



## Facilitator — December/January 2011



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### Curb Appeal

Morning and bagels go hand in hand. For those of us who are not morning people, the thought of a warm, delicious breakfast motivates us to start the day. Though we may only have food on the brain and we're not actively thinking of the importance of a store's appearance, a clean and well-manicured storefront adds to the experience. Driving or walking up to a poorly maintained store can sully even the happiest morning.

Einstein Bagels knows this. The company believes in taking great care of its customers, beginning with a welcoming storefront to start people off with a great day. Maintaining their upscale signature look is no easy task. In fact, it requires season-round attention.

Jeff Drake, director of facilities at Einstein Noah Restaurant Group (ENRGI), was kind enough to share his exterior maintenance schedule with Facilitator. Out of 430 Einstein Bagel locations, he is responsible for the exterior maintenance of their 70 free-standing stores.

#### Springtime Awakening

Starting each spring, Drake focuses on landscaping. Einstein relies on Dentco, their outdoor maintenance vendor, for common-area maintenance, which includes exterior landscaping and snow removal. The goal in spring is to rejuvenate the storefront with plenty of colorful flower beds.

"We want everything looking nice and clean with new, fresh color," Drake said. To complete the look, Dentco incorporates fresh bark and mulch into the flower beds. For older sites that require more attention, Drake works with his vendor to develop a new landscape plan, which varies depending on the region. Working with a nationwide vendor, Drake benefits from their know-how to augment regional plants into each location's finished look.

"We trust our vendor's judgment and put that to good use," Drake said.

Another important springtime procedure is parking lot review. Drake directs his facility managers to walk the entire length of the parking lot to see if any problems need to be corrected, paying special attention to ADA areas to make sure the lanes are clearly marked with proper signage and to ensure the car stops are in place.

Drake directs the managers to review the lot with these questions in mind: How did it fare through the winter? Does it need a seal coat? Do we need to do any new crack sealing? Are there any new cracks or degradation in the lot?

"We don't want the asphalt to degrade, so we want to stay on top of that," Drake said. "Paying a little on the project now saves us on a bigger project later."

For lots that did not fare well through the winter, the whole parking lot is overlaid. Einstein management conducts an in-depth parking lot evaluation every two years.

"Something major happens every two years, and that usually involves a seal coat, restripe or repave," Drake said.

Finally, spring requires a review of the overall site, which involves the condition of awnings, whether the signage is working correctly and the appearance of the exterior paint.

### Summertime Upkeep

The summer is all about maintaining all the work from spring, Drake said. Each store's facility manager ensures that the landscape is maintaining its color, the bushes are trimmed and the flower beds are neat. That way, the store continues to look great, even through the harsh summer months.

### Autumn Harvest

Fall is about tree pruning/trimming. Remember, trees must maintain at least 2 feet of clearance from the building. In order to prepare for the winter, the flower beds at Einstein are cleared to maintain a clean look.

### Winter's Chill

Winter involves a winter-prep review. The sprinklers are winterized, the landscaping is cleaned up, and locations and specs for snow removal are reviewed with Dentco. Einstein's company policy is to plow every 2 inches of snow.

Drake reflects on the previous year when the mid-Atlantic stores were hit with 84 inches of snow. "Plowing every 2 inches stretched our budget," Drake said. "In some cases, like Maryland, one of our vendor's employees was charged with plowing all the businesses in a one-block area. He spent all day there clearing every 2 inches."

But Drake explains that Einstein plows every 2 inches for guest and associate safety. In fact, it is a company policy established by the facilities and risk management departments and approved by the operations department.

"Our vendors did a great job," Drake said. "During snow events, we were able to open our doors at any time we wanted. And even though our parking lots and sidewalks were clear, everything else wasn't. And many times, employees couldn't even get to the store." But Einstein was able to open for business, ready to welcome customers with a clean and safe storefront, as well as hot, delicious food.

### Change is Good

"When stores become dated, it dates our brand, and that's when we'll want to upgrade," Drake said.

The Einstein Bagel at 1901 South Orange Ave. in Orlando, Fla., was one of those stores. The store is situated at a great location: right on a corner with great visibility. But Drake noticed the signage was damaged and dated. The faceplates were broken and cracked and the neon letters did not light up in the early-morning hours, which is key for the business. The store also was using a dated sign font.

Whenever signage needs to be replaced, the store design team must be involved in any renovations. The upgrade was meant to bring the store up to date, but also to make it more environmentally friendly. To become more green, Einstein started moving away from neon to LED signs, which are more efficient, brighter, easier to maintain and longer-lasting.

### Collaboration and Communication

Clearly, the Einstein Noah Restaurant Group is built on a solid corporate infrastructure that revolves around collaboration and communication. Drake highlighted the readiness of corporate to fairly share the costs with him, as well as the benefits of open communication.

"Store Design offered to pay for new awnings and signs from their budget, and I offered to paint the exterior and take care of the landscaping from my budget," he said. "I am most proud of the teamwork and synergy among everyone involved: the partnership between ENRGI facilities and store design to put this project together and the open communication with all our vendor partners."

No remodel is complete without some hiccups. Delays in signage permitting from the City of Orlando set the project back by a couple of weeks. The permitting delay meant exterior painting and landscaping also had to be rescheduled. But through it all, the parties kept in constant communication.

"Our sign company was in constant communication with respect to the permitting issue," Drake said. "It is the finished product that we are excited to see, and although we had a little bump in the road, everyone worked together and definitely saw the end from the beginning. In the end, this will make a huge difference and really enhance this store's curb appeal. We are very excited and proud when we can put a package like this together."

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