

May 6, 2009 by Erin Casey



Kristi Mailloux shares her strategy for business and personal growth.

Today, more than ever, business leaders must be open to change. Molly Maid President Kristi Mailloux understands that need and says she's passionate about asking questions that lead to *positive* change.

Mailloux began her career with Service Brands International (SBI), the parent company of Molly Maid, Mr. Handyman and 1-800-DryClean, fresh out of college. "Starting from the entry-level position and growing through the company has allowed me to look at the business from many different perspectives," she says. During the past 17 years, she's been involved with all three of the company's brands and has watched Molly Maid grow from 40 franchises to more than 750 in the United States, Canada, Japan, Puerto Rico and Portugal. "I love this—and all the businesses within the Service Brands group—because they offer stable business opportunities for people looking to achieve their business dreams and goals. That alone allows me to be very passionate about what I do."

Looking Outward

Her passion and perspective, combined with a plan for continued growth, are helping the company succeed, even in a difficult economy. Mailloux describes a proactive strategy that was put into place as the economy began to show signs of weakness. By asking tough questions and evaluating the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, Mailloux and her team developed a three-year plan that provides both immediate direction and a vision for the future. "We're not opposed to coming back and tweaking that plan based on our results each year, but we felt it was very important to

have a long-term vision," she says. "We know some of the initiatives will take more than one year to complete, but with this plan we are able to get everyone (both in the home office and our franchise owners) working toward the same goals."

That strategy includes improving the way Molly Maid uses the Internet to attract new customers, as well as helping individual franchise owners become more efficient in converting prospects into clients. Opening lines of communication is another critical element of the company's overall strategy. To that end, Mailloux makes herself available to franchise owners by attending regional meetings and hosting quarterly conference calls. Additionally, franchise councils comprising individual owners bring real-time feedback. Insight from these councils helps improve the company's effectiveness in areas such as technology, marketing and training. "They keep us connected to the day-to-day activities in the marketplace and give us a sounding board for the different initiatives we're focused on," she says. "The franchise owners who serve on these committees help us set the direction of our company's future. We're a stronger company because of them."

Looking Inward

Clearly, communication and an ability to adapt to a changing marketplace are important to Molly Maid's success strategy. Those same skills have helped Mailloux grow personally and professionally. Here she shares some of her thoughts on building a rewarding career:

- 1. Master every role you're in and give it 100 percent. If you're not successful in your current role, you may never have the opportunity to get to the next level. Some people are so focused on moving to the next role they neglect their current role. And that, Mailloux says, can hold them back.
- 2. Know no task is beneath you. Mailloux was the seventh employee in the Molly Maid home office. As the receptionist, her responsibilities included cleaning the bathrooms. "If I'd had a mindset of 'that's not really my job' early on, it might have cut me off from other opportunities to grow in the company," she says.
- 3. Take constructive criticism seriously but not personally. "No one is perfect," Mailloux says. "We've all got areas we can grow in. Feedback is necessary for helping us get to that next level." Rather than becoming defensive when a supervisor points out areas that need attention, she recommends viewing the criticism as a compliment. "Look at it as a blessing because your supervisor or mentor is trying to help you get to the next level," she says.
- 4. Seek out advice from a variety of sources. "I have learned so much from networking and brainstorming with people both within and outside of our company," Mailloux says. "You can grow and learn so much from other people. It will allow you to look at things in a different way, and that produces better results in the long run."