



From left to right, Fresh KC Water Operations Manager Milton Whayley and Owner Al Lozier.

Keeping It Fresh

Al Lozier, CWS-VI, CI, CSR, learned the ropes of a running a successful water dealership from the ground up. He began selling residential filtration systems in 1988, and when his employer offered him the opportunity to start a satellite office the following year, Lozier gladly accepted. The result: Fresh KC Water, Shawnee, Kan.

**By Caitlin Cunningham
and Kate Cline**

“We wanted to be the different water treatment dealer—Water Quality Assn. trained, approaching the customer from the service side instead of the sales side and offering products that fit the customer, not the dealership,” Lozier said.

Company Profile

Fresh KC Water sells, installs and services water softeners, reverse osmosis systems and carbon filters, also specializing in the production of potable water from lake, well and pond sources.

The company finds new customers primarily through referrals, which has helped it to grow despite the troubled economy. “Our reputation in the marketplace is great, and we’ve been doing it long enough now that people ask around and our name seems to be the one that pops up,” Lozier said.

The company also does warranty work and repairs for several major manufacturers, which provides steady business, as well as new customers.

Because of the strong business, Fresh KC Water was able to hire a new service technician last year. Today, nine staff members comprise the dealership: Lozier, five service technicians, two customer care representatives and one accountant. Together they serve a customer base that spans approximately north to St. Joseph, Mo.; south to Clinton, Mo.; west to Topeka, Kan.; and east to Sedalia, Mo.

Connecting With Customers

Lozier attributes much of Fresh KC Water’s longevity and profitability to the

company’s interest and investments in effective dealer-client communications. By building and maintaining a solid reputation in its state-straddling service area, Fresh KC Water has weathered the nation’s economic troubles well.

“We have found many people are staying home and enjoying their water more, needing us to service their equipment,” Lozier said.

One key tool the dealership staff uses to reach out to current and potential customers is Fresh KC Water’s website, www.kcwater.com. The well-received site, always a work in progress, offers information on common water problems and treatment options, owner’s manuals, kids’ science project instructions, a products store and more.

“I went with a Web service that allows me to make changes on the fly,” Lozier said. “It keeps it fresh.”

The ever-evolving Fresh KC Water is open to making use of new communication outlets as well. “We are looking at all the ways to contact and stay in contact with people today,” Lozier said. “It is moving fast, and the consumer has changed and has become more educated. We love to keep the competition guessing.”

Because more customers turn to the Internet first when looking for information on water treatment, Lozier works to ensure that Fresh KC Water has a presence on the Web. In the last few years, the company joined Facebook and posted ads on Craigslist to help attract new customers. In addition, Lozier opted to cut down on listing his company in the Yellow Pages in favor of online

resources such as www.yellowpages.com and www.yellowbook.com.

Lozier also is looking into e-mail options that will help him keep in contact with his current customers. One of his goals this year is to establish an e-newsletter that will both remind customers about annual service and provide education on water quality issues, he said.

Serving the Customer

Although customer education is important, Lozier feels that these days his customers already are well informed. When he got into the water business, he said, many people did not believe they needed water softening or additional treatment.

“Today I don’t hear that,” he said. “What I hear is, I know my water’s bad, don’t tell me about it. I already know. People have an awareness level. They’re looking on the Internet for information, but I think there’s so much of it that it confuses them even more, so they’re actually looking for an expert to help them through.”

For this reason, Lozier aims for good customer relations by helping in any way he can. Homeowners often call the office for advice on a problematic softener or treatment system, and service technicians are on hand to help them work through the issue.

“We’re very free with our information,” Lozier said. “If somebody calls, we’ll offer to help fix the system over the phone if we can. If somebody calls, maybe they’ll buy from me—that’s OK too.”

Water dealer builds his
business on careful
customer service



Al Lozier attributes his success to the company's interest and investment in dealer-client communication.

If the problem requires more than a phone call, staff can advise setting up a service appointment or recommend a dealer closer to the customer's home.

Learning More

Lozier regularly participates in WQA continuing education programs to learn and network. To help his staff stay up to date on technology, he encourages them to become WQA-certified; so far, two service technicians have taken the certified installer test, and another is in the process of becoming a certified water specialist.

"I am constantly making sure that they're staying up to date with what's going on with technology and what's available out there," Lozier said.

In addition to being a member of WQA, Fresh KC Water is a member of the Pentair Platinum Dealer Network and its local chamber of commerce.

Planning for the Future

Looking ahead, Lozier believes the industry is heading for some big changes: While companies that have not worked as hard to keep up their reputation will falter, hardworking companies will find that consolidation is a way to help them stay strong. He notes that some bigger national water companies are beginning to consolidate, and local water dealers are likely to do the same in the near future.

"In the local markets, I think that some of your bigger service companies want to expand and get new business, and one of the ways to do that is to find a good company with a great reputation and use its overhead, service the customers that are there and continue on with the business," he said. *wqp*

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