



John and Tina Patton of JAPCO Pest Control.

Don't *Blink*

John Patton of JAPCO Pest Control says success stems from knowing what you stand for.

If 35 years in the pest management industry has taught John Patton one thing, it's never compromise your values.

This philosophy helped him and his wife, Tina, grow JAPCO Pest Control in Calgary from zero revenue in 2006 into a \$1 million company today.

You always have to be diligent that your business framework represents what you believe in, said Patton, who stresses honesty and integrity and will turn away business if he doesn't think customers need it.

When a business is young and struggling, adhering to your core values can be difficult "when you need the money to carry on," Patton admitted. But if you do, "you come out the other end with a really good company."

Maintain your values and the money will come, he explained. "Don't blink."

Still, it takes time for employees and customers to understand company values are more than mere words. Patton reinforces these tenets every day in discussions with

employees and customers. And every company decision is held to that flame.

Integrity and honesty are the traits he looks for in new hires. You can teach someone pest control, explained Patton, who's hired hundreds of technicians over his career.

If the new hire has the integrity to do what we promise, like check every trap every time regardless of who's looking, over time he will become a competent technician. "In the end, the success of the company is the person I put on your doorstep."

Meeting customer expectations is more than offering a guarantee. You must be committed to making things right, Patton said.

This starts the moment the phone rings. Consider all the effort and expense you incur getting people to call. "You have to have the right person answering the phone," warned Patton. "In that first 30 seconds you've either made or lost the business."

Often that person is Tina, who's worked in the industry as long as John. She started answering phones at her family's Toronto pest management com-

pany, later sold to PCO Services, when she was 13. (The two met at a pest control conference and "the rest is history," smiled Patton.)

"Tina is one of the best" at being empathetic, understanding customer needs and explaining services, and has trained staff to do the same, said Patton.

Many customers have never used a pest control service before. "We make

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them feel comfortable with purchasing our services.”

These include commercial and residential pest control, bird control and exclusion, wildlife and fly control, bat exclusion, pest control audits, and Hantavirus remediation. Bed bug work spurred significant growth over the past five years.

One of the hurdles to growth was the

company's new-ness, said Patton. It took off in 2011 when it hit five years in business. A lot of doors opened "that were cracked open before," he explained. Clients want a long-term relationship; they want to know "you're solid" before committing to you.

Patton plans to grow JAPCO Pest Control, which services southern Alberta, from four to 10 technicians. Any larger will be harder to maintain the company's core values, he said.

Besides, smaller companies have the advantage of lower employee turnover rates. Customers like "having a relationship with their exterminator," explained Patton, 58, who spent most of his career with PCO Services. "There's a reason smaller companies make up the majority of the industry."

Patton is past president of the Pest Management Association of Alberta, served on the board of the Canadian Pest Management Association, and sits on several government advisory committees.

He credits JAPCO Pest Control's success to his wife. "She's been my right hand all along," he said. 🍁

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: JAPCO Pest Control

- **Founded:** 2006
- **Management Team:** Co-owners John and Tina Patton
- **2012 Revenue:** \$1 million
- **Employees:** 7
- **Business Mix:** 30 percent residential / 70 percent commercial
- **Services:** Residential services, commercial services, wildlife control, bird control/exclusion, Hantavirus remediation, fly control, bat exclusion, pest control audits
- **Headquarters:** Calgary, Alberta
- **Locations:** one
- **Service Area:** southern Alberta
- **Website:** www.japco.ca

