

THE MAGAZINE FOR RETAIL MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS EXECUTIVES

P R O F E S S I O N A L

# RETAIL STORE

M A I N T E N A N C E<sup>®</sup>

CONVENTION ISSUE

APRIL 2007

## MICHAELS' MAINTENANCE: SKILLED AT ITS CRAFT



**Michaels**  
THE ARTS & CRAFTS STORE

PLUS:

- Maintaining H-E-B Grocery Stores
- How Dollar Tree Handles New Store Rollouts
- Borders' Proactive HVAC Replacement
- Correcting Corrosion In Fire Sprinklers
  - An Energy Management Case Study
  - Avoid Pavement Perils By Sealcoating

# MORE KEYS TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

Viewing quality through your customer's eyes. | **Martin Benom**



Martin Benom, CEO,  
 The Resource  
 Collection

Interesting similarities exist between retailers and facility service providers. Every retailer and facility service provider in business today is involved in supplying services and/or products to people and organizations called “customers.” It is critical for their managers to regularly step back and reflect on the fact that the success or failure of their enterprise rests almost exclusively in their customer’s hands. After all, customers are the ones who pay for the services and products we provide and, in the end, make it possible for our businesses to succeed or fail. In fact, the customer’s experiences frequently serve as the competitive difference or the tie-breaker in their decision to utilize the services or buy the product from one source or another. When an organization has a customer focus which maximizes each and every moment with the customer in the most positive manner possible, it creates and builds long term loyalty and customers actually begin to advocate for the company. On the other hand, we can work hard to build a culture of quality and focus on quality assurance — but if our customers don’t recognize it, we’ve missed it completely and can quickly find our operation in grave danger!

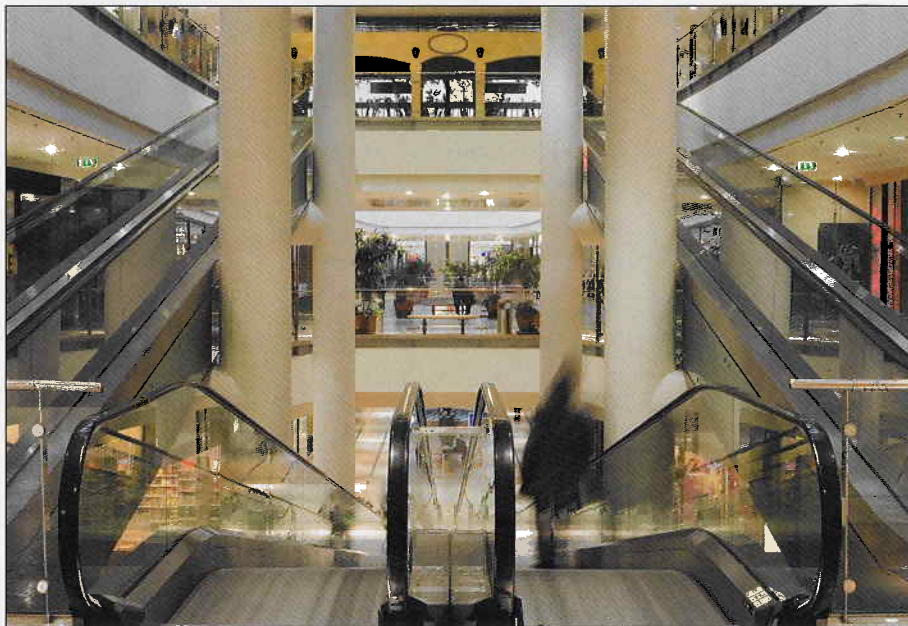
Sam Walton, founder of the Wal-Mart empire, outlined 10 “Rules for Building a Business,” which became the foundation for Wal-Mart’s corporate culture. Rule #8, according to Walton’s autobiography, goes like this: “Exceed your customers’ expecta-

tions. If you do, they’ll come back over and over. Give them what they want — and a little more. Let them know you appreciate them. Make good on all your mistakes and don’t make excuses — apologize. Stand behind everything you do. The two most important words I ever wrote were on that first Wal-Mart sign, ‘Satisfaction Guaranteed.’ They’re still up there and they have made all the difference.”

It’s been said that a satisfied customer tells one person while a customer that is dissatisfied tells 10 or more. We must always remember that customers influence the satisfaction of other customers — guaranteed! Furthermore, it is the customers themselves who define a quality experience with our companies. Author Michael Levine says that operational details, such as limited

hours and dirty bathrooms, send a message to customers about the general quality of a business. What about a fitting room where the door does not close or the paint is peeling or the carpet is dirty? These details have a more significant effect on customers than someone not familiar with the retail industry might think. So, for a working definition of quality customer experience, we will say that “quality customer experience depends upon the perception of quality experienced by the customer at any point of contact with a company.”

In our efforts to delight customers and build loyalty, we would be remiss if we didn’t at least mention how important it is to look first within our own companies. Business philosopher Jim Rohn suggests, “We don’t hire individuals and teach them



If you work hard to build a culture of quality and focus on quality assurance — but then your customers don't recognize it, then you've missed the point completely.

