

# Pest Control

SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

## Solution Center

▶ BEST PRACTICES IN ACTION

### The son also rises

My parents, Al and Sandee, built a legacy in the industry with “Bugs” Burger Bug Killers (BBBK) that I intend to continue. They sold their successful company to S.C. Johnson and Sons in 1986, 26 years after they founded it. At the time of the sale, our company was serving more than 12,000 restaurant and hotel accounts in 43 states. It was the largest privately owned commercial exterminating company in the country.

Soon after the sale, S.C. Johnson changed the name to Prism—although most of the quality assurance factors my dad had put in place remained the same. In 1999, Prism was sold to Orkin Pest Control.

In 2003, I learned that the BBBK name still belonged to S.C. Johnson. When I inquired about it, Sam Johnson was glad to sell the name back to the Burger family. I decided the time was right to start BBBK anew—using today’s technology but keeping with its original values.

#### A LIFETIME OF EXPERIENCE

I grew up in the industry—in fact, I’m a fifth-generation pest controller whose ancestors were in business in Europe. I started as a technician in Gainesville, Fla., for my parents for about two years, then moved on to sales. I was with Orkin for a little more than five years as a quality assurance manager, working with national restaurant chains.

Because people don’t typically leave the hospitality industry (they move up within it), everybody remembers the original incarnation of BBBK. It’s exciting that people are looking us up on our Web site without realizing we were gone for 17 years.

Basically, I’m duplicating most things my father already created. The famous BBBK guarantees include no payment of initial charges until we eliminate every roach, rat or mouse on the premises. If the client is ever dissatisfied, we refund up to a year’s service charge and pay the cost of another firm of their choice for one year.



BBBK’s technicians have virtual offices and stay in touch with handheld technology — one major departure from when the company was run by Al and Sandee.

This is the backbone of our business. These guarantees are still taught in business schools around the world today.

#### DELIBERATE GROWTH

We are currently in Florida, Georgia and Texas. We’re looking to add three to six states in 2005. I have less than a dozen employees, and this is only my first year of operation. Some national chain clients want us to grow aggressively into markets, but we want to have controlled growth in select markets.

We garner loyalty and get the prices we ask for because of our technique: A three to five-person team does a major cleanout and a thorough crack and crevice treatment using pyrethrins and residuals on the initial visit. We return two weeks later and do the service again. If we still find problems, we come back a third time and the client does not pay us. When we do give it to a technician for regular maintenance on the account, it’s clean—that’s how we can provide these guarantees. Typically our price is anywhere from two to five times what the competition charges on regular service, and our cleanout charges are four times our

monthly fee. Our clients are essentially paying for the superior quality assurance and peace of mind we can provide.

#### \$3 million:

For BBBK’s first year of business, sales were just under \$1 million. Projected sales for 2005 are expected to be close to \$3 million.

My father has already done the learning curve for me, so that’s why we were able to start up right away. I’ve kept the marketing concept the same: I’ve led with

the guarantees. If something happens, we hold ourselves responsible. In some cases we lose, but at the end of the day, it’s my reputation—and I sleep very well at night.

If I could give any advice to small operators, it’s that there’s always enough good business out there for everybody. Don’t lower your prices and your standards. Just provide the best service possible at the correct dollar amount. If the customer doesn’t take it initially, you’ll soon find they’ll come back to you if you’re delivering perfect results. **PC**

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