medical facility, I talk about our experience in the medical industry, and that we know how to do that business. Likewise, in the manufacturing business, I'll talk about the fact that we've got a lot of resources on the ground, we understand the market for team members in that area. And so there's not going to be while there may be some turnover, we've got a good process for fulfilling those positions when they're empty.

Tim Clagg 31:27

We're talking with Jeff Carmon, Director of Business Development with Frantz Building Services and coaching as a consultant with Elite Business Coaching. How do you, how do struggling companies typically fall short in managing client relationships, from what you've seen, from the coaching side of things?

Jeff Carmon 31:49

What I've seen, and it's just, the nature of the business is, there's another really good book, it's called predictable success. And there's a phase that businesses grow through the first phase is early struggle, and that's companies that typically are less than a million dollars in revenue. It's just hard. I mean, your work is done mostly at night. And so you gotta be out at night, and team member drama and team

member turnover, and you know, making payroll, that gets tough, but once you get out of that period, it's fun for a little bit. And that's the next phase, but then that the next thing that comes in is, as you're growing, the complexities of the business like that whitewater tends to happen. And so here's what I would say is people fall short, because of the whirlwind of the business. It's not a conscious effort. It's not I don't care about the customers, it is I'm short, three people tonight and I've got to go out and clean, or we've had this issue that's arisen, and I need to take care of that. So it's, I would say most people fall short, because they don't have time, or I guess just the grind of the day. And then secondly, I would say that there's not a structured customer service or customer service model in place. And and I'll tell you, as a business, we've just really developed that out in the last two to three years it's, you know, what is it that we're going to do in terms of customer site visits and monthly customer meetings? And what are the deliverables that we're going to give to our customers?

Tim Clagg 33:21

Yep, that's what you want to be able to do deliver and check off those boxes in those promises that you are giving your customers. What advice would you give someone new to the commercial cleaning industry that's right now on the cusp of locking in that first big contract?

Jeff Carmon 33:42

Yeah, I would say this. Prior to that is understanding, is having a good idea of what type of customer, what's too big. So for instance, it might be it might be a stretch to go from serving someone, most of your customers are \$1,000 or less and biting off one that's \$50,000 a month. That's probably a big jump, but I think we shouldn't, I would say this, I would go into it with confidence, knowing that there is a lot of companies out there who are smaller who are trying to get in these large accounts. It's not anything that you can't do. It's just on a little bit larger scale. Secondly, I would say is just to seek out people in your community of colleagues, and ask questions. And I think that's just not a pitch. But I think it's one of the beauties of things like BSCAI or Elite BSC, and there's some other really good, I guess, associations or collections of customers where you can ask questions like, hey, how should I price this? And, hey, this is my first manufacturing facility. What are some things that I need to think about? It's just going to people who are in the industry, I think it's one of the great things about our industry is even though we compete, there's a pretty good camaraderie of helping one another.

Tim Clagg 34:56

I would absolutely agree with that. 1,000% Can you share A personal success story where your approach led to a significant contract when and what made it successful?

Jeff Carmon 35:08

Yeah, I talked about we have workshops here, and I talk about this one frequently, because it's kind of interesting. And so our sales process, we approach sales just like we do with the same love and serve well. And so we, I talk about quit selling, start serving. And so from the moment we make a telephone call to prospective customer until we land them and transition them, we're just trying to serve. And so a large corporate headquarters down in Bowling Green, and when I initially reached out to this fella, I called him and I had a chat with him. And he told me, Hey, we're not. the company president here, he's really good friends with the owners of the cleaning company, and we're probably not going to ever make a change. And what was interesting about that, that particular contact's name was Joe Morgan,

which was kind of interesting. As a sports fan, I thought that was kind of cool. So over the course of the next four years, our process is when we in our sales process, we nurture leads. And so by nurturing I write content post it on our website, send out an email and say, Hey, here's an article that we wrote about five things to think about when you're changing vendors or any number of things. And so we sent that and then after four years, I got a bounce back one day, they said, Hey, email to Joe Morgan is not deliverable. And so that gave us an idea that Joe doesn't work there anymore. So we reached out to a different contact. And he said, You know, it's interesting, he said, that the owner was not as loyal to his brand as we thought, and he's willing to make a change, and you've called it at a good time. And so we ended up with them, we still have them as a customer. But the point is, and I think this is important for everybody that's in sales, business to business sales, is a long process, hiring a new cleaning company, there's a lot of inertia not to change, even if the works just being done average. And so just have perseverance and just serve through that process.

