

# Milestones, Inc.

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*Developing individuals and organizations one milestone at a time*

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## TO STAY ON TOP, DON'T REST ON YOUR LAURELS

It would be easy for a successful 50-year-old business to say "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" This would be particularly true in the case of ValleyCrest Landscape Development, the nation's largest landscape and site construction company with clients like the Getty Center in Los Angeles and the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas. But ValleyCrest, a company built on growing things, decided to apply its green thumb to cultivate better ways of developing business.

The focus at ValleyCrest had always been on current sales rather than on



*"Brett helped us enlighten our people and create awareness of a better way of developing business."*

building long-term customer relationships that lead to sustained business. "Our organization has been transactionally based," says Brian Storm, vice president of sales. "We wanted to become more developmentally based, to learn how to be there to help when our customers

don't need us, without having our hand out." To do so required introducing a new business development culture to the firm.

Storm engaged Brett Miles of Milestones, Inc. to develop a training

program for all ValleyCrest staff who would be involved in business development. In addition to the company's business development officers (BDOs), Storm included branch managers and chief estimators. These employees have client contact but have not traditionally been part of the business development effort. The goal was to increase the number of staff capable of developing profitable, long-term relationships with clients.

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## Milestones



Brett Miles will speak on "Selling to the Top" at the TTI Performance Systems Annual International Conference January 2003, in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Madelon Miles was elected Chairman of the Board for Adventure Unlimited, a national non-profit youth organization based in Denver.



Audrey Salzburg, a Milestones Senior Consultant, achieved her certifications as a Certified Professional Behavioral Analyst and a Certified Professional Values Analyst from TTI Performance Systems.

Brett and Madelon will continue their advanced professional development in coaching by attending an Appreciative Inquiry Unlimited 6-day workshop in Santa Cruz, CA beginning January 27, 2003.

### Communication is a tool, keep it sharp!

Communication for Managers and Team Leaders Seminar. West Los Angeles, Dec. 10, 2002. For details and registration, please visit [www.milestonesinc.com](http://www.milestonesinc.com).

### Milestones Performance Management System

1. Assess
2. Recommend
3. Implement
4. Reinforce

### Services

Coaching  
Team Building  
Strategic Planning  
Sales Management Consulting

- Training in
- Leadership
  - Communication
  - Customer Service
  - Sales

**mile•stone** \ mī(ə)l -stōn \ 1: a stone set to measure distance, indicating progress toward desired goals.

...Don't Rest on Your Laurels

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Brett's first step was to interview ValleyCrest's top sales producers to elicit the techniques that they felt lead to their success. "Brett was very effective in gathering expert knowledge from our insiders," notes Storm. "He was able to speak intelligently about our organization." The information gleaned from the interviews became part of the manual that Brett created for use in a series of training sessions. The manual also included material on the key topics of business development: building relationships, prospecting, qualifying, and closing.

Prior to the training sessions, participants filled out a sales survey Brett designed and posted on an Internet site. This allowed the group to share information and comments on the sales process without the pressure of a traditional sales meeting. The survey results became part of the training and helped everyone to understand the many challenges that business development people face.

Brett led full-day training sessions in Orlando, Dallas, and Los Angeles, attended by a total of over 90 ValleyCrest staff. Each session was part of a three-day program that included additional meetings and training by in-house staff. Brett's sessions began with the use of DISC assessments to help participants understand their values and styles and build better communication. This was particularly helpful in enabling the three different groups — BDOs, branch managers, and chief estimators — to speak effectively to each other and learn from one another.

Techniques for achieving customer "buy-in" were an important part of the curriculum. Other key topics included how to develop successful relationships with top executives by learning to speak their language and understanding how to "sell to the top."

According to Storm, staff response to the sessions was overwhelmingly favorable. "We broke with tradition in hiring an outside trainer," he says,

and it was clearly a worthwhile change. "Brett helped us enlighten our people and create awareness of a better way of developing business."

The training sessions, held in August 2002, are already leading to a longer-term approach to customers. Expectations are high, and Storm is already considering follow-up sessions with Brett. By refusing to rest on its laurels, ValleyCrest is on its way to creating a culture that will help the company reach new milestones.

Coach's

Clipboard

## Perspective Is in the Eye of the Beholder

**W**e see a limited amount of what there is to see. We become better coaches when we expand the coachee's view — and our own. How do we broaden the view? By asking questions. Isn't it amazing how often questions are the best tools?

**TIP** Characterizing a person as disorganized, lost in the details, aggressive, or any other label stems from a limited perspective. It reduces possibilities for the person and for you. To avoid this loss of options for action, expand the perspective.

**EXAMPLE** John claims that Mary lacks big-picture thinking. We ask John, "In what area?" John replies that Mary noticed data was missing from the report but failed to recognize the report's overall point. Is that true about Mary? Mary, we learn later, can state the point. Had we taken John's claim as fact, we would have looked at the problem and potential solutions in a limited way. Challenge characterizations by using questions to understand the claim. Questioning expands the perspective and increases the possibilities for everyone.

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*Coaches help athletes achieve top performance. Today, more and more managers and professionals rely on coaching skills to get top performance from their teams. In each issue, the Coach's Clipboard brings you valuable coaching insights.*