

STRATEGIES

GENERATING GOODWILL

Generous gifts help empower workers

BY ROBIN LONDNER

It has been five months since MegaTran gave each of its nearly 100 employees a generator, and workers still tell President Michael Acosta how grateful they are.

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"They say, 'The generator and the fuel cans show you care not only about us, but also our families.'" Acosta said.

After a hurricane, workers at MegaTran, a Doral-based utility infrastructure firm, are among the first responders working to help to bring back electricity. After Hurricane Wilma restoration, Acosta and his managers decided to thank their employees for their hard work by alleviating their own power worries.

The problem was that generators were not easy to find after such an active hurricane season. Due to back orders, the gifts didn't arrive by a company picnic in early December, so Acosta had an employee representative come forward to open one of two boxes. Workers had heard rumors about a wonderful surprise. But when the representative opened the first box, there was a safety fuel can inside.

"You could see the look on their faces - 'Is that all there is?'" Acosta said. "We explained what's in the next box goes with the first box. But the box was the same size. The employee opened it up and what was inside was a photograph of the 6,250-watt generator. We said every employee will be receiving one generator and two fuel cans. There was a change in the looks on their faces from disappointment to being really excited and appreciative."

When the Coleman Powermate generators arrived in early January, MegaTran hosted a Saturday breakfast for employees and their families.

"We loaded everything onto their vehicles,"



MegaTran's Frank Estrada, Salvador Garcia, Emilio Morales and Pedro Carvajal load a generator and fuel cans onto Morales' truck.

Acosta said. "We made it another event, a mini celebration."

The generators marked the first time MegaTran had given a bonus beyond things like meals and holiday bonus checks. But Acosta said corporate leaders shouldn't be too concerned about justifying such expenses on paper. MegaTran spent \$50,000 on the generators and Acosta said the payback is even higher employee passion and motivation to meet and exceed customer needs.

A cash bonus can be spent quickly, he added. But every time the employee or a family member uses the generator, Acosta said they will remember where it came from - MegaTran's gratitude for hard work and dedication to customers and attention to employees' long-term well-being.

The gifts may also help when there are emergency calls.

"If the family knows the company is responsive to employee needs, they're more understanding," Acosta said. "It's tough to be away from your family. We all have things planned. But time and time again, they respond. I don't

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know if we'd have such a high level of response to these off-hours needs if the families didn't support them."

Acosta's main employee problem, now, is keeping this year's gift a surprise.

"We already have some ideas," he said. "Somewhere along the same lines - something that will benefit our employees and their families, not just something short term, like cash. A lot of our employees are asking what we have, but that will take the surprise out of it and the fun. We tell them, 'You saw what we did last year, so trust us for this year.'"

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