



From mother to daughter: How a family janitorial business came to dominate 85% of the market

On March 10, 2026, the Cincinnati Business Courier held a CEO Conversations discussion at MadTree Brewing in Oakley. Jamie Smith, Publisher for the Cincinnati Business Courier, and co-host Jim Danneman, Regional President of Huntington Bank, hosted the conversation with Christy Bard, Chief Executive Officer and Owner of JANCOA Janitorial Services, Inc.

Smith opened the conversation, asking about Bard's path to leadership. She recognizes that she faced challenges that ultimately prepared her for her position today. "I don't take it lightly. It's a very important role," she said, noting that hundreds of people rely on her.

One specific challenge that Bard felt prepared her as a leader was the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the intensity of the time along with internal structural changes at JANCOA, she felt that her leadership skills were being strengthened. "My calmness and direction really surfaced," she said. "If I can do this in a really, really challenging time, then the rest is cake."

Her leadership style has changed through the years, and Bard reflected on the difference between being a manager and being a leader. "What I've attempted to do is let go and lead," she said, allowing her team to see something through rather than pushing to complete it the way she wants it done. "My team is so much better at it than I am," she said.

Switching gears, Bard mentioned that every succession transition is unique. Bard followed in her mother's footsteps, as the former CEO of JANCOA. Thinking back to her childhood, Bard shared that her Mom worked at US Shoe. Bard would go to the display closet at her mom's work and try on all the shoes, telling her mom's

co-workers that one day, she wanted to do her mom's job. She ended up filling her shoes, just in a different way.

Alongside her mother, her stepfather, Tony, previously owned JANCOA. They left behind strong pillars that benefited the entire company. One of their pillars was to always be a debt-free company, which JANCOA still is today — not an easy accomplishment in today's economy.

Now, Bard leads the business alongside husband Clint. Ron, her uncle, has also been at the company in leadership for decades, and brings the long-term perspective when a problem arises, that the company has been there before and will be okay. Now Bard is the CEO, her husband Clint is the COO, and her uncle Ron is the President. "The blessing that Ron brings to the team is the knowledge he provides from being part of the family business for almost 40 years" she said.

"When we were in the transition from [generation one] to [generation two], our deal was a five-year deal, Ron, Clint, and I made a courageous decision to try to pay them off in a year," she said. "They didn't know we were going to do this, but we got the pleasure of surprising them."

Then the conversation turned back to the topic of going through storms. Bard reflected on her new role and the expectations versus reality of it. Being used to being a debt-free company, Bard had a moment during the transition where she quickly realized they weren't actually debt-free anymore, and that weight was on her shoulders. "That was definitely my first reality check," she said. "The game has changed." They quickly returned to their debt-free status.

Bard shared that she and her



From left to right: Jamie Smith, Cincinnati Business Courier, Christy Bard, JANCOA Janitorial Services, Inc. and Jim Danneman, Huntington Bank. | Photo by: David Stephen for ACBJ

husband work well together, and they enjoy it. They attempt to have boundaries between work and home life, which can be a challenge. They made a rule that the kitchen island is a place just for personal conversations, not work. "We're still working on that," she said. "There have been multiple times where we'll be in the middle of a conversation where we'll catch ourselves [diving into work]... sometimes [Clint's like] can we just go outside? Does that count?" she joked.

When work disagreements do arise, they always come back to two grounding principles: always protect the golden goose, which is JANCOA, and "I over E," or intellect over emotion. "We have pulled from that advice so many times," she said.

These principles have served Bard well during shifts in the local real estate market. "Lots of buildings went empty during Covid, and they're still trying to make their way back," Bard said. But, she trusts that this struggle will pass. "I truly love our city. It has so much potential and so much positivity," she said.

JANCOA serves 225 buildings in the greater Cincinnati area, but none of the 550 employees work through headquarters. So Bard has made an intentional effort to take employee recognition seriously and make sure they still feel seen. "It's critical that we take time to celebrate our employees and make them feel special," she said.

