

269

MAGAZINE

inside:

BUILDING THE IDEA FACTORY
HOW PEOPLE WILL DETERMINE
THE OFFICE OF THE FUTURE

PLUS: THE REGION'S TOP WORKPLACES

WONDERFUL WORKPLACES

2018



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IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR!

What is your favorite holiday workplace tradition?

*I love to see our team members with their guests at our Christmas dinner. To see everyone interacting truly represents family to me.
@ronkitchens*

*As soon as our office Thanksgiving celebration is over, even before the leftovers can be taken home, everyone excitedly rushes to light the holiday giving tree!
@JakeFredericks1*

*Gathering around the fireplace TV with a warm cup of coffee to discuss the antics of Lumpawarrump and Chewbacca in the "Star Wars Holiday Special!"
@iAmAdamRossi*

We host a Kalamazoo Civic Theatre play outing as a thank you to our clients, vendors, and work family at the close of the holiday season. It's a great feeling to get everyone together outside of work to enjoy the amazing local talent on stage!

Our white elephant gift exchange is definitely a Christmas highlight. There's no telling what you might unwrap. A Magic 8-Ball? A drill? Six boxes of Oreo cookies? Anything is possible!

 | @269MAG

Our hope is that the readers of 269 MAGAZINE will become active participants in the world around them and join our mission to make Southwest Michigan the place to build a home, go to work, and bring dreams to reality.

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BY HEATHER BAKER
EDITOR IN CHIEF

PHOTO JACOBLUND (ISTOCK)



Shake It Up!

FIVE TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR WORKPLACE WONDERFUL



YOU'VE HEARD IT BEFORE: WHY MAKE A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION WHEN MOST OF THEM FAIL?

In fact, University of Scranton Psychology Professor John C. Norcross, Ph.D., estimates that fewer than 10 percent of resolutions declared at the stroke of midnight on December 31 are actually achieved in the following year. The reasons for failure are abundant: People pick too many, don't do the hard work, procrastinate, choose something important to do for someone else rather than themselves, or fear failure and quit before they even start the race.

Another reason for failure is that people usually pick a goal to tackle alone. Now I'm not one to condone bending to peer pressure, but I think it can help when attempting to change a longtime habit for the better.

Since most of us spend a third of our lives at work, why wouldn't we want our workplace to be completely enjoyable and operate optimally?

And what better place to establish good habits than at the office? Since most of us spend a third of our lives at work, why wouldn't we want our workplace to be completely enjoyable and operate optimally? Plus, your New Year's office resolution comes with the added benefit of built-in cheerleaders, co-resolutioners, and beneficiaries!

To get you started on your cultural shake-up, this issue of 269 MAGAZINE offers some wonderful examples from workplaces sprinkled throughout Southwest Michigan, beginning on page 15. Looking for an event to get your team engaged? The Greenleaf Trust team has established some great examples that have moved beyond being simply a calendar date to traditions. To make your clients feel at home, check out how Kruggel Lawton turned its offices into a place that's just like home with a perpetual cup of "joe." If moving around is more your thing, then Midwest Energy and Communications proves that work can be productively done standing or sitting (in groups). And, if you're thinking about getting your workout in at work, then tips from Consumers Credit Union can get you across the finish line.

Once you've homed in on the perfect resolution to energize your office culture, here are five tips—one for every day of the week—to make sure your engagement shift lasts the whole year through.

1. Choose wisely. Decide the behavior or practice that you want to change and pick one or two specific things that will support that change. Too much too soon could topple your efforts.

2. Make it achievable. Can you really make 10,000,000 widgets next year if you made only 10,000 this year? Be realistic and set goals along the way that you can attain. Small wins inspire motivation.

3. Be relevant. Does this goal really matter to you and your team? Will it make all of you better together?

4. Set measures. Check your team's pulse before you begin, during, and after. Put your survey on paper, make it electronic in Survey Monkey, or set it up with Simple Poll in Slack.

5. Don't fear change. If you find your team relapsing into old behaviors, remind them of the end game. The path to making your workplace wonderful may not be smooth, but you will not be traveling alone!

So, as you head into the new year, I send you with this wish: May you love where you work for the next 365 days and beyond!

READ ON,

Heather

Tell us about your office culture
@269Mag with #WonderfulWorkplaces!



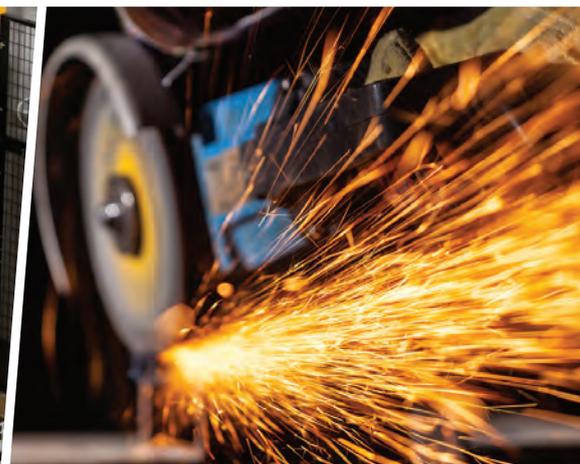
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A group of four children are hula hooping in a gymnasium. In the foreground, a young boy in a green jacket and a girl in a plaid shirt are smiling and hula hooping. In the background, two other children are also hula hooping. A large blue banner with white text is behind them.

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BUILDING THE IDEA FACTORY

TECHNOLOGY WON'T SHAPE THE OFFICE OF THE FUTURE. PEOPLE WILL.

BY ANDREA PRATT PHOTOS HANNAH ZIEGELER AND VASYL DOLMATOV (ISTOCK)

Imagine the office of the future.

What pops into your mind? Maybe it's an artificial intelligence system that reminds you of your schedule as soon as you step foot in your workspace. Or virtual reality technology that allows you to be "in" the meeting room while working remotely. Or perhaps it's something simple, like a coffee maker that always has a fresh cup waiting because it can sense when you're on your way.

While the functions of the futuristic office you envision may differ, chances are that they revolve around technological advancements. Artificial intelligence, virtual reality, the Internet of Things, and other technologies will undoubtedly play a central role.

But designing the office of the future isn't really about technology. It's about people.

THE ERA OF IDEAS

"If we're going to talk about the office of the future, we have to start with people. It's not about things. It's about designing the response to social change."

So said Brian Walker, the recently retired CEO of Herman Miller. He and several other panelists shared their wisdom at "Future of the Office," the inaugural event in Southwest Michigan First's "Future Of" series, in June 2018.

Walker feels that we are entering a new era in office design.

Offices in the era of industry were designed to facilitate process, he explained, resembling shop floors. Upon entering the era of information, the approach changed to designing around technology.

"As technology became dominant, offices were really about moving data and power around," he said. "It was less about housing people and more about what technology they are going to use and how we get the technology to the people."

Now the approach is the opposite.

"In today's world, you have to flip that upside down and start with, 'What do the people do? What are the connections they need to make?' It's less about starting with technology, because the technology is going to be carried around."

If the office of the future will not be designed and organized strictly to improve process or integrate technologies, what is the goal?

"We're organizing to get better ideas," Walker stated. "Our job as companies is to be factories for ideas. How do we get

ideas to move faster and faster through our organization? We're in this world of disruption, so our number one objective as organizations is to get more ideas to prevent being disrupted by somebody else, or to in fact disrupt somebody else."

EXPERIENCES OVER SPACES

How does one design an office for the era of ideas? First, create spaces that draw in people who have great ideas.

"If you think back eight or ten years ago, we were trying to figure out how we were going to create jobs," explained Walker. "Now we have exactly the opposite problem."

A well-designed office plays a significant role in attracting and retaining employees, not to mention enabling them to be as productive as possible.

"The data is pretty conclusive that the next generation will move for employment based as much on the things that you provide to them as for pay," said Walker. "If they have to choose between the two, they're often going to choose community and the place they want to work over pay."

To create an attractive office environment, Walker said, "You have to go from designing spaces to experiences. If you're going to get your people to come [to your organization], you have to create experiences that are better than those at the other places where they could go work. Yes, space is important, but we have to think of it as an experience layer, or how you put things into the space."

TRANSFORMING THE WORKSPACE

A critical part of the office experience is, of course, workspaces. Brian Walker and his fellow "Future of the Office" panelists shared their thoughts about how the office of the future will be organized to provide people with the spaces they need to generate and share ideas.

For one, offices will move from an assigned seat model to more shared work points.

"Data tells us that, across North America, about 60 percent of individual workstations are empty at any one time," Walker shared. "We're building lots of excess capacity."

Herman Miller employees are able to work from home regularly, although the office is the workplace of choice for many. When in the office, Walker could be found in a group work area more often than not. "I'd sit right out in the open. Why? If I'm there 40 percent of my week, it would be a waste for me to have a private office."



"Data tells us that, across North America, about 60 percent of individual workstations are empty at any one time. We're building lots of excess capacity."

BRIAN WALKER, HERMAN MILLER

Adapting the office for the future could also mean moving toward an open floor plan.

Panelist Robb Smalldon, executive vice president of development at Landscape Forms, shared that his workplace has been doing just that.

"We are refreshing our office into a more refined open space," he said. "For us, [cubicles] are very one-dimensional: this is my job, this is my desk, this is my space. Today, we are looking at spaces where we can collaborate."

