



Executive Suite: Arthur Katz, Uniondale

April 21, 2011 12:18 PM By Keiko Morris keiko.morris@newsday.com

Arthur M. Katz and his team put careful thought into how to order the six words of Knockout Pest Control's mission statement: "Our employees forever, our customers forever."

"We chose 'our employees forever' first because if we do the right thing and take care of our employees and give them the proper training, support and compensation, they will take care of our customers," said Katz, CEO-owner of the Uniondale-based company. "And they do."

Knockout also recently brought in Randi Busse, president of Amityville-based Workforce Development Group, to help the customer service staff learn how to be more empathetic, Katz noted.

The company, begun in 1975, has seen sales increase by more than 15 percent a year over the past three years, Katz said.

How competitive is your industry?

"If a potential new client calls and wants us to come for an estimate and we come in an hour, there's a chance one of my competitors have beat us there. . . . having a pest problem is very upsetting, especially for people who have children."

What are the trends in pest control?

"The biggest phenomenon has been bedbugs. We immediately looked into what's the safest method, the green method, the most effective method. We have dogs trained to detect bedbugs. [We use] Cryonite, a freezing technology that does not use pesticides. It's an expensive machine you have to import from overseas. It's not only good for bedbugs but also roaches and grain insects."

Explain your "green" focus?"

We were first designated as QualityPro Green [by the National Pest Management Association in 2009], which helped us during the recession. People want to know when you come into their homes and businesses you are doing the job well and use the least toxic product."

What else have you done to adapt to recent tough economic conditions?"

We extended hours and extended the service hours to Saturday and Sunday, so we now have people in the office and the field seven days a week. Again, with the recession, we're giving customers who need it a little flexibility. . . . We work out a payment plan that is comfortable with our clients."

You've expanded marketing in the Spanish-speaking community. Why?

"It was a conscious effort. We're reading in Newsday that the Spanish-speaking community is growing by the highest percentage."

What's your biggest challenge?"

To consistently make sure we are providing the very best service to clients from the customer-service perspective and the technician-in-the-field perspective. . . . and to make sure the message everyone gives to the client is the same