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Executive of the Month: Santos is the managing director of Performance Northeast Services, LLC

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Lee Santos, the managing director of Performance Northeast Services, LLC

Boston, MA The New England Real Estate Journal (NEREJ) sat down with Lee Santos, this month's executive of the month, for a question and answer session. Santos is the managing director of Performance Northeast Services, LLC.

NEREJ: You are the managing director and partner of Performance Northeast Services, LLC. How did this happen?

Santos: Spent 27 years at American Cleaning Company where I started out as a part-time supervisor downtown Boston (Little Building – 80 Boylston St.), within a short time got promoted to full time area manager and over the years moved up to district manager.

Through a client and friend started a conversation with State Cleaning Services and joined in 2009 where we did a great job putting a small company on the map, becoming one of the largest in the Boston area in record time.

State Cleaning Company was sold to a N.Y. based company three years ago and an opportunity came up for ownership which I readily jumped on.

NEREJ: Tell me a little bit about Performance Northeast Services, LLC:

Santos: Performance Northeast Services, LLC is a partnership between myself and Performance Environmental Services founded in 2020. Our core mission is to provide commercial maintenance building services with a main focus on janitorial.

NEREJ: Can you give me a few examples of the types of projects your firm is involved in?

Santos: We currently service commercial office buildings, life science, medical and high profile residential grounds and common areas.

NEREJ: Tell me a little bit about you, personally:

Santos: Grew up in East Cambridge, proud Navy Veteran, love golf and a great book but my biggest achievement is my family, one lovely son (Joshua Santos) and a great wife of 36 years (Alise Santos).

NEREJ: What is your motto in life?

Santos: Be kind and grateful for all the blessings life has bestowed on me.

NEREJ: What are the key influences in your work today?

Santos: Technology is in my mind the greatest influence, it transformed the entire industry without a doubt.

NEREJ: What led you to your current profession?

Santos: In 1984, recently married, I needed a part time job to supplement my income, started out with American Cleaning Company part time and in a short time led me to a full time position as an area manager.

NEREJ: Describe the philosophy behind your firm?

Santos: To find the very best talent we can, build a family like employee company and provide the very best services possible.

NEREJ: What do you regard as the greatest success in your career to date?

Santos: Building State Cleaning in record time to a large size operation servicing a diverse portfolio as well as a large geographical foot print.

NEREJ: What do you like most about your job?

Santos: The people.

NEREJ: How long have you been in the janitorial industry?

Santos: I have been working in the industry since 1984.

NEREJ: What was the most complex project you were involved in?

Santos: Pharmaceutical services.

NEREJ: What do you see as the biggest challenges in the industry from your perspective:

Santos: Office concept changes, mainly due to COVID-19, have been a challenge for our industry.

NEREJ: What guidance would you give to someone contemplating a future in your industry?

Santos: Make sure, above all, you enjoy working with people, buildings and traveling.

NEREJ: Do you ever truly unplug from work?

Santos: The commercial building maintenance industry is a 24/7 commitment, customer needs are constant and unpredictable, so you have to be there for those that trust you with their assets.

NEREJ: What learning experience or professional development most helped prepare you for leadership?

Santos: People skills, listening skills and a commitment to always aim for excellence.

NEREJ: How do you cope with crises?

Santos: I believe that every crisis has a solution, crisis will happen no matter how well you prepare, most of them out of your control, how you respond and come through for your customers is what make the difference.

NEREJ: How do you set priorities?

Santos: Priorities setting is mainly based on common sense, the level of urgency will determine that.

NEREJ: How has the industry changed since you first started out?

Santos: This is like asking how was life before the Internet, when I started out was basically a hand shake and very little else. There was no price structure, agreements were non existing for the most part, unions and labor rules were very relaxed to what is today. Communication was non existent as far as cell phones, e-mail, everything was coming through the door and verbal, no computers, in the 1980s the only thing we had was a typewriter and not all even had that.

NEREJ: How did you move up the ladder in your industry?

Santos: Hard work, commitment, leadership, integrity (core values).

NEREJ: Do you or did you ever have a mentor? If so, how did your mentor help you and where do you think you would be today without their mentoring?

Santos: When I started out I worked for very demanding people, that pushed you to your limits at every level, I believe that had a great impact on my approach to the business.

NEREJ: What was your biggest challenge in business and how did you overcome it? In your personal life?

Santos: Biggest challenges would be starting out multiple job sites at a moments notice with very little support, all was on you, so creativity, being resilient, etc. was what defined the outcome.

NEREJ: Hindsight is 20/20. What would you do differently? Do you think that would have changed where you are today?:

Santos: Nothing comes to mind, no regrets, happy with who I am and where I am in life.

NEREJ: Do you ever take time for yourself?

Santos: I try my best to balance my lifestyle between work and family.

NEREJ: What are your future plans?

Santos: To build a quality driven service company that will become my legacy.