



PUBLISHER'S PAGE

By Pat Ottmann

People First

If your goal is for one year, plant wheat. If your goal is for ten years, plant trees. If your goal is for a lifetime, plant people.

These thoughts are from the book *People First – Building Lives and Passing on a Legacy* written by Jack Lannom. Lannom's book is written to address the people crunch that every industry, profession and service is facing. There is no doubt; it is an absolute guarantee that labour will be the number-one challenge for business moving forward. Today we are feeling it, but with the baby boomers coming to the end of their working careers, the numbers are undeniable. There simply will not be enough people to fill all the positions that are open.

With the Canadian economy running at high speed, we are already reading the stories of equipment sitting idle as there simply aren't any individuals to operate it. Every province is in the same position whether it is the oilpatch or construction, agriculture or funeral service. The writing is on the wall.

There was a time not so long ago when having a job was a privilege. Management were allowed to have the attitude of, "You're lucky to have a job," and there was a lineup of capable people to fill a position when someone moved on. That thinking is now a thing of the past.

If the people that work in the company and on the front lines feel that they are the most important part of the success of the company, it will naturally flow through to the customers the firm serves.

I am in no way suggesting that we put up with mediocre performance. In funeral service, there is no room for anything but 100 per cent effort from people who are passionate about what they do. The job is too important to allow that type of performance and too many people are affected by a job done poorly.

As with all things, the greatest challenges will ultimately lead to the greatest opportunities. The firms that put the effort into recruiting the best and then work to develop them will be the ultimate winners in this challenge to find the people and provide the services.

According to Lannom, there needs to be a shift in thinking, even to the point that the customer doesn't come first, but rather the employees of the company come first. If the people that work in the company and on the front lines feel that they are the most

important part of the success of the company, it will naturally flow through to the customers the firm serves. We have had it backwards for too many years where most firms have always had a "customer-first" attitude and policy.

This represents quite a shift in thinking for most employers and managers. We work so hard to attract customers that they have always been number one in the mind of management. If your company was to run with an entire group of number-one people, just think of the results that could be obtained. If your company had the corner on the best, the brightest and the most passionate funeral service professionals available that felt they were number one – the results would be incredible.

Until next month...