



## Managing a Hand-Picked Team

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Boston, Massachusetts-based SIGNET Electronic Systems, Inc. is the largest privately-held systems integration company in New England. Since joining the family business in 1987, Brad Caron, President and CEO, has overseen the company's growth from eight to nearly 150 employees, and from \$1.8 million in annual revenues to approaching \$30 million.

Having grown up alongside the company—Caron spent his boyhood summers making service calls alongside his father who had begun SIGNET as a four-man service operation in 1974—he knows that a company's success is about more than just understanding an industry; it's about understanding people. Caron attributes SIGNET's continuing growth to its talented workforce, and in particular, its managers. "We wouldn't be where we are today without the knowledgeable people who work here," he says. Caron and his handpicked team of experts have managed to guide the once mom-and-pop business onto the cutting edge of the 21st century.

What is his secret to success? Caron shares a few of his management philosophies:

- **Put your ego aside.** "When you are dealing with a senior management team, there is no room for ego. These are your point people, the drivers of your business, people who have great gifts," says Caron. "Because these people are gifted, they are highly compensated, and they deserve more recognition than you. Let them put their stamp on the business, and don't be afraid to take a backseat to their success."
- **Empower your managers.** "I'm always looking for quality people to fill quality spots," Caron explains. "But sometimes finding a really strong person and analyzing their abilities can help me recognize a need I may have been unaware of." He continues, "You don't want people who will "yes" you to death. As president, it's my job take a step back to forecast long-term strategies and trends, and to keep my eye on the bottom line. And while it's not my nature to sit at a desk and read reports, it's easier for me to balance that with getting in the trenches and getting my hands dirty because I trust my managers. You have to empower them to do their jobs."
- **Lead by example.** "Be the first to arrive at work and the last to leave," he says. "I learned that from my father in the early days. I believe that people are going to work hard for someone they know is working hard."

SIGNET's Vice President of Operations, Dawn M. Mello, corroborates Caron's guiding principle of walking the walk. "Throughout SIGNET's growth from a small business, Caron is still very much a "hands-on" presence," Mello says. "That's what a good leader is able to do—to be on the same level as the people and on the level beyond. His work ethic and dedication are inspiring and emanate down to his management team."

Find this article about President Brad Caron's hands-on approach to managing his hand-picked team in the November print edition of *Systems Contractor News* or online at [www.systemscontractor.com](http://www.systemscontractor.com).

