

# Introduction

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

— Lao Tzu

Imagine this scenario.

You are reviewing the quarterly results and business continues to be very positive. Revenues are up over 15% compared to last year and this is the sixth quarter in a row that has demonstrated year-over-year improvements. The overall margin percentage has improved too—by almost 5%.

As you look a little more closely at the numbers, you note that the unplanned emergency service work has actually gone down (by about 10%) but it has been more than offset by small project work which has risen by a whopping 25%. Small project work as a percentage of the contract base is significantly higher, even as the contract base itself has grown.

You also note fewer fluctuations in revenues from month to month. The business is still seasonal, and that will likely never change, but revenues have smoothed out significantly. This is mainly due to the impact of being able to schedule project work during off-peak times and minimizing unplanned emergency service. Labor planning is so much easier and there is much less stress than before—both on the business and on the people.

Customer satisfaction rates have even improved and retention rates are tracking up as well. It will take a few more quarters to be able to prove a trend in retention but everything seems to suggest that the numbers will continue to improve.

Your mind wanders to the climate in the service department. Is it your imagination, or does it seem as if people are more relaxed at work these days? Perhaps it's because the work is more planned and there is less stress than in previous times, or maybe it is because the work is more rewarding and more interesting. Heck, people are even recommending others to come and join the team. Hiring has never been so easy. In fact, you are hiring (again), this time for two field positions. You have interviews later today with the short list of four very capable candidates, three of whom are referrals by people on your team.

Things just seem to get better and better . . .

If all your financial reviews are like this one, congratulations! If not, I suggest they could be by implementing the approaches suggested in this *Beyond GREAT SERVICE Planning Guide*. And, perhaps the best place to start is by discussing what we are actually trying to achieve in delivering a service that is beyond great!