



All in the Details

By Kate Cline

Started in 1988, Dunbar Water/Mr. H2O Pumps and Filters began as a simple operation, with founder Carl Dunbar working out of his home and using his Subaru to make sales calls. Since then, a “can-do” attitude and a dedication to providing excellent customer service have helped the business grow.

Maine dealer finds success by focusing on the small stuff

Today, the dealership has 10 employees, a fleet of six vehicles and a 2,400-sq-ft warehouse with an office and showroom. It is also the exclusive Evolve Dealer for Water-Right in southern Maine.

Kevin Kaserman took over as president in 2006, and strives to continue the company's success by keeping up the positive attitude and concentrating on the little things that make a big difference.

Complete System Service

The company's service area covers southern Maine, where 56% of residents rely on private wells for drinking water. Often, customers call on the company to treat aesthetic issues, such as staining, corrosion and odor, Kaserman said. But because Maine and New Hampshire have naturally high arsenic levels in groundwater, he recommends additional testing to each customer.

“We always want to educate our customers on the importance of a lab-certified test to ensure that the primary contaminants, including bacteria, arsenic and radon, to name a few, are not present in their water

along with the contaminants they called us to remove,” he said.

Dunbar Water/Mr. H2O Pumps and Filters offers systems to treat all of these issues, including whole-house reverse osmosis systems. Employees are also licensed pump installers, which means the company can provide customers with full system service, including well pump replacement and pressure tank installations.

“On numerous sales appointments, we determine that the customer may have a pump or pressure tank issue that would definitely impact the success of any filtration equipment,” Kaserman said. “We are able to properly make the adjustments when we install the filtration system, which prolongs the life of the pump and ensures that the filtration system gets the flow required for proper operation.”

Sweating the Small Stuff

The company stays on top of its game by concentrating on all the details, both big and small. According to Kaserman, it is doing the “big things” right that keeps any company afloat. A knowledgeable sales staff, quality customer service and the best

equipment keep the company in business, he said, but it is the small things that help his company stand out.

All Dunbar Water/Mr. H2O Pumps and Filters employees wear clean company uniforms with their names on them, and keep their lettered company trucks clean and properly stocked and organized, he said. The company ensures quality customer service by having a real person answer the office phone at all times, and includes personal touches, like before-and-after photos and customized thank you notes.

The company is continually working to improve in all aspects, which has helped it stay strong in recent years, despite the depressed economy. “Having a can-do attitude and continual action have allowed us to continue to grow and prosper, even in the most recent years that have been difficult for everyone in business,” Kaserman said. “We have continued to grow even in the past few years because we refuse to take our foot off the gas.”

One of Dunbar Water/Mr. H2O Pumps and Filters' focuses for improvement has been technology. The company's latest addition is software that tracks the installation process from sales prospect through GPS mapping of installation and service routes.

Company vehicles are outfitted with GPS systems so that employees avoid spending extra time deciphering maps.

“Our goal is to work this year on maximizing these software functions more completely in an effort to provide our customers with the most efficient service they deserve and give our

employees the data and tools they need to meet these customer demands,” Kaserman said.

Kaserman’s improvement efforts do not end there, however. “I always say, for each item we complete on our list of improvements, there are five more that come to mind for completion,” he said. The company’s other efforts include improving advertising campaigns, actively searching for sales leads and keeping up with training and Water Quality Assn. (WQA) certifications.

Training for Work and Fun

Kaserman puts a high value on continuing education and association membership and certification for the benefits to both the company and its customers. Dunbar Water/Mr. H2O Pumps and Filters is a member of WQA and Eastern WQA, and the sales manager is a CSR. Kaserman is currently a CWS II, and plans to continue until he reaches CWS VI, because association membership not only provides him with networking and education opportunities, but also assures customers that he and his employees are dedicated to the water industry, he said. In addition, employees take part in monthly training and various local classes.

Another aspect that helps keep the company successful is a focus on hiring and nurturing exceptional employees. “The water pump and filtration business is very demanding,” Kaserman said. “It is a 24/7 business for service and requires working in less-than-ideal conditions in Maine, from pulling and installing pumps in the middle of a snowstorm to crawling under a seasonal camp on your stomach to get your water lines run.”

Keeping this in mind, Kaserman makes an effort to create a family atmosphere within the company. Seasonal events such as trips to AAA baseball and hockey games and a summer lobster bake provide employees a break, and a chance for a reward—at the annual Christmas party last year, the door prize was a 42-in. flat-screen TV.

Looking Toward the Future

Despite the economic troubles, Kaserman believes the future is bright for all water dealers, especially as studies reveal the effects of contaminants in tap water and the benefits of water softeners. Technology will play a major role as well, he contends, as consumers become increasingly aware of technology and older systems require replacing.

“Many industries face challenges in these tough economic times, but I am glad to be in an industry that truly has limitless potential and promise,” Kaserman said. “If we continue to provide the best equipment and service

to our customers, we will continue to prosper in the coming years.” *wqp*

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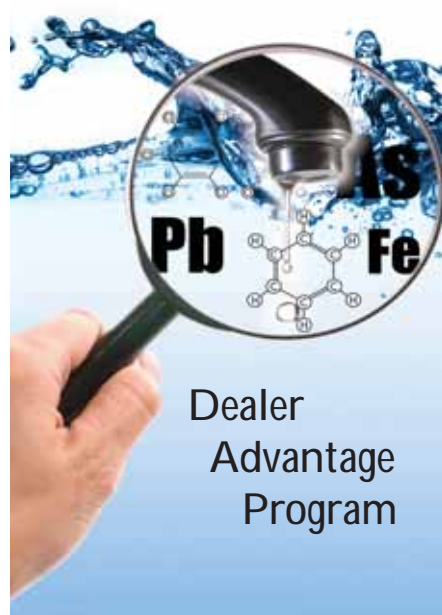
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