

RENTAL

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Ghanem rents such items — and hundreds of others — for all kinds of bashes. Weddings, home parties, bar mitzvahs, boat shows, golf tournaments and dances are a few of the celebrations within his realm.

“People rent stuff for any size party,” he said. “But where we manage things, the parties usually range from 50 to 1,000 ... Our involvement can run the full gamut from taking a small order over the telephone to executing and designing the full event.”

Taylor Rentals, at 12090 Metro Parkway, had been open since 1974. Ghanem purchased it in 2001. Since then, he’s expanded to Bonita Springs and Naples, and added “Creative Events” to the name. Among his 40 employees are planners who service the entire party, from invitations and design, to set-up and clean-up. The only element of a party that Taylor Rental will hire someone else to handle is catering, Ghanem said; but that may also be in-house soon.

“We’re trying to expand our repertoire to have whatever products someone desires,” he said. “We have the wherewithal to have more depth of products.”

A 23,000-square-foot warehouse connected to the showroom stores those products. Inside, a worker finished a huge foam seahorse that he designed from a business card logo. Elsewhere, steamy air drifted out of a two rooms reserved for laundry and dishwashing. Out back, a two-story tall clothesline was hung with limp tents, which were being hosed down, drying in the sun. Behind that, more space was crammed with tables and chairs.

“We have thousands of chairs,” Ghanem said.

Before purchasing Taylor Rental, Ghanem spent 20 years in financial consulting and executive management for Northwestern Mutual Life.

“I lived all over the country,” he said. “Florida reminded me the most of the California weather without the traffic.”

His business experience paid off. Since he bought Taylor Rental, revenue has grown by 15 to 20 percent every year for five years, he said; and the work suits him.

“One of the things I like about our events is they are generally celebratory,” he said.

But the experience hasn’t always been a cake walk.

“It’s generally always positive — that doesn’t mean easy,” he said. “Timing and execution and product quality are difficult because the details have to be watched all the time and so it takes really good quality people in the organization.”

One of his skills, he said, is choosing employees who can handle whatever the job requires.

“I think that’s what sets us apart,” he said, “the people that we have.”

He listed a few job titles: operation manager, division manager.

“Hey, Jeremy, what’s your job title?” Ghanem called out his office door.

“You were supposed to give me one about a year ago,” Jeremy called back from the showroom floor.

“I hate titles,” Ghanem explained. “Because then people think that’s all they have to do. I count on everybody in our organization: from the drivers, to the linen washers, making sure the linen doesn’t have spots or damage to it — we toss it if it’s got a spot — to people who answer the phone. They deal with booking events and rentals. They have to have a good relationship with the client and a good knowledge. For example, we have 20 different types of arches for weddings and 17 different types of chairs.”

Ghanem plans on expanding the staff to 50 people once the business moves to a new location on Alico Road in April. It will have almost three times the amount of storage space. There must be room for the chocolate fountain, the casino tables, the 40-plus inflatable games, the genera-

tors and portable air conditioners.

“I have to be growing to feel good,” Ghanem said. “I’m a pretty driven guy.”

Besides being married with three sons, Ghanem, 46, is a licensed pilot and has been sky diving and hang gliding. He also likes to boat and fish.

“I like to try everything,” he said. “This weekend I’m going to racing school. I’m hoping to get that out of my system so I stop getting speeding tickets.”

His willingness to take risks and jump into new opportunities has created a measure of success in business, he said.

“The leader attitude always trickles down and creates the culture in an organization. It’s very difficult for me to say ‘No, we can’t.’ It’s always ‘Yes, we can.’” ■

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Honda executive to speak on state of industry

John W. Mendel, senior vice-president of Automobile Operations at American Honda Motor Company, will discuss the challenges and issues facing the automotive industry at 11:30 a.m. Friday, Feb. 22 at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort in Estero.

Mendel is part of a series of presenters sponsored by Speakers Assembly of Southwest Florida, which for 12 years has brought distinguished speakers and panelists to address the community on issues of politics, energy, the economy, healthcare, business and industry.

As executive vice president at Honda, Mendel is responsible for product planning, advertising, marketing, public relations and distribution for both Honda and Acura Automobile Divisions. Prior to joining American Honda in December 2004, Mendel served as


executive vice president and chief operating officer for Mazda North American Operations.

Mendel began his career with Ford Motor Company’s U.S. operations in 1976 and held numerous sales and marketing positions within Lincoln Mercury and Ford customer service.

Mendel holds undergraduate degrees in business and economics from Austin College and a master of business administration from Duke University. He is a member of the American Honda Board of Directors and also serves on the board of directors for XM Satellite Radio.

The cost, which includes lunch, is \$40 for guests of the Speakers Assembly. Reservations are required and can be made by contacting the Speakers Assembly Office at (239) 948-7909 or speakersassembly@aol.com. ■

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Left to Right: John Reingardt, Dennis Kucera, Bill Valenti, John Hodas and John Fritts

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