Then the conversation turned towards community impact, with Bard noting Mary and Tony always led the way in this area. "Right now we're in a season where a majority of our passion is supporting Tony," she said. "My step-dad in retirement is battling dementia. It's not a fun journey and not what the two of them had pictured for their retirement. A lot of our passion and our heart is to support the Alzheimer's Association."

Bard was asked about the future of the company and where she wants to take it. JANCOA currently operates in 85% of the market, and is still looking at more potential for growth. She believes that the company will reach \$30 million by 2030.

Looking forward to the next gener-

Presented by



ation of leaders, Bard was asked what advice she could give them. “A lot of time in family businesses, family dynamics blind the vision of the business,” she said. As mentioned earlier, it’s always important to go back to the intelligence and facts of the situation.

They also take goal setting quite seriously.

“We started this thing... my husband called it the F yourself list,” she said. “We take time to come up with our own F words, such as “faith,” “family” or “foundation” and map out what we want to focus on with each of those topics. It’s encouraging to see at the end of the year which ones were accomplished or we were successful in.” She shared copies of these lists with the audience to take home to make their own, and shared her extensive journaling on these topics.

Switching back to business specifics, Bard was asked about the remote work phenomenon and how the phenomenon has impacted services. “Part of the challenge is if only 100 people came into the floor, they’re still using the potties, the kitchen... whether it’s 100 or 500, we still have

to do the same tasks to make sure that your building is clean,” Bard said. It can be challenging to make budgets work for property managers and still provide the same exceptional service.

When asked about maintaining staff, Bard shared that it can be a challenge, but offering full time work to those in janitorial services is a distinguishing factor, and creates more buy-in from employees. JANCOA employees get benefits, 401k, and other perks, while most competitors only offer part-time. Bard takes seriously that these positions support not just employees but their families. She also shared gratitude with some Cincinnati clients who decided to keep having their spaces cleaned even when workers weren’t coming into the office, such as in remote and hybrid situations, so they don’t have to rehire a cleaning team when they do come back to the office, which is a huge help.

Then the conversation shifted to questions from the audience. One attendee asked how they diversify their business to survive. Bard mentioned that they haven’t always had 85% of the industry. A decision to

focus on large class A office & medical buildings was a game-changer, specifically focusing on what the team did well. When asked about diversification, Bard mentioned a potential focus on common areas of buildings that are now residential that used to be office spaces, but never work in the personal spaces of tenants at residential buildings. “A lot of these beautiful class A office buildings used to be filled with people working in them are now residential. So our team has shifted mindset...they are in the same structure but formatted differently,” she said.

She shared that another challenge is that, as the real estate market struggles, sometimes they spend time chasing payment in collections from clients.

Another attendee shared that they use JANCOA services and have been impressed by the level of trust and honesty the company exhibits. They gave an example of how if a tiny item is accidentally dropped, they are notified along with the location and time, and that he’s even found a coin he’s dropped put in an obvious location, demonstrating their incredible service.

Another question was about diversity on the staff, to which she shared that 15 nationalities are represented in her employees. “We have a large Nepali population...a lot of times in the building, people see brown skin and assume Latino. But we are more diverse.”

One attendee asked what the most rewarding part of her role is. She circled back to employees’ lives. “Knowing I have a direct impact to change 550 lives and that we can be a blessing to not only the employees but the families. We can make a difference. That’s what fuels me and brings me back every day.”

She emphasized throughout her workshop that she is guided by her faith, and centering herself on that has helped her be a more grounded and compassionate leader with a servant’s heart.

Bard wrapped with immense gratitude to the audience, which included her mother, son, and other family and friends along with CEOs in attendance. “Thanks for listening to a janitor tell her story.”

Great leaders think outside the hexagon.

When you spend your days making a difference, people notice. Huntington Bank thanks Christy Bard, chief executive officer and owner of JANCOA Janitorial Services, Inc., for sharing her story at the CEO Conversations event. Thank you for inspiring us to look out for each other, our customers, and our communities every day.

