



FACILITY MANAGER PROFILE

Make 'Em Smile – A Philosophy That Works Well for Kevin Purdy

By John Dunlap – Editor, SSA Globe

“Make ‘em smile” might be the job of a clown in a circus or a stand-up comedian, but for Kevin Purdy it is just part of his job as facility manager at Magnolia Storage in Seattle, Washington. Nonetheless, he considers it a very important aspect of bringing in and keeping customers, as well as also giving him personal satisfaction.

Not that he has to resort to clown-like tactics to put that smile on the face of potential or regular customers. Rather, the 32-year old Purdy feels that engaging customers in pleasant conversation and bringing out those smiles pays great dividends.

“The thing that really attracted me to the self storage industry was the fact that there is always something different every day, and getting to meet new people and helping them with a new step in their life by providing storage is great,” Purdy says. “A new customer could be buying a new house, need extra storage space as their current place is too small, or dealing with remodeling. I found out that what I did to make my facility successful was to have the ability to relate to existing or potential customers and make them really feel welcome at Magnolia Storage. If I

can get a smile or a laugh, that makes my day.”

“The most important part of the storage industry is customer service. If you don’t possess great customer service, then you don’t belong in customer service. When you experience great customer service you always tell your friends and family, and that is what I pride myself on.”

Customer service seems to have always been in Purdy’s blood. Even when he was working as an aerospace machinist after high school he remembered fondly the time

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You:



Missed three calls while showing a customer a storage unit

Together, we:

Sent a store map with directions to a customer's cell phone

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he had spent working at a restaurant while in school. He knew that customer service was something he felt particularly comfortable doing, in part because he liked making the customers smile.

In June of 2000 his grandfather passed away and he moved in to help his grandmother. Realizing that his grandmother needed storage space to make room for him, he dropped in on Magnolia Storage (owned by Urban Self Storage, Inc.). He met with Steve Douglas, the manager (soon to be district manager) and Patrick Reilly, the company president. Purdy ended up interviewing with both of them the next day and being offered the job of facility manager.

1,100 Opportunities to Please

Magnolia Storage is located two miles north of downtown Seattle and has 1,100 units. It is an indoor

heated facility with individual door alarms for extra security. After the facility is closed, it is monitored by Fire Protection for security. And all those facts, while important to Purdy, don't matter a bit unless you can find a way to bring in and keep the customer.

"Having priorities at your facility is a must," says Purdy. "Some of the most important priorities are making sure that you have a very clean facility. First impressions are everything for a potential customer. Just making sure that the facility has freshly painted curb stops, nice landscaping, swept parking lot, and that the inside of the facility is swept is so important. This could make a difference whether the customer rents or not. This would be followed up with great sales skills. You can have the nicest facility, but if you don't have a trained team to sell the facility, you have nothing. We go through a very extensive sales training, to ensure that every potential customer turns into a rental."

"Magnolia Storage is doing really well due to the fact that I have a great team that works for me," adds Purdy. "Ramon Laso and Cory Lobdell have both worked for me for the past two years. If you don't have employees who you can depend on to do their task when you are not there, the facility would not be successful."

Purdy loves his life as facility manager, as evidenced by his having been at the same location for over a decade. When he's not putting smiles on the faces of customers, he likes to golf, go dirt bike riding, boating, camping, working out and snowboarding. Obviously, living in Seattle, one of the great outdoor-friendly cities in the country, he has all those things at his fingertips. But he also has residents of one of America's most popular cities and while things are generally positive, Purdy also realizes that people have gone through hard times of late—and he empathizes.

"Some of the concerns that I have about the business is the fact that with the economy having been worse in recent years more tenants are going late and are getting auctioned," Purdy says. "I really hate to have to auction off tenants' goods. I always try to work out a deal with the tenant to get them to move out their belongings and sign a 'promise to pay' letter. I know if it happened to me I would be sad to lose all of my belongings."

That ability to empathize, as well as take a real interest in his customers, is what makes going to work every day at Magnolia Storage a pleasure for Purdy.

"The things I really enjoy about the business are meeting new people every day, and no two days are ever the same," he says. "I wake up every day looking forward to going to work to know that I will make a positive impact on someone's life today. It just really makes me feel good."

No doubt his customers, and his employers, feel the same way about Kevin Purdy. He probably even puts a smile on their faces. ❖



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