

Going Green and Improving Business

How Service Foods is Helping the Environment and Its Own Bottom Line

When Service Foods – an all natural and organic foods company in Atlanta – decided to implement environmentally-friendly solutions in its business practices, the Company had no idea that this would make them **more** profitable. Here, the Company’s energetic CEO Keith Kantor shares the phenomenal results of “going green.”

Southeast Green: Keith, first tell us a bit about your Company.

Keith Kantor: Service Foods – the Atlanta branch of our business – offers a full line of top quality, chemically purer foods to which we add no growth hormones, chemicals, preservatives, dyes or colorings. We provide free delivery directly to customers’ homes. In addition, dietitians, nurses, visiting doctors, and fitness experts are on staff to counsel clients in leading a healthier lifestyle. Service Foods has been in business since 1981 and is based here in Atlanta, GA, with warehouses in several states. We also have Blue Ribbon Foods, which is the Tennessee branch of the business, doing the same thing. Southern Foods At Home is our North and South Carolina and Virginia arm.

Southeast Green: There are numerous food companies around. What, do you feel, sets you apart from the competition?

Keith Kantor: I think what makes us truly unique is the fact that, in addition to providing healthy foods, we mentor our customers on living a healthy lifestyle. The CDC recently came out with a study that stated that up to 80% of chronic illnesses, like heart disease, cancer, celiac disease and diabetes can be prevented by eating an all-natural, healthy diet, with lots of fruits and vegetables and keeping weight down to a BMI below 30. Other important health factors included exercising and not smoking. To that effect, we counsel our clients and offer them tips on exercising, cooking healthier meals, and establishing good eating habits. We communicate with our customers through a newsletter, emails, two monthly video emails and blogs. Our clients can ask our health experts questions at any time, thus giving them personal, timely help when it comes to healthier living.

Southeast Green: Well, you have obviously been in business a long time. What prompted you to suddenly start adopting “green” practices?

Keith Kantor: I’m the first to admit that, although I care about the world around us, I was never the biggest advocate of “green” solutions.

However, we felt that our customers were demanding that certain changes be made in our business practices. They wanted us to be more eco-conscious. That was what originally propelled us into trying out “green” methodologies.

Southeast Green: What kind of changes did you implement in your business?

Keith Kantor: Well, we are an employee-friendly recycling business. Meaning, we have placed recycle boxes in various locations throughout our office and warehouses, making it simple for our team members to pitch recyclable materials into the boxes. We also make it a point to turn off the lights in rooms that are not occupied, thus conserving electricity. Our Company is using only recycled paper, high-efficiency fluorescent light bulbs, reusable food delivery totes, and recyclable Styrofoam. Furthermore, we use bio-diesel in all our delivery trucks and clean all processing facilities with steam, rather than chemicals. Finally, Service Foods is a carbon-neutral Company. We’re constantly striving to decrease our carbon output and have purchased the required carbon offsets to become carbon-neutral. And, of course, our customers drive their cars less, because we deliver their groceries directly to their homes, thus minimizing exhaust fumes.

Southeast Green: Keith, you were recently a panelist at the GreenBusiness Works™ Expo. What was the subject of your discussion?

Keith Kantor: I was part of the Green Hall Meeting – a discussion among business leaders on how to derive profits from being a carbon-neutral organization. The title of my presentation was “*Turning Green into Gold*”. Its focus was on how “going green” can help enhance a company’s image and earnings, simultaneously. My goal is to help other business realize that “going green” can be good for the environment **and** the business’s bottom line.

Southeast Green: Keith, what was your biggest surprise with turning to “green” practices within Service Foods, Blue Ribbon Foods, and Southern Foods At Home?

Keith Kantor: When we decided to put earth-friendly practices into effect, we were sure the business would suffer a financial loss, due to the cost of these solutions. Honestly, we were shocked to discover that the price of being environmentally-conscious was more than offset by the positive additional sales gains we experienced. Our customers were thrilled with the changes we made and were more than willing to help pay for them, in a way of slightly increased prices. That was by far by biggest surprise – and a good one! If other

businesses truly understood what a powerful marketing and sales benefit “going green” provides, more would be doing it. “Going green” often implies that products are cleaner and of better quality. Thus, it can ensure customer loyalty. This is a message that is particularly relevant in these challenging economic times.

Southeast Green: Keith, thanks so much for sharing your insights. Good luck in your future endeavors!