Even facilities that may traditionally be seen as incompatible with an open office plan have been adopting them. Mike Roeder, president and chief operating officer of Fabri-Kal Corporation, discussed the transformation of the company's plant to an open plan.

"We used to have offices in our building. They are now out in the plant. It's an open area for everybody. It's no longer a supervisor going out to the line to see what's going on."

He explained that this new dynamic has had a positive effect on energy and interaction in the plant.

"How do you relay that good idea that you have? If you have an environment that's got a lot of walls and hallways and offices, and you have to go up the hierarchy to [share] that good idea, then it doesn't work. To me, it's [about having a] whole culture and mentality of [creating] energy. We're here to interact and to think of a better way of doing things."

Walker mentioned that the resistance some may feel toward open workspaces could be due to poor implementation in the past.

"I think there was a time when [talking] about an open plan really meant, 'We're going to set up a room and throw benches in there.' It wasn't that the idea [of an open plan] was bad. It's that we [went to] a spot of one size fits all. That's when you should raise your red flag—the minute somebody tells you everybody should have the same thing."

That is to say, the days of private workspaces are not over.

"It's not about taking away space for individual work; it's about building the right blend so that the office is not an individual thing but a collective set of systems," stressed Walker. "Do you need private offices? Of course. Do you need conference rooms? Absolutely. Do you need group spaces? Yes."

The allocation of spaces shouldn't be determined based on hierarchy or status; it should depend on what an individual needs for the work that they do. "You have to optimize for the network. This is a little bit hard for the people who have grown up in organizations that optimize space based not on need but status."

It takes listening to the needs of the individual, agreed Roeder. And perhaps some trial and error.

"We've gone through every case study of what not to do. We started off with 'What size [space] should everybody get?' Now we have a team of leaders talking to people and asking: 'Whom do you interact with?' 'What do you need?' 'What does your space need?'"

For instance, Walker explained that Herman Miller's chief legal counsel works from a private office for a considerable portion of the time.

"He's almost always on the phone with somebody, working on a legal issue. He has a private office. It isn't because of his status or mine. He would actually like to come and sit with the rest of us in the open space because he realizes that we're moving faster. He's trying to keep up with us because he's not in the middle of the flow."

Walker likens determining the mix of spaces needed in the office to designing a home.

"When it comes to office design, we often think it's either/or. It's either my space or your space, but it can't be our space. If you think about your own home, can you imagine if you designed every room as individual rooms for each person? You wouldn't think of it that way. You'd think of each room having a special purpose."

By cutting down on the space needed for individual work areas, there are more opportunities to include the spaces that employees are asking for.

"If you asked your people, what would they tell you they don't have?" Walker asked. "Enough spaces to meet."

Just like open office plans, group meeting spaces can facilitate connections that need to be made and the conversations that need to be had to accelerate idea-making.

"It's all about idea sharing," emphasized panelist Meghan Boyer, manager of interior design at TowerPinkster. "It's about creating those connections, bringing people together so they can talk and share ideas."

BUILDING CULTURAL HUBS

The office of the future will also be designed to encourage connections outside of workspaces.

"[We want to provide] an environment that has a tremendous amount of energy that promotes positive interactions," said Roeder.

"Google recognizes that you have to get people excited by work and by the people they work with," Walker added. "Increasingly, we've got to think about that holistic experience when you are deliberately trying to attract the best people."

Employees are more likely to stay in their place of employment if they have formed connections.

"There was a big study done on churches years ago that said if you [attended] more than three times without making a friend,

you'll never stick with the church," Walker shared. "Work is exactly the same. If you don't have a shared experience, then you're not going to stick."

"The research is proving that it's about forming those relationships and creating those opportunities for connection," concurred Meghan Boyer. "[If] you have that trust and you have those relationships built, that's what keeps you at work. It's not necessarily the work you're actually doing. It's the people you're working with."



"The research is proving that it's about forming those relationships and creating those opportunities to connect...it's not necessarily the work you're actually doing. It's the people you're working with."

MEGHAN BOYER, TOWERPINKSTER

To encourage those necessary connections, the office of the future will include more intentional gathering places outside of work areas.

"You're seeing progressive companies today not think about the office and break room, but they are thinking 'How do we build cultural hubs within the space?'" Walker said. "If you came to our place, we have this giant coffee bar right in the middle of the Design Yard."

It is a space that deliberately invites people to gather.

Walker described a moment at the coffee bar with a colleague who hadn't visited the Design Yard, Herman Miller's corporate headquarters, in a while:

"He said, 'Where did we get all the young people? You guys must be hiring like crazy over here.' The answer was no; we've just taken the covers off of people. Now people are in this central neighborhood, starting to gather together, and you can feel the energy rising in the place."

Walker noted that seemingly insignificant circulation space—the pathways that people use to move through and around a space, such as hallways, stairways, and mezzanines—will also play a key role.

"We know that about 25 to 30 percent of space is circulation space," he said. "We tend to think about that as dead space. But we can deliberately design those spaces as a way to get people to walk into each other and have conversations."

By designing the office to foster connections and community, an organization can provide a space in which people want to linger. Walker shared that his objective while at Herman Miller was to encourage people to stay in the office after their meetings, which he said was especially important now that the internet allows people to work from virtually anywhere.

"If you're one of our designers and I get you to stay longer in our building, I get more ideas out of you and more time with you bouncing ideas off our people than any of my competitors. If you're a supplier, when you come to that building to work on a new product, we want you to stay because I can bet someone in our research and development process is going to see [you] and think of another idea."

Herman Miller's Design Yard was created with that objective in mind.

"We thought, 'How do we make this feel like it's the hub of the network?' When people come here, we don't want them to think they're outsiders. We want them to think they're invited guests in the middle of the network."



Any technology has to be incorporated into its surroundings intelligently, Walker added.

“Companies hire architects to design [their] building. Then they hire a furniture company. Then they hire somebody to put in the technology.” If these aspects are not combined well, “you get a room that’s been designed as a box, and then people put technology and furniture into it.”

Walker emphasized that the groups have to be brought together to design spaces as integrated experiences.

CHANGE IS INEVITABLE

If you’re part of a progressive organization, perhaps you’ve already seen steps taken to transform your office in the ways that Brian Walker, Robb Smalldon, Mike Roeder, and Meghan Boyer described.

While there will be common threads, like those that the panelists shared, the office of the future doesn’t look the same for every business. Plus, it will constantly be evolving as society and technology advance and change how people work.

“I’m sure we’re going to see more disruption,” said Walker. “There are going to be more societal changes coming. I think we’re in a great spot, where productivity is going to move at a fast pace in the next 10 years. I think we’re almost on the cusp of another change as we start to see things like artificial intelligence.”

That doesn’t mean that offices will need to be updated only when society or technology leaps forward. They should be changing incrementally along the way.

“Generally, when we redesign spaces, we get done and think it’s over,” Walker said. “We wait 10 years to come back and touch it again, no matter how productive it is in the intervening years. It just sits there, rather than us asking ourselves, ‘Is our work changing?’ You can spend less on physical assets, but you have to be more active with changing and making sure it’s being used.”

For offices in the era of ideas, the only constant is change. But one thing will stay the same: a focus on people.

“If you can think about your company being a factory for ideas and a magnet for the best people who have ideas, and that’s your overarching goal, that’s where competitive advantage will come from,” said Walker. “It won’t be from technology. Technology will be your secret sauce [for] getting the best people together.”

As long as people come first in the design process, the idea factory will be more likely to send plenty of ideas down the production line.

TECHNOLOGY’S ROLE

While providing the spaces that each employee needs to create and connect is key in designing the office of the future, technology will still play a significant role, Walker assured.

“Technology ultimately does change the way offices and people work and how people orient themselves towards work.”

However, technology integration will be focused on supporting people.

“Increasingly, we’re going to see technology that is more ambient, in the background, learning from us and beginning to anticipate our needs,” Walker said.

He mentioned Herman Miller’s focus on furniture that is part of the “connected tool network.” Imagine a height-adjustable table that automatically rises or lowers based on your schedule.

“If I stand, it automatically rises with me,” he described. “If I turn my chair like I’m leaving, it knows I’m leaving and doesn’t rise. It reads my calendar as well, and it knows I have 15 minutes in between meetings and I’m going to come back and check my email real quickly, so it rises to greet me at a standing height.”

Connected devices could also provide clues about which spaces are underutilized.

“One of the advantages is that we’re going to get data. What’s being used? What’s not being used? How can it be better? We’re able to reduce space, by 20 to 25 percent, by thinking about it more deliberately. That means we could spend more money on the experience.”



If you have an environment that’s got a lot of walls and hallways and offices, and you have to go up the hierarchy to [share] that good idea, then it doesn’t work.

MIKE ROEDER, FABRI-KAL



WONDERFUL WORKPLACES

2018



WHAT MAKES AN ACE WORKPLACE?

What is it that makes you excited to walk into work each day? Is it the new foosball table in the break room? Or is it something more intangible—like culture—that truly makes the difference?

To help answer this question, our editorial team scoured the region to find the premier places to work. Along the way, we found treadmill desks, Nerf guns and coffee bars, and were met with warm handshakes, friendly faces, and one-of-a-kind workplace cultures. No matter how different each approach may be, all of 269 MAGAZINE's 2018 Wonderful Workplace winners prove that you can find out-of-this-world culture right here in Southwest Michigan.



