

REAL ESTATE

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STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEMIEUX

Talent collector: Terry B. Schwartz, an executive with Village Green Management, compares himself to the director of player personnel for a sports team.

Exec explains winning ways

BY DOUG FUNKE
STAFF WRITER

Here's the gospel on the world of work according to Terry B. Schwartz, chief executive officer of Village Green Management Co. headquartered in Farmington Hills.

The firm owns and/or manages 26,000 apartment units, 105 properties, throughout the Midwest.

■ "If you don't set the bar high, the likelihood of receiving high results is non-existent.

■ "I believe there's a please and thank you in everything you do.

■ "It's a sacrifice to be more successful in your field. You sacrifice, personally, some long hours. You do deals others shy away from because they're too tough. You take on adversity others walk away from.

■ "I believe in giving more than just what's expected.

■ "Here, there are no superstars. People in the field are more important than me. Front line people make or break an organization.

■ "Getting there (high achievement) is probably easier than staying there. You get complacent, everyone tries to knock you off, steal your people. You can't be so caught up in success you can't improve.

■ "In life, you have to be a student and a teacher.

■ "Successful people are in command of all information necessary to make a good business decision. They don't need all the information.

They're comfortable with their own intuitive skills and perception skills. They hear a quack and know it's a duck. They don't have to see it."

Schwartz, 45, a West Bloomfield resident, was selected 1996 Executive of the Year by Multifamily Executive, a bimonthly magazine geared to developers, owners, managers and investors of multi-family housing.

Schwartz was honored as a trendsetter in the industry.

"His professionalism and customer service and heights to which he has taken Village Green were reasons for choosing Terry executive of the year," said Jodi Bromberg, managing editor for Multifamily Executive.

"He's our first one, and I think he'll be the benchmark we'll use to choose our future executives of the year," she added.

Schwartz has worked in property management nearly his entire career, joining Village Green in 1984.

"An executive recruiter contacted me. I interviewed with Jonathan Holtzman (Village Green chairman). The next weekend, he invited me to his house. I spent a couple days. We hit it off. We talked about our dreams. It was a match."

Holtzman said Schwartz was one of his first key hires when the decision was made to become more than just a family business.

"I think we share the same vision," Holtzman said. "We care that growth shouldn't sacrifice quality and that

performance to our partners and residents needs to be constantly improved."

It doesn't take much to get Schwartz talking and, when he does, you better listen carefully. The words come quickly.

"I'm the organization person," he said. "I'm the chief motivator, long-range planner. I consider myself director of player personnel.

"I look at how we're structured, how we're recruiting. I'm the budget guy. I focus on what it takes to keep moving ahead. Every week, I meet with department heads. We have on-going agendas," Schwartz said.

On what it takes to successfully manage apartments:

"You need common sense, good judgment, good problem-solving skills. It's a business of problems. We call it conflict resolution. You're good with people."

On how to deal with tenant complaints:

"We're in a service business. Bottom line, that is our responsibility. In talking with customers, it isn't that we didn't communicate properly. If there's going to be a delay or you have to order a part, no one told them. Communicate more than less."

On who's most important in the employee-tenant-investor relationship:

"I think all their destinies are intertwined. If we don't have great people,

we can't provide great service, and if we don't provide service to customers, we probably aren't going to be able to provide financial expectations clients have."

On how to make a good impression on the job:

"I would tell young people to perform. Perform at a standard above everyone else. If a report were due Friday, I gave them on Wednesday. If a minimum goal was 92 percent, I made sure we gave 94. If you perform - exhibit talent, work ethic - you will get recognized."

Susan Schwartz has known her husband, Terry, since their middle teenage years.

"He's always, since the day I met him, had ambition," Susan said. "He has a lot of pride. Whatever he does, he has to do his best. He has to put his all into it. When he cleans the garage, he pulls everything out and brings out the disinfectant.

"It funny, he's a totally different person at home," she said. "When he comes home, it's playing with the dog, throwing the ball, having fun. When he comes home, he doesn't discuss business."

Terry Schwartz credits his wife and children, Michael and Melissa, for keeping his life balanced.

"They have a great sense of humor," Terry said. "We entertain each other."