

# Rising to the Top in Reno



**M**ike Guidara, president and founder of Truckee Meadows Water Systems Inc. (TMWS) in Reno, Nev., got his start in the water industry more than 25 years ago when he was living in Pebble Beach, Calif., and was offered a manager trainee position at a large bottled water company.

By Rebecca Wilhelm

WQP's Dealer of the Year shares tips for success

He struck out on his own, founded TMWS in 1988 and currently employs 12 people. The company's service area covers northern Nevada and northern California.

"When we first started out, we would go anywhere—it didn't matter," he said. "We were happy to have a customer. Since then, we have consolidated a little bit but we still have that same principle."

Guidara's experience as both an employee in a large corporation and as a small business owner has given him a unique industry perspective. "I much prefer owning a small business," he said. "I don't have to worry about the bureaucracy of a large corporation."

TMWS has four divisions: office drinking water dispensers, office coffee service, residential water systems and commercial/industrial water systems.

"We started out in POU water coolers and we have a good stronghold in that market," Guidara said. "We added an office coffee service, which is also a huge business. But the residential POE equipment and commercial divisions have just taken off."

## Interactive Management

In order to keep track of TMWS' different divisions, Guidara has split responsibilities for the divisions among different employees. They are all still under one roof, however—the company's 5,000-sq-ft facility in downtown Reno. TMWS also runs 11 trucks.

"The hardest part we have is training—getting quality coworkers and employees to learn their jobs and want to make it a career, not looking

at it as a stepping stone into another occupation, but thinking: 'hey, I can make a living at this, I can afford to buy a home ...' and to get them to educate themselves so they can learn all the little intricacies that are involved in running this business, which is very difficult."

In order to foster communication and interaction, Guidara and his staff gather for weekly sales training meetings. They take advantage of smartphones by using them to take photos when an issue arises in the field, then printing them out and meeting and talking about the problem. Other scheduled meetings include safety and service meetings.

"We talk a lot in the morning before we go to work—management by walking around," Guidara said. In fact, Guidara's office is right in the middle of the warehouse, and to get back and forth employees have to walk through his office.

He also believes in letting employees enjoy their time at work, which is why he allows his office manager to bring her pet chihuahuas to work every day.

## Future Predictions

The future of the industry looks strong, according to Guidara. "I see the market just growing and growing," he said. "I think we are still at the tip of the iceberg, as far as where we are going to be 10 or 20 years down the road."

Opportunities also will come as technology evolves, he said. "We are all waiting for a [new] water softener to be developed that does not use salt or

potassium. When that happens, there is going to be a gold rush."

To encourage other dealers, Guidara offers common sense advice that holds true for almost any profession: "Show up for work every day, answer the phone and do what your customers ask," he advised. "Hold strong for customer service. Make sure you do what you say you are going to do and follow up on your word, and don't hide when there is a problem."

## Honoring the Best

Guidara was one of 12 dealers *Water Quality Products (WQP)* profiled as a Dealer of the Month in its *Dealer Insight* e-newsletter in 2010. In early 2011, subscribers selected Guidara to be honored as the 2010 Dealer of the Year. WQP presented the award to him at the WQA Aquatech USA 2011 tradeshow in San Antonio, Texas, in March.

Visit [www.wqpmag.com](http://www.wqpmag.com) to see video of the award presentation at the tradeshow, as well as an interview with Guidara, also conducted at the show.

Do you know someone who should be recognized as a Dealer of the Month? E-mail your recommendations to [wqpeditor@sgcmail.com](mailto:wqpeditor@sgcmail.com). *wqp*

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# WQP's Dealer of the Year Award Program



Each month, *WQP's Dealer Insight* e-newsletter highlights a successful dealer in its Dealer of the Month feature. Each of the featured dealers is a leader in the industry, using creative and innovative methods to increase business and service customers. Whether it is a specialized scheduling system that makes sales and service calls more efficient or a softener tank exchange program that improves customer service, these dealers are constantly considering how they can expand their businesses.

Early this winter, *WQP* readers voted to select Guidara as Dealer of the Year from the 12 dealers featured in 2010. *WQP* staff presented him

with his award at WQA Aquatech 2011 this March.

This year's Dealer Insight program is well underway, with five outstanding dealers profiled at the time this issue went to print. Voting will take place in early 2012 to select the 2011 Dealer of the Year.

The *Dealer Insight* e-newsletter also features industry news, sales tips and product spotlights. To sign up to receive this monthly newsletter, visit <http://www.wqpmag.com> and click on "Newsletter."

If you know a successful dealer you think should be a Dealer of the Month, send a tip to [wqpeditor@sgcmail.com](mailto:wqpeditor@sgcmail.com).



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