WSI, A NATIONALLY ACCLAIMED STAFFING AND RECRUITING AGENCY, HELPS LOCAL CANDIDATES FIND SUITABLE EMPLOYMENT AND GROW IN THEIR CAREERS.

Though its team is dedicated to matching clients with the perfect job, that passion is driven by WSI's commitment to building a better community—in and out of the office. To accomplish this, WSI holds quarterly “Days of Caring,” when its whole team volunteers for a local cause.

“A lot of the people who we're helping find jobs are using the resources in the community. We have to understand how it comes full circle,” says Lauren Rogalski, manager of corporate culture. “The more that we can help the nonprofits and organizations that are giving back to the people in our communities, the better off we all are.” In the past, the WSI team has cleared trails and stalls at the Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center, helped the Salvation Army set up a toy store for families to shop over Christmas, and participated in multiple drives for United Way.

While these efforts have done a lot of good for the Southwest Michigan community, Rogalski notes that the “Days of Caring” have benefited WSI internally as well. “I do think it brings on an incredible camaraderie just to be able to go out and spend quality time with somebody from a different division and really get to know them,” she says. These charitable excursions not only shake up the team's day-to-day activities but also keep the organization connected to the community it serves.

Not satisfied even with quarterly volunteering, WSI tries to make every workday a “Day of Caring” by using an online

program called “You Earned It” to celebrate teammates who go above and beyond. “It is like Facebook for the workplace,” explains Rogalski. “You can log in and shout out your coworkers for being awesome. But it's not for when you do your reports fast enough. It's for when someone exemplifies what we want to be as a company and has passion driven

I do think it brings on an incredible camaraderie just to be able to go out and spend quality time with somebody from a different division and really get to know them.

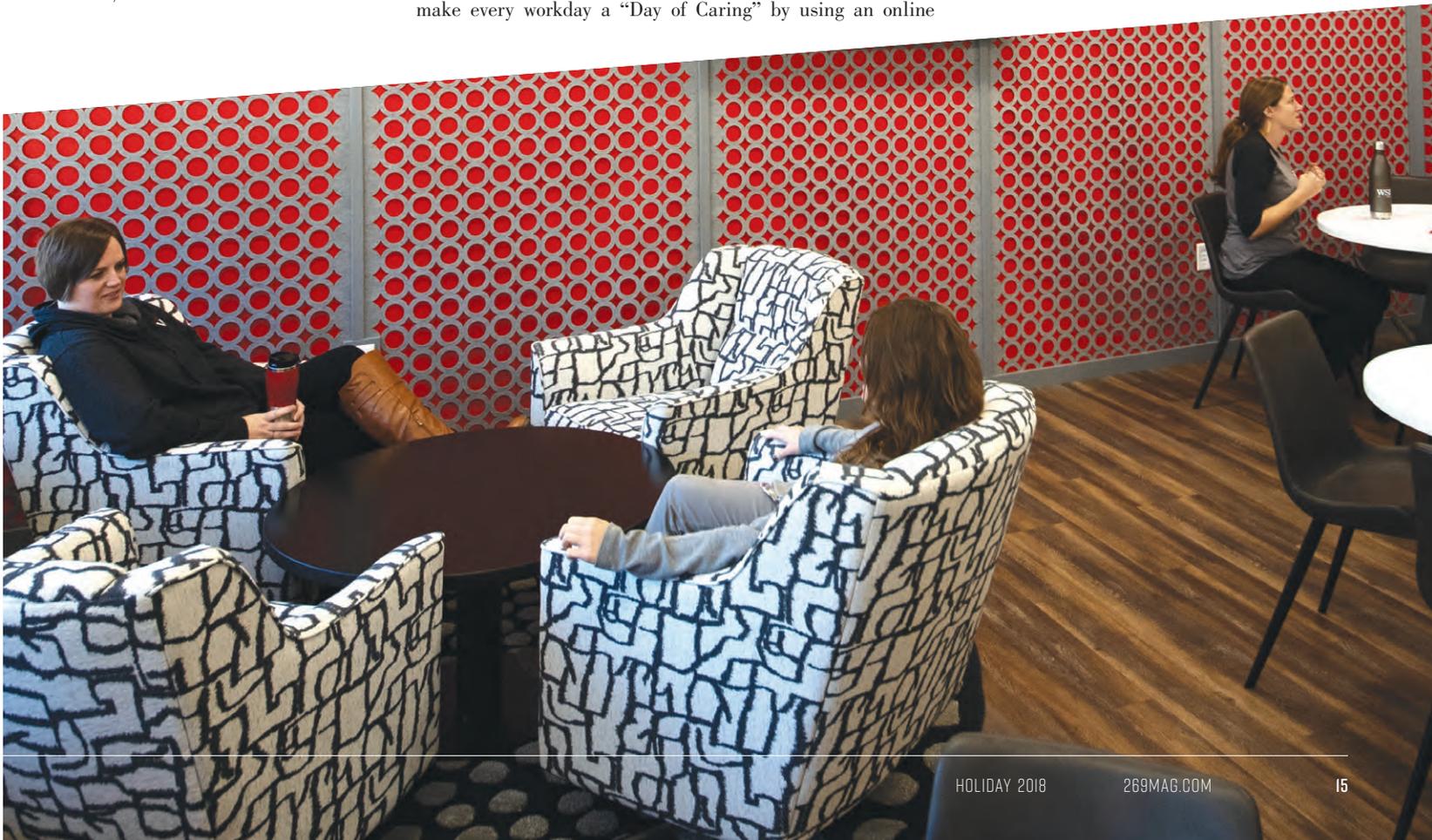
LAUREN ROGALSKI, MANAGER OF CORPORATE CULTURE

toward our purpose.” The team can even set customized behavior bonuses, incentivizing a particular behavior or task that they would like to see. And after accumulating recognition points, team members can sort through a catalog of 200,000 prizes and gift cards to choose their reward, making it fun to pitch in.

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GABRIELLE CONTESTI, BUSINESS INFORMATION ANALYST

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For a business that deals with people’s livelihoods and the volatility of financial markets, this is a place where team engagement and communication are must-have assets.

“Twelve years ago, Greenleaf Trust formed the Communications and Culture Workgroup to meet monthly to focus on nurturing and continuously improving the way we engender workplace culture,” says Vice President, Director of Marketing Sarah Johansson. Workgroup members are selected from all divisions across the 120-employee company which is spread across five locations. “We are privately held and therefore focused on our clients first, followed closely by teammates, and then shareholders. The efforts of the workgroup make it possible for each Greenleaf Trust teammate to raise their hand each day and say, ‘I was able to do the right thing for our clients.’”

“We have social events, we have wellness events, we have traditions, things that we have done every year,” explains Gabrielle Contesti, business information analyst and a workgroup participant. “For example, the Fall Festival celebrates Halloween

with a children’s fashion show and [encourages] our employees to come and see our families grow up every single year.”

There are multiple activities throughout the year—35 last year—for employees to connect. There’s something for everyone—from adult recess, when employees play chalked-out sidewalk games while enjoying a snow cone, to a tailgate featuring Western Michigan University Coach Tim Lester to get everyone excited for the upcoming football season. Employees are encouraged to wear yellow ribbons on Veterans Day and write notes of appreciation to each other on Valentine’s Day. Come the holidays, the team’s sense of philanthropic giving takes over as they purchase and wrap gifts for multiple foster families and culminates in a sit-down holiday dinner for all, “plus one.”

At locations outside of the corporate headquarters, a culture ambassador is responsible for coordinating similar events and initiatives that are meaningful to team members who work there. And there’s cross-location connectivity too, as one wellness initiative staked out a simulated walking trail linking all five locations; for 12 weeks, employees trekked on foot, virtually, to each one.

Johansson is quick to credit Chairman William (Bill) D. Johnston with setting the vision for the culture: “Bill always reminds me: ‘Don’t ever take your eyes off the culture. It’s the most important thing.’”





WELLNESS

WELLNESS INVESTMENT PAYS OUT IN DIVIDENDS

Consumers Credit Union

CREDIT UNION
OSHTEMO, MI



CONSUMERS CREDIT UNION UNDERSTANDS THAT A HEALTHY TEAM PRODUCES HEALTHY RESULTS.

In recent years, the credit union has expanded to 19 locations across Southwest Michigan. Last year, it unveiled its state-of-the-art headquarters in Texas Township. There, Consumers team members can be seen interacting in real time with clients, grabbing a healthy snack from the kitchen or walking together in “Team Consumers” gear to a fitness class at the on-site gym.

To encourage physical wellness, as well as collaboration, Consumers Credit Union covers costs for gym memberships, marathon registrations, and even ski trips. While at work, team members from all levels of the organization participate together in on-site barre, high intensity interval training (HIIT), and other fitness classes while tracking their progress together through a shared wellness app. With this app, they can book personal coaches, compete in health challenges, and work toward the reward of an Amazon gift card.

But the credit union doesn’t limit its workplace wellness to just the physical; the company makes sure that its team is also well mentally and emotionally. “Everybody in the credit union has access to coaching whether it’s for stress, finances, physical fitness, or nutrition,” says Chief Human Resources Officer Shawn Premer. “We also have a success coach who comes in

every Wednesday to help our people solve any challenges they might have.” Consumers also has a shared fund dedicated to helping employees during a personal crisis. Last year, employees came together to assist the family of a team member facing surgery.

