

■ Take This Job and Shovel It

by Tom Terez

I'm always sniffing around for a good story about work and workplaces. So when I drove past a truck marked "Pet Butler Dog Waste Removal Service," I couldn't get to a phone fast enough. I just had to ask: How in god's green earth can a person do that and find any sense of purpose?!

Pete Hulse took the call and gave me the scoop. Nine years ago he was holding down a more traditional job, but a work-related conversation with some entrepreneurial friends got him thinking.

People are going to buy what they need, right? And they need to clean up after their dogs, right? Bingo! It had all the makings of a sure thing.

As Pete puts it: "A lot of people love their pets. What people don't love is picking up their pets' poop."

Pete is comfortable with the P word. And he should be. By his own calculation, he has picked up "a third of a million" piles since going to work for Pet Butler in 1992.

(I'll pause while you stare into space and contemplate the previous paragraph.)

He went on to buy the company in 1998, and today, Pet Butler has seven full-time employees, nine trucks, and a full schedule. They ser-

vice 700 yards a week in the Greater Columbus (Ohio) area, cleaning up after more than 1,000 dogs, each of whom does its thing two to three times a day. You do the math. That's a lot of, er, revenue.

So what about it? Do Pete and his co-workers find any sense of meaning in a job like that?

You bet. In fact, Pete will happily explain

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that the job has less to do with dirty stuff—and more to do with people. Most of their customers cherish their pets, he says. And some people, especially senior citizens, wouldn't be able to have a dog at all if it weren't for Pet Butler.

They develop their own emotional attachment to the dogs, some of whom they see day after day. Every once in a while a customer will call to report that their dog has passed away. The news can hit hard—even prompting tears among Pet Butler workers.

There's also meaning to be found in the business end of the business. Pete and others have worked hard to set up smart systems for every-

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thing from billing to routing to scheduling. The place runs like clockwork. It's a source of pride for all who work there.

"Any job worth doing is worth doing well," Pete says. "We pick up dog poop here. But we're the best at picking up dog poop. We are very good and take pride in doing what we do."

He also has perspective—a lot of it. "Everybody takes a little crap in their job. We throw ours off the truck and call it a day."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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