

# Bugajewski cleans up by making sure it's done right

He takes pride in his admittedly less-than-glamorous job

## **GROWTH** STRATEGIES



CURT HUDSON

**Ben Bugajewski will throw in everything, including the kitchen sink, to put a shine on his customers.**

**ADAM STONE**  
SPECIAL TO THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

**W**ARRINGTON — Most people don't want to work for Ben Bugajewski, but everybody wants what he has.

"It's not a glamorous job. In national polls, 26 percent of people say they wouldn't take a job if they had to clean anything," the professional cleaner said. "But the impor-

tance of a clean environment has everything to do with my clients' bottom line and their ability to be successful."

That's a big part of the pitch at Bugajewski Facility Services. When he talks to national retailers, Bugajewski doesn't just sell cleanliness. He woos them on the notion that a cleaner store makes for a happier customer.

Since 2004 that argument has helped him land such major national accounts as Nike,

*"He was the first person to get back to me, the first person to come out, and everything I asked him it was, 'Yeah, we can do that.'"*

**Ted Benke**  
Elizabeth Benke & Associates

# CLEANER: Bugajewski won't sweep your business dirt under the rug

Chico's, Bebe and Game Stop. Closer to home Bugajewski's client roster includes Doylestown Hospital Children's Village, and Worth & Co.

Customers say Bugajewski's personal involvement helps the firm stand out from the myriad other cleaning companies. "He was the first person to get back to me, the first person to come out, and everything I asked him it was, 'Yeah, we can do that.' Everything was no problem," said Ted Benke, president of Elizabeth Benke & Associates, a Doylestown salon.

Having landed an account, Bugajewski stays connected. "Ben himself is very much on top of things. He monitors his folks as they come in. He stops in to make sure they are doing what needs to be done," said Jean Chubb, director of Doylestown Hospital Visiting Nurse and Hospice.

This remains true even though 95 percent of the firm's customers are dispersed around the nation. On a recent Tuesday for instance Bugajewski hopped a last-minute flight to Memphis, Tenn., to investigate a flooring issue. "You find things out by being out there in the field. You have to do that," he said.

## UP CLOSE

**COMPANY:** Bugajewski Facility Services

**LOCATION:** 1432 Easton Road, Suite 3-D, Warrington, Pa. 18976

**OWNER:** Ben Bugajewski

**TYPE OF COMPANY:** Cleaning, maintenance and repair

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 25 full time and part time.

**2004 REVENUE:** \$500,000

**2005 REVENUE:** \$1.4 million

**2006 REVENUE:** \$3.2 million

**LESSON LEARNED:** In a service business, personal involvement is key.

Being in the field is especially important when one's operation encompasses so wide a geographic area. On the other hand, Bugajewski has no interest in spending all his days on the road. To ensure things are running smoothly even in his absence, therefore, he relies on a close cadre of subcontractors.

He figures he knows some 80 percent on his subs personally. With the rest he has seen convincing samples of their work.

"I have over 3,200 subcontractors qualified to do work for me around the country. I have met most of these people in my travels over the years," he said. "There's a guy I met 10 years ago in Chicago, when he was working for someone else, and when I started my own business I contacted him. Now he does all the cleaning for me in the metro Chicago area."

Keeping those subs happy is no great challenge. Just give them what they are due, when it is due.

"They do a valuable job for me, and I think paying them timely is important," Bugajewski said. Pay them on time, and loyalty will follow. "Then when you have a real emergency, people will go above and beyond for you."

Bugajewski says this simple principle of treating people well accounts for much of his success. In the cleaning industry you need people who will give it their all, and for that to happen employees need to feel a personal sense of loyalty to the enterprise.

Bugajewski recalls seeking an able body to put in 13 hours a week on a particular account. He got an applicant with speech trouble and some cognitive impairment. Despite outward appearances, "I hired him, and I paid him \$13 an hour when the industry standard is \$8 an hour. This was a year ago. He still works for me today."



When that employee needed six weeks off for surgery, Bugajewski paid him the whole time, "and now there is nothing I could ask him to do that he wouldn't do for me."

That kind of action may be expensive up front, but it makes for sound business in the long run. "In the end you reduce your costs in terms of turnover, and your people take pride in the jobs they are doing, which, in the service industry, is important."

Do it right and you get big-time growth. With that growth you get ... more challenges, especially on the financial front. "You are paying vendors constantly before you are getting paid," Bugajewski lamented.

The best solution is a good line of credit, and for those looking to go that route, Bugajewski recommends building a solid base of business first. "Banks have to see the growth, they have to see the profit, they have to see the commitment there."