Everybody in the credit union has access to coaching, whether it’s for stress, finances, physical fitness, or nutrition.

SHAWN PREMER, CHIEF HUMAN
RESOURCES OFFICER

For Consumers, doing the right thing for both clients and employees is the key to success. “To be a successful organization and serve our members well, we know that we need a high level of employee satisfaction,” emphasizes Lindsay Land, vice president of operations. “That starts with having an excellent culture and investing in your people. We know it is the right thing to do, but it also gets real results.”

BRIGHT AND FUN

A PERFECT BLEND OF CORE VALUES AND COFFEE

Kruggel Lawton

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS
ST. JOSEPH, MI

KRUGGEL LAWTON IS NOT YOUR STANDARD ACCOUNTING FIRM.

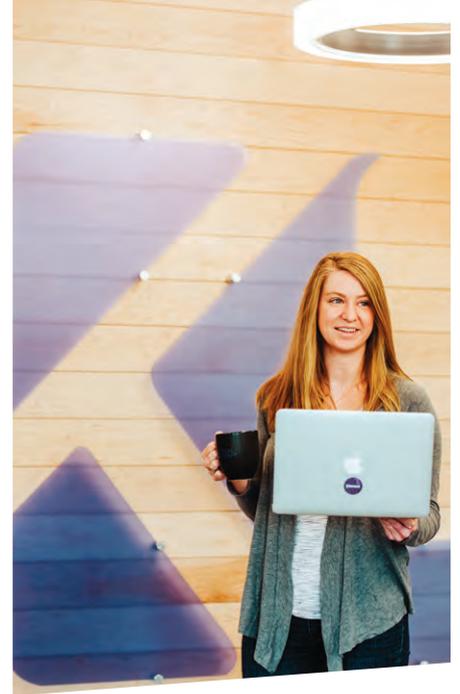
Come tax season, work may not be all fun and games, but Kruggel Lawton tries to keep things light even in the most hectic time of the year. On Fridays during tax season, the firm's St. Joseph office caters in lunch for everyone, so the team can unwind. And on April 15, when it's all over, the company hosts a firm-wide Tax Day Party featuring an evening of music, games, food, and celebration for the entire team.

When meeting a Kruggel Lawton employee, one immediately becomes aware that warm, genuine, down-to-earth, and fun personalities are the norm throughout the company. And letting those personalities shine was one of the drivers behind the design that accompanied the company's July 2018 move to a new location

If someone stops in with a quick question, they can stand by the coffee bar, which is much more welcoming [than being whisked into an office].

ERIN BONIN, MARKETING DIRECTOR

in St. Joseph. Furnished with cushioned conference spaces and a comfortable coffee bar where team members chat with clients, the lobby makes this clear. "The new design was really about just having a more hospitable space," states Erin Bonin, marketing director. "If someone stops in with a quick question, they can stand by the coffee bar, which is much more welcoming [than being whisked into an office]. I really love being able to say to clients, 'Stop by anytime and grab a cup of coffee!'"



Since the move, Kruggel Lawton has enjoyed having more room to stretch out and have some fun along the way. The new building features modern glass walls embossed with decals applied to mimic ledger paper, which was used by accountants before technology made it possible to go paperless. Sometimes they are decorated with suctioned Nerf gun ammo, as toy dart guns have gotten quite popular among the team. "Everybody is relaxed and likes to have a good time, and we encourage that," says Bonin. The firm even recently changed its dress code policy, encouraging employees to "dress for their day," and tailor work outfits based on whether their schedule calls for meetings with clients or working with teammates.

Along with emblazoning its core values on the walls of its break and training rooms, the company makes a concerted effort to live them out by picking one per year on which to concentrate. Throughout 2018, "respect" was the value of focus, with team members receiving stamped bracelets as reminders. Team members were encouraged to post kudos on cardboard tent boards and Kruggel Lawton's internal communication platform for team members who showed respect to clients, coworkers, and even neighbors. Especially neighbors—as the new location sits within a real neighborhood, team members went door to door with Kilwins' treats to introduce themselves, explain how they would impact traffic, and invite them to stop in anytime. The Kruggel Lawton door stands open: stop by for a great cup of coffee plus sound tax, assurance, and accounting advice!



through Gallup CliftonStrengths and DiSC assessments, and every year, the company hosts a retreat emphasizing the need for better interactions. By breaking down the basics of communication, the TowerPinkster

We've got a lot of young folks. Through mentorship, we are trying to help them start their careers and get a broader picture of the world than they may have had either growing up or in school.

BJORN GREEN, PRESIDENT AND CEO

CULTURE ADVISORY TEAM

**BUILDING A BETTER
WORKPLACE ONE
INTERACTION AT A TIME**

THE ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS AT TOWERPINKSTER HAVE HELPED DESIGN SOME WONDERFUL-LOOKING WORKPLACES SINCE THE COMPANY'S FOUNDING IN 1953.

TowerPinkster

**ARCHITECTURAL AND PLANNING FIRM
KALAMAZOO, MI**

However, for President and CEO Bjorn Green, a workplace is measured not by its appearance, but by the quality of day-to-day interactions within its team. "I think it's all about building relationships with one another," emphasizes Green. "When you have a challenging project, you need to have a strong relationship with the people you work with. You have to be able to trust them and communicate with them."

To help its team grow, TowerPinkster has taken time to focus on communication skills. "We've got a lot of young folks," says Green. "Through mentorship, we are trying to help them start their careers and get a broader picture of the world than they may have had either growing up or in school." Team members discover their personal strengths and communication styles

team learns the best ways to interact on an individual basis, something Green believes is the cornerstone of the company's success.

But if communications and trust are the foundation of a terrific team, TowerPinkster then builds upon these fundamentals by teaching the skills team members need to succeed in the workplace, well into the future. To take its team to the next level, the company hosts seminars that teach good health and wellness practices, financial well-being, social wellness, and community building. "We're trying to build strong leaders in every department," remarks Green. "I think that's all just good practice. Being good stewards of our industry and community means really putting effort into building the leaders of the future."





EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP
**WALK INTO WORK LIKE
 YOU OWN THE PLACE**

Gibson

RISK MANAGEMENT
 KALAMAZOO, MI

When we own a part of the business, we own that relationship with our clients. They're not corporate's clients; they're our clients.

BRIAN BELLWARE, EMPLOYEE BENEFITS CONSULTANT

GIBSON TEAM MEMBERS PRIDE THEMSELVES ON BEING ADVISORS AND CONSULTANTS, NOT JUST COMMERCIAL AND PERSONAL INSURANCE BROKERS.

They offer solutions to guard against risk, helping their clients protect what's most important to them, like their homes, businesses, and employees. And to ensure the company provides the best service possible, and to drive engagement and responsibility within its team, it has a unique internal structure.

After six months of service, every Gibson employee becomes part of its Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), making them a part owner of the company. "When we own a part of the business, we own that relationship with our clients. They're not corporate's clients; they're our clients," explains Brian Bellware, employee benefits consultant. This dynamic fuels Gibson's engaged and egalitarian culture as the company grows together. "Gibson's target is to triple in size over the next 10 years," continues

Bellware. "It's exciting that we get to be a part of that. We all share in that success."

The organization's structure also encourages greater transparency within the team. "Every quarter, we share with our employees how we did financially versus our plan. We want everyone to be fully in the loop," says Chairman and CEO Tim Leman. However, transparency at Gibson goes both ways. The company regularly surveys its team to find out what workplace improvements could be made to increase engagement. "When we asked, we found that culture is not about ping-pong tables and foosball. We found out that culture is actually about being straightforward, attentive, and caring," recalls Leman.

The results from these anonymous surveys give Gibson the data it needs to be purposeful about its culture as the company expands. For example, when it opened its new office in Kalamazoo, Gibson made sure to include the workplace features its team actually wanted, such as pneumatic standing desks and an on-site physical training center. For Gibson, its ESOP plan has not only led to creating the workplace its part owners want; it has lowered costs, increased engagement, and enabled the company to attract some of the most talented minds in the business.





WIDE OPEN SPACES
OPEN ENVIRONMENTS
JUMP-START
COMMUNICATION
AND MORE

DENSO

MOBILITY SUPPLIER
BATTLE CREEK, MI

We are able to share what we know and be flexible. The open office environment leads to that...That's where teamwork comes from.

NATALIE EBIG SCOTT,
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION LEADER

IN BATTLE CREEK, 3,000 PEOPLE REPORT TO WORK DAILY AT DENSO CORPORATION'S MANUFACTURING HUB.

The site is where DENSO, the world's second largest mobility supplier, produces all of its thermal systems in North America. To manufacture its advanced automotive cooling and heating systems while staying on the forefront of the fields of electrification and automated driving, the company remains steadfastly committed to a culture of continuous improvement in its highly-automated processes as well as the ability of its people to communicate directly at a pace of well over 60 miles per hour.

"We monitor how quickly and with the best quality and safety we can make an HVAC [heating ventilation and air conditioning] or an ECM [engine control module] system. Those same principles also apply to an office worker in our manufacturing environment," says Natalie Ebig Scott, communications section leader. Off its plant floors, DENSO's office space is wide open

for engineering, human resources, purchasing, finance, accounting, and payroll departments to mix freely. "The number of people you can touch in a day is almost unthinkable," continues Scott.

