



# executive insights



**Name:** Michael Diamond, CBSE

**Title:** Managing Partner

**Company:** AffinEco LLC

**Fact:** Michael has been in the building service contracting industry since he was 10 years old.

**Fact:** He is currently reading a book about the Brooklyn Bridge called “The Great Bridge” by David McCullough. “I find the engineering feats amazing for this historic site,” he said.

**Fact:** Michael said that in creating a great company culture, the most important factor is trust.

There are two things that managing partner of AffinEco Michael Diamond believes have given his company the ability to sustain 47 years — putting clients first and empowering his staff. Providing great value and recognizing clients’ needs have positioned AffinEco as an ideal partner for its clients, but the focus on its team members has taken the company to the next level. “For us, building an exceptional team takes everyone working together and knowing we look out for each other. Following through on promises both externally and internally are paramount.” Here, he talks about trends in the industry and business challenges he’s faced.

**“We have always based our business on putting the clients first.**

**Their needs come before margin dollars.”**

#### **How long have you been in this industry? How did you get your start?**

I started in the business as a young man. My dad, Alan Diamond, started Premier Maintenance in 1966, and I worked in the shop at 10 years old, then through high school on a route truck. After graduating college, I worked in Manhattan, N.Y., for a family friend in a larger janitorial firm during the 80s. It was an interesting way to learn the industry. I returned to my family business and grew from operations management to business development and administration until my dad retired in 2000, and I took the reins.

#### **AffinEco has been in business for 47 years. How has the company been able to withstand throughout the years?**

We have always based our business on putting the clients first. Their needs come before margin dollars. Our belief has been that if we do the right thing by people, our profits will come to us in the long run. That position has created many loyal clients who value our service and don’t just view us as a commodity. Just behind clients, we work hard to empower our staff and align our team. Certainly, training, safety and service delivery systems are basics, but setting a clear direction and providing all the best tools allow our management team to take us to great places.

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## **What are some important things a company needs to do in order to stay relevant and competitive for that long?**

AffinEco has evolved. We are always looking for ways to control labor costs, improve productivity, be more sustainable and track our quality. Going forward, understanding our clients' needs will help us continue to customize our services to be the right solution.

## **How has the industry changed since you started in it 28 years ago?**

Technology and the ability to produce high-quality work faster is the biggest difference. We have grown four-fold in revenue, but only doubled our administrative staff in the past 10 years largely due to computerization. Team members in the field are producing, in some cases, double what we were only a short time ago. A combination of tailored specifications and advancements in machinery have allowed for this. Lastly, educated clients have allowed us to create strong partnerships on creating healthy buildings, not just cleaning to meet a specification that could have been inaccurate for the needs of the facility.

## **What are some trends that you see developing in the building service contracting industry?**

I believe robotics will play an interesting role in the next 10 years. Recently at the BSCAI/WFBSC meeting in New York, we saw many new applications for robotics. I know they are coming, and to me, it's a matter of when it becomes cost effective to implement a variety of these technologies. It is more likely we use aspects of how technology can work, such as GPS, or connectivity to track productivity or equipment maintenance.

## **What is one challenge you've experienced in your career, and how did you handle it?**

The succession of the business from my dad to me was a business challenge where I was pleased with our success. My first priority was our relationship, but we also needed to transition the business from one generation to the next and maintain a financial fairness in the process. It took us several years of talking through

many aspects of our deal, but ultimately, everything worked out well. We are the best of friends today!

## **How would you describe your management style?**

My partner Paul Senecal and I are fortunate to have surrounded ourselves with talented people. We have contrasting styles, but we believe that allows us to work well off each other's strengths. We work hard to give our team the tools to excel. We have spent a lot of effort working directly and indirectly via a coaching service to align our management staff on our company goals and purpose. This alignment has transcended through our mid-level management, and over the last few years, it has bonded us together even more. As we move ahead, our future goals are to spread this culture exponentially throughout our field workers.

## **What are some tips you have for employee retention?**

The key to retention is in proper hiring, onboarding and training. A recent article I read stated that employees leave managers, not companies. We have worked to be selective in who we hire and not just fill a position to get them filled. We take our time teaching a new employee our company policies, task skills and the culture of how to manage through difficulties. Additionally, we perform regular performance reviews and consistently gather feedback on how their job is going. I have found that if someone is not performing or unhappy in their work, it is because our communication has broken down. Usually it is not a big surprise that they are not working out well.

## **What is the best piece of advice you've received in your career?**

To do what you love. While there is nothing sexy about the maintenance field, I love the team we have assembled, the clients we work with and our support vendors. Coming to work each day is fun; I enjoy the diversity of our team and client base. Delivering service is less quantifiable than a products business, and the challenges create opportunities to build trust. I enjoy that very much.