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## Agape Construction Co. Tracks, Shares Progress with Employees

By Jerri Stroud, BBB Editor

Agape started 28 years ago in the O'Brien's basement, and Kevin ran the business from their house for the first 20 years.

The company has grown a lot since then, and now Agape's specialty is "bigger, more complicated" home remodeling projects, such as additions for older homes in Kirkwood, Webster Groves and surrounding areas. Agape also builds custom homes, including several small subdivisions in Webster Groves and Des Peres.

A staff architect develops plans that meld additions with existing homes. That can be especially important in historic districts or in cities like Webster Groves, with its Architectural Review Board.

Agape's goal with every job is simple: "We're going to do your job on time, on budget, and you're going to be a happy customer," Amy said. Agape may not be the cheapest, she said. "We're looking for the person who just wants the job done right."

And to ensure that jobs are being done right, Agape keeps a chart for just about everything. There are charts for each stage of the process, including sales, development, design, and production.

Each client – and each project manager and each lead carpenter - gets a "job book" with charts showing how their job is expected to progress, payment deadlines and other project details.

There are charts showing yearly goals for sales, expenses and profit posted against actual numbers. At the bottom of the chart is a line that shows money allotted for bonuses, a figure that grows as Agape meets or exceeds income goals.



The Agape Team

Several years ago, Agape got involved with "The Great Game of Business," a program that espouses "open-book" management to help employees think like owners by showing them how a company is doing financially and how they can contribute to and benefit from success.

Amy and Kevin O'Brien, Agape's owners, said the charts help their employees understand how their hard work and budget-conscious practices contribute to the company's success.

Open communication between employees also translates to better communication with clients. And outstanding customer service is the top priority at Agape. Daily cleanup, a year's warranty, and an end-of-job "thank you gift basket" are just a few of the services Agape performs for each job.

Additionally, Agape uses a third-party survey firm to ask each customer about their experience and satisfaction. "It helps us improve," Amy said.

Service to the larger community is also important to the O'Briens, who credit God with their ultimate success. In the past, Agape has sent carpenters to Joplin to help with tornado recovery, and it has donated framing work for other projects.

"This year, we committed to giving 10 percent of our net income to help other people," Amy said.



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