The environment and accessibility made quite an impression on Lance Lys, a 2018 summer intern who had access to DENSO's CEO on day one. "The office is wide open. Everyone has their own desk, but the CEO, CFO, directors, managers, and [everyone else] all sit together. There is no special area and the [company's leadership] sit intertwined with everyone, making it easier to feel comfortable and do analysis."

What was expected to fill his entire summer was due in less than one month. With no doors or walls, Lys was easily able to approach and then work with multiple teams to successfully assemble his dynamic project.

One glance around DENSO's space confirms the company's focus on how people communicate. "We are able to share what we know and be flexible. The open office environment lends to that. If someone has a question, I know at least where to direct them to better service our customers—whether that's an associate or an automaker or a business partner. That's where teamwork comes from," says Scott.





MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAM

HOW A HELLO CAN BECOME A LASTING RELATIONSHIP

The Wiser Financial Group

FINANCIAL PLANNING
KALAMAZOO, MI

We serve multiple generations of clients and in some cases, entire families. We have to make sure each is comfortable with their financial plan. But we also need to find ways to engage clients of different ages.

KATELYN CHARBENEAU, DIRECTOR OF CLIENT ENGAGEMENT

WHEN YOU DIAL THE PHONE NUMBER OF WISER FINANCIAL GROUP, YOU WILL ALWAYS BE GREETED WITH A CHEERFUL “HELLO” AND NEVER A MACHINE.

This philosophy of fostering real, human connections is also behind the tray of fresh-baked cookies that greets guests in the lobby.

In turn, the people who make this level of service possible, the Wiser staff, have glowing words for their employer. “When I had my accident, they provided food for my mother and me for as long as six months,” remembers Financial Advisor Denise Garten. “I’ve been here for 11 years now. It’s the best place I’ve worked in my whole career.” Garten’s story is not uncommon

at Wiser; in fact, the company has an average tenure of 16 years.

As Wiser Financial has grown, its culture and retention rate have allowed multiple generations of team members to work in the same space. “[Our founder] Ron really took some time years ago to structure our team approach with different levels of experience and different backgrounds. Team veterans can share some wisdom and younger coworkers bring a fresh perspective,” remarks Managing Partner Wesley Lentz. At Wiser, Millennials, Gen Xers, and Baby Boomers all work together with the common goal of providing the highest level of financial and personal service to clients.

Having a team of diverse perspectives has served the firm well because when families choose Wiser financial planners, they usually stick with them for generations. “We serve multiple generations of clients and, in some cases, entire families,” says Katelyn Charbeneau, director of client engagement. “We have to make sure each client is comfortable with their financial plan. But we also need to find ways to engage clients of different ages.” To accomplish this, and give back to the community, Wiser Financial Group organizes regular outings at charity events for the whole team, their families, and clients, with the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, Kalamazoo Institute of Art, American Diabetes Association, and many more.



VARIED WORKSPACES

ENERGIZED WORKSPACES PLUG INTO CLIENT AND EMPLOYEE NEEDS

Midwest Energy and Communications

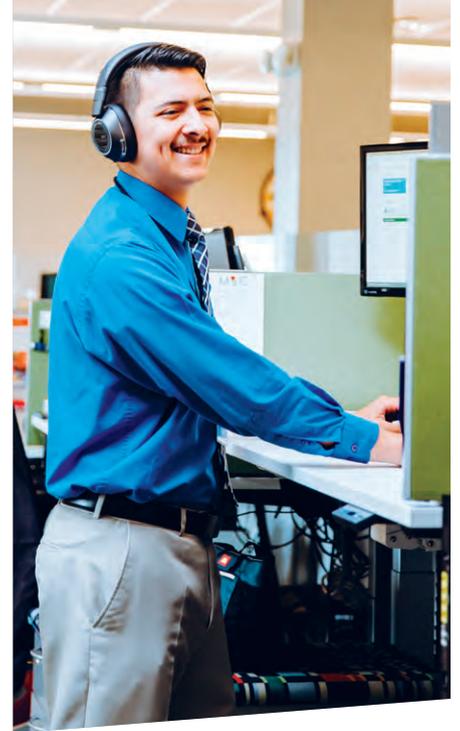
UTILITIES PROVIDER
CASSOPOLIS, MI

UPON ENTERING THE LOBBY OF MIDWEST ENERGY AND COMMUNICATIONS (MEC), THE CLIENT EXPERIENCE TRULY BEGINS.

Visitors are greeted in the “Internet of Things (IOT) Room,” which sports the latest high-tech gadgets. Why? Providing electricity and high-speed internet to rural areas is part of what MEC does every day, and MEC employees use the IOT room to introduce their clients to the possibilities high-speed internet affords, like connecting to an Amazon Alexa, colored smart lights, and even a smart crockpot.

Patty Nowlin, vice president of corporate communications, contends that MEC’s culture has always been strong—but a sparkling new building helped. “The new space has made things a little easier, but I think that the culture is still the same,” she observes. “The people didn’t change. It’s just that now we have the ability to work more efficiently and more effectively.”

Indeed, when MEC relocated to its sleek, hyper-modern headquarters, the move opened up many options for its team. Adjustable standing desks, tech-equipped collaboration stations, and both private and group workstations now offer a palette of workspaces for team members to complement the advanced technology available throughout. “My standing desk is my absolute favorite!” says Sergio Moreno, a technical solutions agent. “But sometimes I do get a joke here and there, like, ‘You’re such a stand-up guy.’” MEC employees can even



connect their laptop to a mounted screen to begin an impromptu meeting, check into the private and aptly named “Get ‘R Done Room,” or set their laptop on a treadmill desk to get moving.

The people didn’t change. It’s just that now we have the ability to work more efficiently and more effectively.

PATTY NOWLIN, VICE PRESIDENT OF
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

Patty says that the new space was intentionally designed to give team members varying spaces to work to accommodate different work styles and daily demands while also bringing them together in a new way. Goal accomplished!





FAMILY FIRMS

FIELDING NEW PLAYERS TO FILL THE ROSTER

Ron Jackson Insurance Agency

PERSONAL AND BUSINESS INSURANCE
KALAMAZOO, MI

RON JACKSON INSURANCE WAS FOUNDED BY A FORMER CHICAGO WHITE SOX AND BOSTON RED SOX PLAYER IN 1962 AND HAS STAYED IN THE KALAMAZOO AREA, AND IN THE FAMILY, EVER SINCE.

Today, the organization is staffed by members of the Jackson family, but it has also expanded its ranks to include new “family” members. “We are one big family. But on two levels,” states Ron Jackson’s son, Mark Jackson, who serves as the company’s president alongside his sister, Operations Manager Jennifer Jackson.

When I started in this business, potential clients would meet me and say, ‘There isn’t a more honest man in the community than your dad.’ It was always such an honor.

JENNIFER JACKSON, OPERATIONS MANAGER

To make sure that every new hire is a perfect match for the family culture, the agency has a rigorous hiring strategy. Jennifer explains, “Because we are such a tight group, one of my biggest concerns was how a new person would fit. So before we hire anyone, we have a job shadowing stage and then a team interview, so everyone has a say in whether the newbie will be good for our culture.”

In years past, the Ron Jackson team has been spread out between two locations, but recently,



the team moved to a new home base, completely reimagining an old community bank. There, they have found that they work best when they can collaborate and support each other in the same space. The team participates in regular activities like book clubs to better themselves professionally, and constant coaching pushes new team members of all levels to new heights.

Together, the Ron Jackson Insurance team continues to live out the legacy that its founder intended, proudly displaying its values on the wall. “I am so grateful to dad,” says Jennifer Jackson. “I know he’s super proud of us continuing to grow. When I started in the business, potential clients would meet me and say, ‘There isn’t a more honest man in the community than your dad.’ It was always such an honor. And it’s our responsibility to continue that legacy for the community.”





EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

**PUTTING OTHERS FIRST
MAKES A DIFFERENCE**

Keystone Solutions Group

MEDICAL DEVICE SOLUTIONS
KALAMAZOO, MI

KEYSTONE SOLUTIONS GROUP, A WEST MICHIGAN-BASED PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND MEDICAL DEVICE CONTRACT MANUFACTURING COMPANY, FINDS THAT ITS EMPLOYEE-CENTRIC CULTURE HELPS IT TO FOCUS ON WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT: ITS CUSTOMERS.

"I know that what I do each day matters. It matters to my team, my customer, and my company," says Product Development Manager Jason Barr.

Director of Operations Vaughn Gerber explains how President Jim Medsker assembles his multifaceted team: "The type of person that fits our culture is somebody who is a self-starter, self-motivated, collaborative, and a team player who serves with humility. It's putting others first. We just roll up our sleeves and get it done."

The company's war rooms are designed for collaboration, featuring custom-designed workstations with embedded horizontal screens. Up to eight people can gather around and visibly mark up and expand upon ideas. At any time, any one of the company's employees can be called into the iterative process. "We all are here to help one another. Office staff help production if needed. Production can help product development," says Production Supervisor/Planner Kari Treat.

I know what I am doing is helping people. The products we design and make save lives. I may never meet one of those patients, but every day, I think about them.

