
PROfiles In Success

2006 Professional Cleaner of the Year- Kenia Montalvan of Maid to Clean



As owners of small businesses, we have the power to create opportunity not only for ourselves, but also for our staff. And it is the rare employee who can take obstacles and turn them into opportunities. Little did I know, in 1998, when Kenia Montalvan joined the Maid to Clean family, that she would be just such an employee.

From her first day on the job, Kenia showed an incredible sense of enthusiasm and responsibility. She was punctual, she cleaned hard, and she cleaned well. In spite of the fact that the quiet Honduran native spoke very little English, I promoted her, in just three months, to team supervisor.

Kenia assumed her new role as supervisor with earnestness, always thinking about how she could improve customer service. With an eye to preventing breakages and other mishaps, she did not hesitate to offer suggestions for improvement. In the same vein, she would quickly inform clients about problems like leaky faucets and loose fixtures. It is this conscientiousness that characterizes Kenia's work. Never would I associate her with misplaced keys, unlocked doors, water stains, or furniture scratches. In fact, her work is so highly-rated that special requests for Kenia's services have become overwhelming. I oftentimes find myself apologizing to clients, "Sorry, Kenia is booked for the day."

What sets Kenia apart from other hard-working employees is that she demonstrates a keen interest in the professional development of the staff. She is the first to take a new team member under her wing, and offer some useful "been-there-done-that" examples. Sometimes Kenia's mentoring happens quite by accident. She will hop out of a car to change a flat tire, or find some cables and jump-started a dead battery. Through a little initiative and ingenuity, she unwittingly demonstrates to co-workers that resourcefulness in a crisis allows the team to carry out its responsibilities.

In Kenia's estimation, however, professional development is not always about job performance; sometimes it is



Kenia with Maid to Clean owner Cindi Bermudez at the ARCSI Awards reception in Chicago



Kenia with ARCSI Board of Directors President Tom Stewart receiving the Professional Cleaner of the Year Award

about morale and team-building. On a number of occasions, it has been Kenia who has reminded me about a birthday, or planned a party to mark a company milestone. Often, I am heavily focused on administrative tasks and let slip those all-important morale-building occasions. I cannot count the number of times I have been grateful for Kenia's thoughtful reminders of the little things that make all the difference.

Kenia's penchant for morale-building is not the only reason I am grateful to her. It was several years into her tenure with Maid to Clean that I promoted her to supervisor of initial cleanings. In her new role, Kenia took over my duties and became the frontline face of Maid to Clean: it was she who went out and met with new clients for the first time, she who created the first impression, and she who established the rapport. In retrospect, the decision to promote Kenia was one of the best I ever made. In spite of the fact that Kenia speaks very little English, she is able to communicate so successfully with clients that in the course of three years her hard work has doubled our client base. Kenia's drive to turn her language obstacle into an opportunity has been an inspiration to everyone who knows her.

Perhaps Kenia's greatest achievement is to have taught all of us - the Maid to Clean staff, our family of clients, and even herself - that problem-solving begins with yourself; you will always be a winner when you have the courage overcome deficits and pursue an opportunity to excel. Hiring Kenia was one of the best decisions that I have made in my eleven years as the owner of a cleaning company, and I am proud to know that she has earned the honor of ARSCI 2006 Professional Cleaner of the Year Award.

Cindi Bermudez
Maid to Clean