Tim Clagg 37:05

That's a great story of, you know, continuing to follow up and prosperity and leading to the finish line. Which was that great win for everybody.

Jeff Carmon 37:17

Yeah, yeah. And just not trying to sell them all the time. It's just hey, I'm out here. I'm glad you have a good vendor, but if you ever want to make a change, I've raised my hand, we'd love to serve you. That's been our approach.

Tim Clagg 37:28

Yeah, and I would say this, it would be nice if those prices increases, or if those wage increases had reduced turnover. increased wages too, one of the continuing topics all over, I'd say the world right now, especially in the commercial cleaning industry, they've been able to raise by about 25 to 30%. In the industry. This is, of course, great for employees. Limiting turnovers we've documented, how far to meet those living costs, and allowing people to come to work to be able to afford basic necessities. Right? What has that done on that scale now? Raising the price for services?

Jeff Carmon 37:47

But I mean, it's documented, there's less people in the workforce. So there's, you know, COVID just pushed a bunch of people out of the work out of the work. So there's less workers to draw from, but pre COVID, I would say just in our general market here in and around Owensboro. And Evansville, we can we can generally hire people for \$10, \$10.50, \$11 an hour, post COVID were \$14, \$14.50, \$15, \$16 an hour. And so we knew that when we came out of COVID, that we were going to have to approach some customers. And we kind of crossed our fingers and said, Well, I hope we served them really well, because we didn't have a great service model at that time. We hope we served them well, so that we go to them for the price increase, they're willing to take it, I would tell you that we were successful in a lot of cases, but not to the extent I mean, when you go from \$10 an hour to \$14 an hour, we just couldn't make that up and the customer couldn't and the customers were great. They said, hey, look, I can take a %4 or 5% increase, but I can't do 15%. And so that's just been a journey for us that we said, you know, we're going to have to in our case, we can't say well, Mr. Customer, if you can give us a price increase, I'm just not gonna be able to serve you as well as I should. So we've just taken a little

less margin and just overtime built back our service level and went back and gotten got those increases as allowed. But there's nobody, there's no customer. There's no business out there that sits around the table and goes, Hey, you know what, I think we ought to spend more money on janitorial services. There's no benefits.

Tim Clagg 37:47

Really? Right. And continuing to work out. Well, Option A isn't on the table anymore. Let's go back to the drawing board and get our minds together and come up with a solution. It's continuing to be able to serve and help everybody To see what and find what they're looking for. Jeff, I think this conversation has been very insightful with your expertise, your knowledge and passion to be able to serve Frantz, your customers, and our listeners today, we appreciate it. Where can people find you, first on social media, and if they want to reach out and have any further questions for you, where can they reach you?

Jeff Carmon 40:28

Yeah, three places. I'm on LinkedIn. So you can find me on LinkedIn, you can email me it's pretty easy. It's Jeff@elitebsc, building services contractor, or you can get our website elitebsc.com.

Tim Clagg 40:42

Excellent, Jeff. I appreciate it. And we look forward to catching up with you and hopefully very soon and getting some more knowledge from you. Thank you again, so much for being so gracious today.

Jeff Carmon 40:53

Thank you and go Vols!

Tim Clagg 40:56

That will complete this month's episode of the business of cleaning. Be sure to subscribe to us on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Amazon Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts from. Also, be sure to leave us a five star review and your comments from everyone at janitorial manager, our guest Jeff Carmon and Tim Clagg saying so long. Until next time.