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Black Diamond Plumbing's booking-rate secret? It's worth examining at your company

By Pat McManamon

Kevin Dagner admits he knew little about management when he took over as Branch Coordinator at [Black Diamond Plumbing & Mechanical](#) in Rockford, Ill.

"I just know how to work with people," Dagner said.

That, of course, minimizes the reality that working with people is one of the key facets of management, at any company. So Dagner's humble presumption is that he's just good at relating to people and talking to them. He has stressed that to the CSRs at Black Diamond, where the emphasis is on a positive attitude and empathy for the customer.

"All of our trainings, all of our decisions, are based on giving the customer a better experience," Dagner said. "And of course we get money in the process, but we try not to make that our priority.

"If you have a positive attitude and empathy and have the customer feel like you're going to take care of them, then I think the rest just kind of happens."

It's that kind of approach that put Black Diamond's call booking rate at 77.1%. That ranks well ahead of the average of 42% ServiceTitan found in a recent review of aggregated data, and in the top 25 of all trade businesses in the United States and Canada served by ServiceTitan.

Dagner said ServiceTitan, a cloud-based software for the trades, has helped refine the approach by streamlining procedures and focusing efforts. Black Diamond joined ServiceTitan in early 2021, and found that having all the data on one software made a difference. The company had been using multiple softwares, including one for call booking that wasn't integrated with the others.

That led to data being run separately. With ServiceTitan, all relevant data is there "in one shot," he said.

ServiceTitan 'just lets you book the call'

Ease of use matters, and Dagner said ServiceTitan also provides that.

"I think what ServiceTitan does is really lets you take your mind off of navigating the software or navigating the environment that you're trying to book the call in and just lets you book the call," Dagner said. "There's a whole lot less making sure you're getting things right.

"It's easier to navigate."

Dagner said the company knew when it added ServiceTitan that a new software would have new tools and different integrations. He knew there would be an adjustment. He and the company set out to try to encourage the team to let go of the past and embrace the new, as fully and as quickly as they could.

"(ServiceTitan) helps us be more tech-savvy," he said. "There's less time fiddling with making sure things are working correctly and more time giving an estimate and then doing the work. It really helps advance that visual of being a tech-savvy company and makes the customer feel a little bit better."

It helped that ServiceTitan could be customized to Black Diamond's needs. The adaptability of reports is one example – all within Dagner's focus on the customer.

"You can customize however many millions of reports you want and have them sent out," he said. "Communication is key. And the reports help us keep close communication and a watch on everything and make sure we're taking care of our customers."

Focus on internal growth

Since joining ServiceTitan, Black Diamond has experienced what Dagner calls "internal growth." Instead of recruiting employees with a certain skill set, it recruits young people willing to learn who have an interest in the trades. It then gives them work time in each division – HVAC, plumbing and electrical. After 12 to 18 months, the employee decides his or her focus, and starts an apprenticeship in that division.

"We're really trying to be strict, not just in the office, but in the field, about who we are hiring and making sure they have that right attitude that we're looking for," Dagner said. "There's some struggle there, which everybody is seeing, but we're growing internally and we're growing our own."

He admits his previous software did many things well. But with ServiceTitan, there is less to think about, which means the focus goes to what matters. That, to Black Diamond, is an understanding of what the customer needs, and how Black Diamond can provide a solution.

"There's so much (about ServiceTitan) that we've just taken for granted," Dagner said, "because it is so easy to do."