SISU LULL, CLEANROOM LEAD

To acknowledge employee contributions, a "Kudos" wall stands prominently in the production space. Employees write and post notes recognizing team members' service to customers and each other on the wall, which was designed by Treat. These notes are physical manifestations of Keystone Solutions Group's commitment to helping customers bring their ideas to fruition. Many of the resulting products, like wound care kits and MRI markers that help treat prostate cancer, go on to save lives in the world of healthcare. Cleanroom Lead Sisulull says, "I know that what I am doing is helping people. The products we design and make save lives. I may never meet one of those patients, but every day, I think about them. It makes me feel like my job makes a difference."

It's those attitudes of ownership that were front and center at this year's annual meeting, where 90 percent of the meeting focused on each employee, their role, their contribution to their department, and touching facts about their family, children, hobbies, and strengths. For Medsker, "Keystone is about building long-term, mutually-beneficial relationships and creating value within our team, with our customers, suppliers, and all stakeholders. Our team is truly a work family."



WORK/LIFE BALANCE

A LITTLE LATITUDE GOES A LONG WAY

GT Independence

SELF-DIRECTED SERVICES

STURGIS, MI



FOR GT INDEPENDENCE, SELF-DETERMINATION IS EVERYTHING.

“Think of the choices you make every day,” explains Holly Carmichael, chief operating officer at GT Independence. “You choose when to take a shower, what you want to eat for lunch, and so on. But even those basic things aren’t always afforded to people with disabilities. That’s where we can help.”

GT Independence serves over 17,000 people in Michigan, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Florida, and Colorado who have long-term care needs or disabilities by facilitating their efforts to easily hire and employ caregivers. The company handles all legally-required paperwork, time tracking, payroll, tax filings, and insurance concerns as a fiscal intermediary. Its services enable individuals to live the life they want to live in their own home and on their own schedule.

We honor what’s important to you, if you honor what’s important to us. It’s been the best way to operate the business.

JOHN CARMICHAEL, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Not satisfied with just empowering its clients, GT Independence also lives out its founding value—“Your Life. Your Choice.”—in its workplace. The company has created a culture in which its employees have great autonomy. “Anybody who works here

knows that the culture is built around this idea that no matter who you are, you’re entitled to make decisions about whom you spend your time with, who walks through your front door, and how you live your life. Everybody. That is the cornerstone of our culture,” says Chief Executive Officer John Carmichael.

Because of this culture of flexibility, team members don’t have to feel guilty taking their child to a dentist appointment or leaving a little early to make it to a tee-ball game. GT Independence also gives many of its employees the option to telecommute, encouraging team members to find their optimal work/life balance. John argues that an open culture is much more effective than trying to monitor and control behavior: “We honor what’s important to you, if you honor what’s important to us. It’s been the best way to operate the business. Giving people the latitude to make that commitment, rather than being paternalistic and trying to monitor their behavior, yields such a collaborative team environment.”



COLLABORATION PLACES

CHECK IN TO A GREAT DAY AT WORK

BDO USA

ACCOUNTING, TAX, AUDIT,
AND CONSULTING SERVICES
KALAMAZOO, MI

BDO, A GLOBAL ACCOUNTING NETWORK, HAS OFFICES ALL OVER THE WORLD. IN ORDER TO FUNCTION OPTIMALLY ACROSS LOCATIONS, THE COMPANY HAS COME UP WITH SOME INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS.

Located in the heart of the city's downtown, BDO's Kalamazoo office decided to tear down its grey cubical walls to let in more light and opportunity for collaboration. "The office is very open now and allows for people to come in and mingle," says CPA and Tax Senior Josh Light. "And coming in every day with such a great view of downtown gives me a better connection with the city and the community I grew up in."

I love having the opportunity to work where I need to—whether that's at Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, at home, or while traveling—and still get everything done.

JOSH LIGHT, CPA & TAX SENIOR

In addition, BDO has no assigned seats in any of its offices. Instead, the

company relies on a hoteling system where team members can "check in" to workspaces across its worldwide offices and reserve a desk months in advance. "The system is based on a software network that is linked to all the buildings that we have offices in," explains Light. "We collaborate a lot with the Grand Rapids office and use [the team and site there] as a support system. The space allows for a lot of that working back and forth. It's very easy for someone from Grand Rapids to come down here, plug in, and work with their team down here. It really leads to more flexibility."

BDO's flexible workspace also extends beyond the boundaries of the traditional office. Its employees can "check in" from home to work more easily, taking their office space with them. Some team members have even made use of this policy by taking "working vacations," connecting with coworkers and clients from all over the globe. "I love having the opportunity to work where I need to—whether that's at Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, at home, or while traveling—and still get everything done," says Light. "If I had to pick a word, I would say it is a very energizing environment."



VALUES

FUN AS A CORE VALUE

Airway Fun Center

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT
PORTAGE, MI

We set aside a little bit of money in case an employee is struggling and needs something. There was a bartender once who didn't have any heat, and when we found out, we fixed it for her. It was the right thing to do.

MARC WEISS, GENERAL MANAGER

BOWLING LANES, GO-KARTS, A FOUR-PERSON HUMAN GYROSCOPE, AND EVEN A VIRTUAL REALITY ROLLER-COASTER ARE JUST A FEW SET PIECES AT THIS WORKPLACE.

“At Airway Fun Center, all 125 of us come in with smiles on our faces. That passion comes so easily because the only thing we’re selling is fun,” says Executive Manager James St. John. At this sprawling hotspot for fun of almost every variety imaginable, team members may help patrons navigate the high ropes course, a laser maze, and a mind-bending escape room, all in the same week.

Airway Fun Center lives up not only to its name but also to a code of higher principles. Each employee carries a card printed with these five core values, a move that General Manager Marc Weiss says has been a game-changer for his team. “In my mind, we have always lived by these values,” he says. “But now everyone can see them in black and white, which has made a big, big difference. They’re not only on a card; we live them every day.”

Airway’s values include “Resolve to Be Better Today Than Yesterday,” “Customers and Employees Are Always Treated With Respect,” and “Always Do the Right Thing.” These maxims apply to how the team treats customers—like when a family needs some extra time after closing to finish a bowling game—but also fellow team members. “We set aside a little

bit of money in case an employee is struggling and needs something,” explains Weiss. “There was a bartender once who didn’t have any heat, and when we found out, we fixed it for her. It was the right thing to do.” For many team members, Airway Fun Center is their first employer, but by holding fast to its values and providing room for advancement, the company is home to many more who are having a blast with their careers.





its team to be flexible with their schedules and has a “no questions asked” policy when it comes to family.

It’s great to know we can talk with any therapist who may be available to decompress and not feel shameful or judged.

NIKKI MCGRUDER, PRACTICE MANAGER

INTEGRATED RELATIONSHIPS AND WORK
**SOMEBODY
(OR SOMETHING)
TO LEAN ON**

IF YOU HAVE NEVER VISITED THE OFFICES OF CHILD & FAMILY PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CFPS) BEFORE, YOU MAY BE SURPRISED BY THE ANIMALS YOU MEET THERE.

Patients are sometimes encouraged to bring emotional support animals with them for their visit, and for those who don’t have a pet, Grady, a gentle African grey parrot, is there to take them under his wing. Over the years, the staff has seen everything from cats and dogs to a baby reindeer!

While the practice’s therapists and support animals are there to help patients through difficult times, CFPS is dedicated to supporting its team no matter what. That includes understanding that family should always come first. “Here, your family is most important, and your work supports your life,” explains Practice Manager Nikki McGruder. “Since I started here, my kids grew up, and I didn’t miss an event. It was very important for me to have that support and not feel bad about it at all.” CFPS allows

CFPS staff also do everything they can to care for each other in the workplace, especially when working on a challenging case. “It feels very comfortable and natural to lean on others here. It’s great to know we can talk with any therapist who may be available to decompress and not feel shameful or judged,” says McGruder. The team also shares appreciation on “Thankful Thursdays,” recognizing how others have made a difference in their week. CFPS’ goal is to create an integrated work community where its people can feel connected. “When we feel connected, we feel better about ourselves and our impact,” says CFPS founder Dr. Larry Beer. “If we all have good feelings about ourselves and support for each other, we are better equipped to help people who come to us.”

**Child & Family
Psychological
Services**

PSYCHOLOGICAL VALUES
PORTAGE, MI





creating great places to live & work

AVB partnered with Consumers Credit Union to build their state-of-the-art headquarters facility in Texas Township. The 92,000 square foot office building features a 400 foot long glass curtain wall that spans 44 feet high and an attached 107,000 square foot parking garage that preserves the gorgeous natural setting. The building features several different types of meeting rooms and community work areas to accommodate each employee's need for collaboration, privacy and productive work habits. This focus on work space design assists in recruiting and helps foster team member engagement.



BUILD SOMETHING BETTER.

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50
REASONS
TO

kzoom[▶]

THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR ONE MORE

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EXTENDED FAMILY



HOCKEY PHOTO

Marc and his family are sports enthusiasts. Marc played football and basketball growing up, and says, "I had two sons that played college hockey and my daughter played college tennis."

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Marc graduated from MSU with a B.A. in political science. "I bleed green and white, but now we do a lot with Western Michigan University and are beginning to build a good relationship with Kalamazoo College."

