

Every month, Water Quality Products' Dealer of the Month electronic newsletter recognizes a water treatment professional whose forward-thinking business techniques have propelled his or her organization to be a marketplace leader.

The following dealers were profiled in Dealer of the Month e-newsletters throughout 2008. If you know of any outstanding dealers who you think should be profiled in an upcoming newsletter, feel free to send your suggestions to wqpeditor@sgcmail.com. If you would like to receive Dealer of the Month, sign up on our website: www.wqpmag.com.

Service & Stability

Bruce Whitney of Whitney's Water Systems, Logandale, Nev., has found adaptability to be the key to success—especially in the water treatment industry. Working in rural southern Nevada since 1987, Whitney and his wife Sherrie operate their business with the goal of “providing quality service to our customers and providing a good income for [our] employees.”

One reason Whitney needs to keep adaptability at the forefront of his business is his location. “Being in the desert southwest, you run into some unique water quality issues,” Whitney said, “from high salinity and hardness to high volume needs and addressing those at a reasonable cost.”

Recent droughts in the area have affected water quality and quantity in Whitney's service area but they have also been a benefit, he said, because people are more concerned about conservation.

In the wake of a declining housing market, Whitney and his team have also aimed to become more service oriented, making sure customers' existing systems are well serviced so they will last longer, and setting up regularly scheduled maintenance contracts rather than waiting for customers to call them. So even if the market fluctuates, Whitney's twenty-plus years of service in the area provides an element of stability.

Educating Employees

For some dealers, WQA certification and continuing education for their employees may be a vague goal for the future. Actively

pursuing educational opportunities, however, can have immediate benefits, as shown by the example of Joseph J. Huemann, president of Huemann Water Conditioning, Div. of Huemann Water Mgt., Inc., in Johnsbury, Ill.

Huemann has seen first-hand how focusing on education and certification can result in better business. His family's roots in the water business go back to 1902, when his great-grandfather founded Joseph H. Huemann and Sons Well Drilling. His father, Thomas Huemann, established Huemann Water Conditioning in 1963.

Changes within the industry since then are one reason continuing education and certification is important, according to Huemann. “In the '60s and '70s, our customers needed to be educated more. Today, most people know they want their water treated. With the exposure and demands of the customer, we are being held to a higher standard. Training and education helps with delivering a consistent and correct product to the customer.”

With customers who have more access to information than ever before thanks to the Internet, Huemann and his employees have to take steps to make sure they are updated on current industry topics and news. For instance, if a magazine has an article pertaining to an issue his employees may face, he routes it around the office so that everyone benefits from the knowledge.

Huemann's goal of “educating my employees to do their job better than I could do it” is ensuring the longevity, security and success of his business well into the future.

Teaching the Customer

Many water dealers find success through unique marketing techniques while others spend a lot of time and effort going through the process to become a Certified Water Specialist—all of which are valuable and proven ways to get ahead of the competition. Phil Rhodes Jr., operations manager of Futuramic's Clean Water Center in Omaha, Neb., has found another way to get ahead of the curve: educating the customer.

“We really focus on educating the customer about water and the

products,” said Rhodes. “We teach the customers what actually goes on inside a water softener, how they work and what they can do for them.”

This educational philosophy, Rhodes thinks, is different than initially selling the benefits and costs of the products. “We try to educate [the customer] as to why it is important that they have a water softener and then what the difference between the systems are,” he said.

By participating in home shows, interacting with customers and educating them on the importance of water treatment and the need for equipment, Rhodes has been able to find success for his business. He has found that it is more important to have customers who understand water treatment rather than have customers who are simply aware of cost savings.

Green for Growth

Matthew O'Toole, manager of Abbey EcoWater Systems, Spring Valley, N.Y., offers full treatment systems for residential, commercial and some small industrial applications. He maintains a well-rounded business approach stressing environmental benefits, which has helped his company remain competitive in today's demanding marketplace.

“Everyone needs to do their part to conserve our resources, and one of the benefits we let our customers know about is the energy savings associated with soft, clean water,” O'Toole said.

The Abbey EcoWater Systems website features a “For the Environment” tab, which outlines key points supporting the company's green approach. The page states, for instance, that using a water softener and reverse osmosis system in a hard water area can reduce greenhouse gases to the same extent as taking 1.3 cars off the road annually.

Such forward-thinking efforts have promoted Abbey EcoWater Systems' growth to become the full-service environmentally conscious water treatment company it is today. *wqp*

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Tricks of the Trade

WQP recognizes water dealers who go above and beyond

