



GREEN BUSINESS QUARTERLY

WINTER 2009

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CUSTOMIZED PERFORMANCE INC.



CALIFORNIA COMPANY IMPROVES THE HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY OF ITS CLIENTS' FACILITIES

by Katie Gutierrez Painter

Above: Tony Prado (left) and Norberto Velez (right) discuss clean products and green initiatives.

IN THE YEAR THAT NORBERTO VELEZ has served as president of Customized Performance Inc., a janitorial services company, its revenues have more than doubled. But Velez is quick to assert that his tenure is not responsible for such growth. Rather, the San Jose, CA based company saw a near-instant boom in revenue, as well as clients, when it shifted its platform to implementing sustainable and environmentally friendly cleaning practices.

“Our focus is to be an ethical company that provides great service,” Velez ex-

plains. “But also, we elected to do the right thing by having a positive environmental impact on the facilities we work with.”

Founded in 1998 in San Jose, Customized Performance prides itself on creating individualized service plans for its clients. With a client roster ranging from multi-tenant buildings, to biotech companies, to software companies, the company offers traditional janitorial services, as well as general-maintenance services. Grossing \$3.5 million in 2007, the company has always had a strong

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business model and an excellent reputation within the industry. Nonetheless, Velez felt something was missing. Thus, the company took a slightly different direction, and implemented a green philosophy. “Our goal became creating healthy working environments for our clients and their employees,” Velez explains. “And that starts with management making a commitment to do the right thing by looking internally at the company’s processes and procedures as they relate to the environment.”

With a background in operations, administration and consulting, Velez has also taught courses on the proper procedures for maintaining facilities. That

was when he first realized the benefit of using green products and equipment. In 2007, although passionate about the idea of going green at Customized Performance, he recognized that doing so could cause a backlash from those clients and employees accustomed to traditional cleaning methods. “What we’re basically saying is ‘what you’ve been doing for many years is okay, but now we’re going to do it differently,’” Velez notes. “We started slowly, but our employees are really embracing green cleaning.”

Today, Customized Performance uses a slew of Green Seal-certified cleaning products and equipment, including dilu-

CUSTOMIZED PERFORMANCE INC.
AT A GLANCE

LOCATION: San Jose, CA

AREA OF SPECIALTY:
Sustainable janitorial and engineering services

GROSS REVENUE 2007: \$3.5 million

ANTICIPATED REVENUE 2008: \$6 million

EMPLOYEES: 140

EMPLOYEE BREAKDOWN:
97% operations, 3% management

Below: Norberto discusses ‘green program’ with Pete Velez and Janet Burlinson.



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Norberto Velez, President

tion-control products. Such products ensure that employees deliver products at the correct chemical-to-water ratio, and avoid what Velez calls the “backyard chemist” effect. Velez elaborates, “Years ago, people thought that by mixing chemicals they could create a better cleaning product. I call these folks ‘backyard chemists.’ But from a safety standpoint, this was not good for either our employees or our customers. Now manufacturers have done their homework and listened to the end user by manufacturing tamper-resistant dilution-control chemical stations.”

To avoid contamination, the company also uses a color-coded microfiber cloth system for cleaning glass, countertops, and restrooms. This ensures that no cloth used to clean a restroom will make an appearance in the kitchen. From a green standpoint, cloths are far more efficient than paper towels, and they are reusable.

Another invaluable piece of green equipment utilized by Customized Performance is a high-filtration backpack vacuum system, which uses a four-level

filtration system to capture soil, dust mites, and bacteria, down to the micron level. “With the traditional vacuum, you had a cloth bag,” explains Velez, “but when you turn those [vacuums] on, they release dust and soil particulates into the air, which linger and eventually settle back onto the surface. The idea with the high-filtration vacuum is that it collects the particles into the bag, and then we take the bag and toss it in the trash.”

In addition to its cleaning services, Customized Performance also offers a recycle support program, which educates clients on the numerous benefits of

recycling, and helps them launch their own recycling programs. Passionate about the significance of the company's green initiatives, Velez has made it his personal mission to teach the company's 140 employees the importance of sustainable practices.

“Our business is not a sexy business,” he admits. “We don't write software. We deliver a basic service, but what our employees understand is that cleaning isn't just about cleaning—that it's about infectious controls and making sure we don't add adverse effects into the environment... then it stops being a job and becomes a profession.” ^{GBQ}



Above: Norberto Velez, President.