MEDALLION

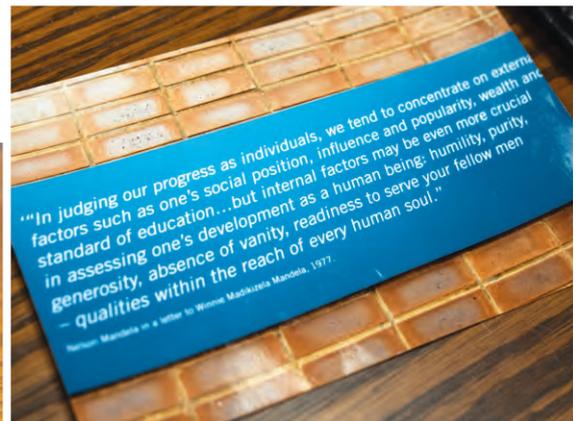
"We shared these 50-year medallions with our employees at our summer outing at the AirZoo. Over 1,200 people came—employees and their families."

AWARD

"I've always stressed the difference between success and significance. A lot of people judge success on where they think you are personally or financially. Significance is 'Do you make a difference in others' lives?' The community service awards are really important to me and what this company has achieved."

NELSON MANDELA QUOTE

"I saw this quote on the wall where Nelson Mandela lived in South Africa."





SCHUPAN & SONS' CULTURE BREEDS KINFOLK

BY HEATHER BAKER PHOTO HUNTER BRUMELS

HARDHATS

This is the 40-year anniversary for the Michigan Beverage Container Act, which put a 10-cent deposit on beer, carbonated soft drinks, and mineral water. “We handle pretty much all of Michigan here and have become nationally the largest independent recycler of aluminum containers in the U.S.”

WOODEN CROSS

The song “Three Wooden Crosses” by Randy Travis has special meaning for Marc. There are several references to the song, mostly gifts from his employees, around his office.

THE YEAR 2018 MARKS THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SCHUPAN & SONS FAMILY OF COMPANIES.

In reaching this milestone, President and Chief Executive Officer Marc Schupan credits the company operations, which he compares to how hockey great Wayne Gretzky skated on the ice. “We ‘skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been,’” Marc says.

Now some argue that quote is more attributable to Gretzky’s father offering advice to his young son. And this potentially paternal advice seems fitting for Marc, who took over company leadership when his own father passed away.

“The company was only six years old when my father passed away when I was 26. [My dad gave] it a start, and the thing is that it was nothing I ever wanted to do. It was in the recycling business only at that time. I had just come back to work for him for one year after I’d been teaching for three years. Then, I was either going to go to law school or try to coach college basketball,” explains Schupan.

“To me, it’s been exciting over the years to be able to grow in different areas of business and to be able to surround myself with talented people who have been dedicated and loyal. That’s the secret of our success.”

What began as a non-ferrous industrial scrap processor in 1974 has become a three-tiered business operating on a national and international level with locations in four states.

Schupan credits his company’s culture for growing the business from six to 600 employees. He quotes Peter Drucker: “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” Schupan says, “Culture is basically asking yourself, ‘Do you have the right people? Are they motivated?’ If you have a problem, they’ll solve it. If [your company’s way of doing things focuses on] strategy [only] and you don’t have the right people, it doesn’t matter what the strategy is. If you have faith in your people, you’ll be able to solve the problems.

“We’re not successful necessarily because of me. It isn’t me. It’s what we all do together. And, we do have what I would call still a bit of an old-style patrilineal attitude. It’s important [to who we are].”

Indeed, Schupan & Sons is now a third-generation company. Marc’s son Jacob works in the electronics recycling division, while another son, Jordan, divides his time between the industrial scrap and beverage recycling brokerage areas. His daughter, Shayna, represents the beverage division with legislators, and her husband, John Barry, is president of Schupan Aluminum & Plastic Sales. Marc’s brother, Dan, has been involved, too, since 1974 in the scrap division’s success. Dan’s son, Shay, manages the Rescued Metals & Equipment store on Miller Road in Kalamazoo.

But to Marc and his family, the real Schupan & Sons’ family has grown beyond the Schupan name itself to now be 600 strong. At an ideas conference, Marc once heard New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman address the concept of commitment by using the phrase: “No one washes a rented car.” Schupan brought that idea back to his company. “We don’t want anyone to have a job at Schupan & Sons that’s a rental. We want them to own their job. If they own it, they’ll take care of it, and it’ll make a huge difference.”

And own it they do. The Schupan & Sons’ culture spreads beyond the company walls to the greater community. “One thing I’m really proud of our company for is our 94 percent contribution rate to the United Way [in Kalamazoo], our work with Kalamazoo Big Brothers Big Sisters, the annual Rich Holtz Golf Outing, and more,” says Marc.

“We’ve been successful by being accountable and responsible for establishing trust and respect while providing products and services that exceed our customers’ expectations. Our success is owed to our continuous improvement and our honest relationships with our employees, customers, suppliers, environment, and community. That’s really what we’re about.”



“ THE SERVICE, THE FOOD AND THE ATMOSPHERE ARE OUTSTANDING. ”

Mark Jones
CEO and Founder, AmeriFirst

Mark Jones, chief executive officer and founder of AmeriFirst Home Mortgage, can't say enough about how much Revel and Roll West made a difference in the success of the Big Brothers and Big Sisters Bowl for Kids' Sake.

“Our employees had a great time supporting Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and they had fun in a great updated environment. Revel

and Roll West is not like bowling alleys of yesteryear. It is an entire entertainment center.”

The Monroe Executive Suite at Revel and Roll hosted area businesses and their employees as they bowled to raise money for Big Brothers and Big Sisters. “The executive suite at Revel and Roll West is an awesome venue for companies to hold a fun, team-building event for their employees,

but the room also can be used to hold team meetings and planning sessions. AmeriFirst definitely will use the executive suite again.”

For more information about Revel and Roll West's executive suite and party rooms, please contact our sales team at events@revelandrollwest.com or 269-215-0937. You may also visit revelandrollwest.com.



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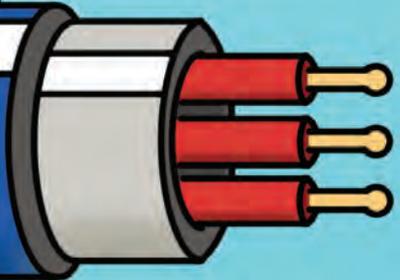


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SEED CORN BAGGING COMPANY TAKES ROOT IN STURGIS

BY GATHY KNAPP PHOTO CHENGYUZHENG (ISTOCK)

BARRY MUMBY TOOK A LEAP OF FAITH IN 1979 WITH FOUR PARTNERS TO LAUNCH MENDON SEED GROWERS.

Paying 18 percent interest on borrowed capital and adding customers a single digit at a time, he had no idea then what the seed corn venture would spur in St. Joseph County and the region.

While that Southwest Michigan county is also home to seed corn production giants Pioneer and Monsanto, Mendon Seed Growers persevered because family-owned seed companies wanted to sell seed grown by family-owned farms. That familial commitment allowed Barry to buy out his partners' interest. His son, Dave Mumby, later joined him in business after graduating from Michigan State University and spending several years as a seed corn salesman at Dow.

"I learned marketing and brought these skills to Dad's business," Dave said. "I contacted 45 seed corn companies and gained one new customer. Soon, we had five new customers and quickly went from growing 500 acres of seed to two thousand acres."

In 1999, Dave and his wife, Deanna, bought the business from his father, and the evolution continued with Barry's blessing. Dave was instrumental in establishing Premier Seed Group, a collaboration of 12 family seed producers who use their combined resources to better compete in the market. In 2012, Dave and Deanna added to their business footprint by constructing a modern seed corn drying facility with the capacity to handle 140,000 bushels annually.

Forward thinking has led to another project. This year, Dave and Deanna joined forces with kindred entrepreneurial spirits, Jason Schwenk and Alvie Wall, to create Excel Ag Solutions.

The newly-formed seed corn bagging company will operate in a renovated industrial building in Sturgis, taking their offerings to a new level.

"Mendon Seed Growers needed to vertically integrate," Dave explains. "Yesterday's family seed companies were farmers that wanted to produce. Today's family seed companies are marketers that want full service."

After the seed is dried, Excel Ag Solutions provides the remaining turn-key services—cleaning, sizing, treatment, bagging, warehousing, and distribution. The \$3 million start-up investment includes state-of-the-art equipment and will serve retailers from Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio.

The operation will begin with eight employees, including two clerical, two managerial, and four laborers. The various job skills needed will encompass data management, scheduling, customer relations, equipment set-up and maintenance, operations oversight, and warehousing functions.

Although Barry passed away in 2017, Dave knows he has been proudly watching over the progress. "This is something he always wanted to do," he said.

WHERE THE NEW JOBS ARE

As reported by the regional economic development partners Battle Creek Unlimited, Cornerstone Alliance, and Southwest Michigan First.

