

# the NEWS

## Perfecting The Recipe For Success

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John R. Hall



The management team at Engineering Excellence includes (from left) Thomas J. Winstel, president; Thomas A. Winstel, CEO; Mary Seaman, service project manager; Jenny Hirsh, CFO; and Audra Yacks, accounting manager.

CINCINNATI - Engineering Excellence Inc. President Thomas J. Winstel believes the secret to his company's success is in its "sauce."

"If someone went to a recipe maker and asked, 'What is the secret to your sauce?', they would be taken to a vault and shown the recipe," explained Winstel, before adding, "If you ask us, all you need to do is look around and see the people who are here. They are the secret to our success. Our 'secret sauce' is our people."

The commercial contractor has a lot of people "stirring" that sauce - approximately 150 employees in its three Ohio locations: Dayton, Columbus, and the main office in Cincinnati. The total includes 85 service techs and installers.

Ask around and you will get favorable feedback from employees concerning Engineering Excellence, a company that works hard to distinguish itself from competitors. Ownership has managed to get its employees to buy into team participation, which has resulted in a win-win situation for all parties.

Because, in part, commitment is shown on both sides of the fence, Engineering Excellence is the Midwest/Great Lakes Region winner in *The News*' 2003 "Best Contractor To Work For" contest.

"More than ever, today we have to wrap our arms around our customers and take care of them," said Winstel. "We do that by taking care of our employees - defining processes and team players. This award goes to our employees."



Engineering Excellence Inc. employs roughly 150 people in its three Ohio Locations.

## Company Background

The bulk of Engineering Excellence's market is in the engineering, installation, and maintenance of industrial and commercial HVACR systems. The company was founded 18 years ago by Winstel's father, Thomas A. Winstel, who is the company CEO.

"My father had a vision to create a company different from others - dedicated to servicing building owners," said the younger Winstel.

His father had to be creative to fund the new venture. He acquired a four-man shop with start-up capital from the sale of some of his antique duck decoy collection.

"Back then, we had enough work for three technicians, if two of them were sick," said the younger Winstel. "And our secretary could only type in capital letters. Her husband [who also worked for the company] would not drive on major roads."

The company has come a long way since those early days, but the goals have remained the same. Its mission is still to provide the best service and maintenance for building owners - and to continue to grow in new directions.

"We are looking to expand our business into the multi-location side," said Winstel. "Clients are looking for a company that understands their critical needs and being a HVAC building management firm."



The Engineering Excellence field service managers prepare for another busy day.

## Proud Of Relationship

In the eyes of Winstel, Engineering Excellence Inc. has become a big player in the national accounts market, having backstopped an initiative to perform start-ups and maintenance on Lennox rooftop units.

"We had been looking to partner with a manufacturer and at the time a salesperson from Lennox was calling on us," he said. "At the time they were doing road shows and a salesperson was dragging an L-series unit around on the back of his Taurus, spewing transmission fluid all over our parking lot.

"Lennox asked us if we would like to use our national accounts service management center to partner with them to administer a punch list program to customers around the country. The first year we started up over 8,000 rooftop units. We worked with about 80 service providers that first year and today we work with over 700. We are no farther than an hour from any location that needs service."

Winstel is proud of his relationship with service providers around the country, many of whom he met through his company's involvement with the Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA) and the MIX Group that his company belongs to through ACCA, titled Contractor's Information Group (CIG). They have been involved with CIG for several years, with Winstel calling it his board of directors. They share best practices with all of these contractors.

"We want to work very closely with service providers around the country," he said. "They are integral to our business. They are fellow contractors who I meet at ACCA meetings."



Family is a tradition at Engineering Excellence. Seven families are represented among the company's work force. *(Photos by Mark Lyons.)*

In its entry form to *The News*, Engineering Excellence representatives stated: "Reality hurts and challenges us. We understand today's technician may perceive our company as a commodity. That is until they get to know Engineering Excellence Inc. With thought-out retention and benefit plans in place, we work to successfully distinguish our company from our competitors.

"The key to success of our plan is total participation by all parties. Employees are taught the value of total participation. Prospective service technicians and current technicians are trained to recruit and sell Engineering Excellence continuously."

The company identifies the basic needs of its technicians and breaks them out into four major groups: fair wages, recognition, opportunities for growth, and human resources (benefits).