KALAMAZOO OUTDOOR GOURMET

COMSTOCK CHARTER TOWNSHIP, MI
KALAMAZOOGOURMET.COM

NEW JOBS: 31

DENNIS GROUP

BATTLE CREEK, MI
DENNISGROUP.COM

NEW JOBS: 65

WALTHER FARMS

MOTTVILLE TOWNSHIP, MI
WALTHERFARMS.COM

NEW JOBS: 12

MICHIGAN MILK PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

CONSTANTINE, MI
MIMILK.COM

NEW JOBS: 11

TRISTAR MOLDING

MARCELLUS, MI
TRISTARMOLDING.COM

NEW JOBS: 3

DICASTAL LOGISTICS GROUP

HAGAR TOWNSHIP, MI
DICASTALLOGISTICSG.COM/INDEX.ASPX

NEW JOBS: 100

KALAMAZOO INDUSTRIES

COMSTOCK CHARTER TOWNSHIP, MI
KALAMAZOOIND.COM

NEW JOBS: 3



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BANKING ON CULTURE

WITH BRANDEN DELK

BY JAKE FREDERICKS | PHOTO STEVE HERPPICH

EDUCATION

Grand Valley State University (GVSU) Finance, B.B.S. '17

EMPLOYMENT

Credit Analyst, Huntington Bank

HOMETOWN

Kalamazoo, MI

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

I work at Huntington Bank, a leading regional bank, as a credit analyst for the commercial middle market. I work closely with clients to determine if a company is doing what it needs to be doing to be successful. Then, my team decides how the bank can help our clients reach their business goals in each case individually. We want to make people's lives better, help businesses thrive, and strengthen our communities.

BUILDING ON BASICS

When I first started here, I was not an expert in commercial middle markets. I knew a lot about finance from college, but just taking classes couldn't perfectly prepare me for this specific role. When I first joined the team, I was a bit overwhelmed as I sat in on meetings, hearing the complicated lingo. On my first day, I remember

thinking that my coworkers sounded like the adults on "The Charlie Brown [and Snoopy] Show." As time went on, my team set aside time to explain things to me—that really equipped me to be effective.

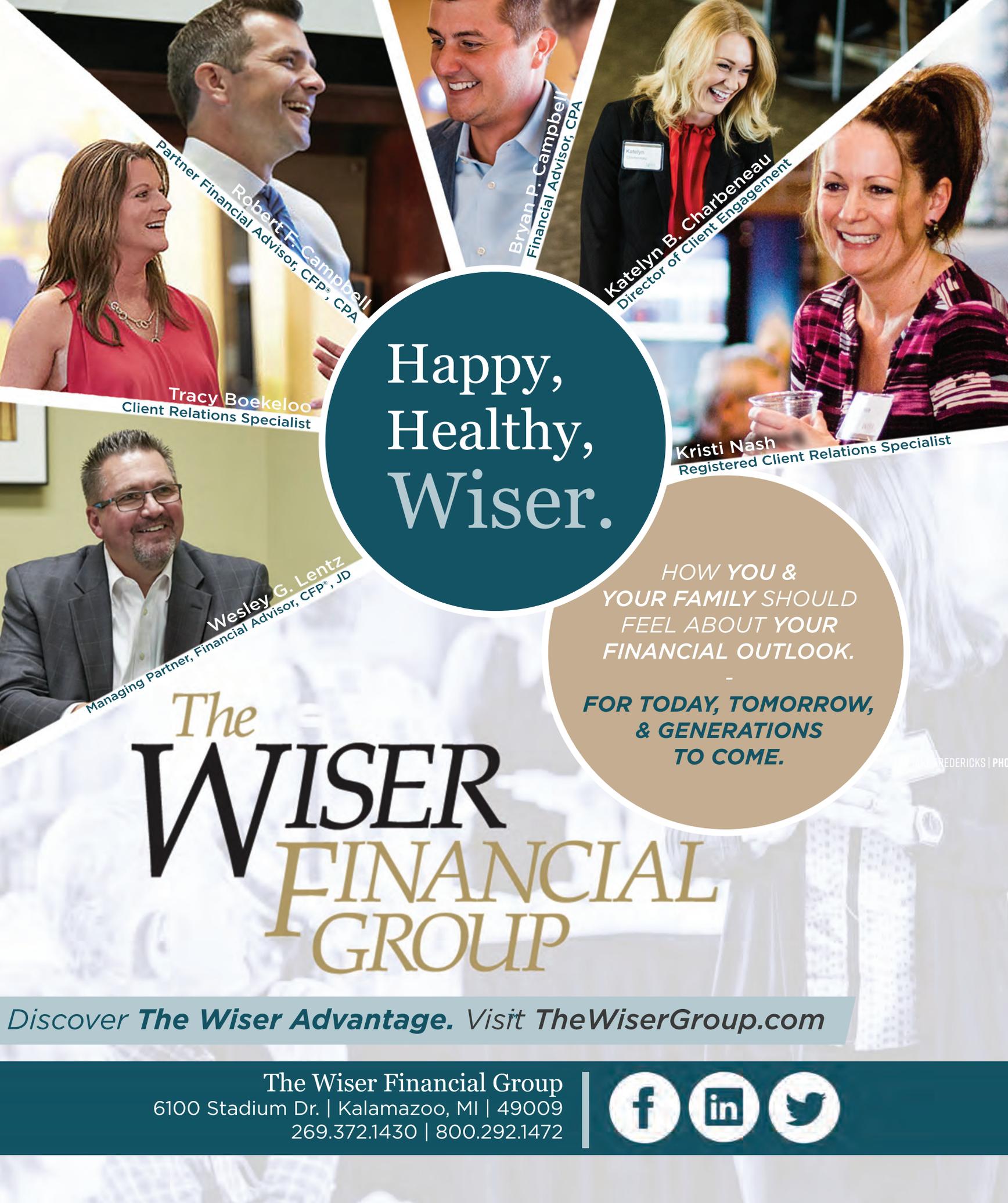
IT'S ALL ABOUT CULTURE

Culture was a big factor for me in choosing this job. Everyone seems to have a horror story from past employers, so I consider myself lucky that I found such a terrific environment right out of college. From the start, Huntington has been very welcoming. No matter how far along they are in their career, everyone here is humble and willing to be your mentor, as long as you are coachable and willing to ask questions. I have weekly meetings with my boss and other colleagues about what we want to do moving forward and even how things are going outside of work. I really

appreciate working for a company that cares about me as a person.

ADVICE TO COLLEGE STUDENTS

Networking at GVSU led me to this position. It was hard for me at first, but it was worth it. As a college student, you need to go out and socialize. I was on the GVSU football team all four years—it was hard work, but one of the hidden perks of being a student-athlete was that I was forced to become a more outgoing person. As luck would have it, a former teammate called me after attending a charity dinner to tell me about someone he had met that night. I reached out to him and landed a paid internship. So don't be afraid to talk to people and ask questions. You never know who someone else will know or run in to. If you take those first steps, it gets easier and easier, and it will pave the way for your future.



Robert F. Campbell
Partner Financial Advisor, CFP®, CPA

Bryan P. Campbell
Financial Advisor, CPA

Katelyn B. Charbeneau
Director of Client Engagement

Tracy Boekeloo
Client Relations Specialist

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EDUCATION

Western Michigan University
Civil Engineering Major,
Mathematics Minor; Expected
Graduation: Spring 2020

POSITION

Project Management Intern
at Miller-Davis

A CAREER UNDER CONSTRUCTION

MEGAN SCHERPEREEL BUILDS ON PAST EXPERIENCES AT MILLER-DAVIS

**ON THE JOB**

My role is to support the project management team. Our purpose is to coordinate office communications to make sure that our construction team is well-informed so they can do their job. Clear communication and understanding what we need to accomplish on site are the most important aspects of my role. I enjoy that some days I am out on the construction site, and other days I am in the office putting together the paperwork that will keep the project moving.

THE BIG PROJECT

We are working on a \$40 million, multi-year project for Comstock Public Schools. The first stage started last fall before my internship began, when Miller-Davis renovated the front office spaces of the district's schools and added another level of security to its entrances. After I started, Miller-Davis began working on phase two, which was an update to the locker rooms. My participation began in the demolition phase, as well as the construction of the electrical and plumbing systems. Then, we kicked off phase three: the renovation of all the bathrooms. There are six schools in the district and approximately 36 bathrooms to finish, so our team worked hard all summer long!

A PASSION FOR BUILDING

I love being in this construction environment and seeing everything come together. Slowly, as Miller-Davis installs ceiling tiles and polishes the floors, you can start to see the finished project materialize. It is so rewarding to see ideas come to life in physical buildings.

My dad is a contractor, so when I was growing up, I got to see him renovating and building houses. I spent summers with him on build sites working and watching the process. When I was young, my dad even added on to the house we lived in, so in a sense, I grew up on a construction site. These experiences have helped me a lot, but this internship is teaching me that I still have a lot to learn.

LEARNING FROM THE BEST

Being observant and asking the right questions has really helped me grow. It also helps that I have a great mentor at Miller-Davis, Amanda Mason, to give me answers. She is on the board of the National Association of Women in Construction and is the vice president of its local chapter. I appreciate the opportunity to go to monthly meetings so I can hear from other women in the industry who do everything from construction management to geotechnical engineering.



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BY CHARLOTTE YOUNG

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SEARCHING FOR THE PERFECT COMPLEMENT TO YOUR SEASONAL FEAST? FOR YOUR HOLIDAY WINES, LOOK TO NORTHERN ITALY FOR EVERYTHING FROM BIG REDS FOR HOLIDAY FEASTS TO LIVELY BUBBLES FOR RINGING IN A NEW YEAR.

When selecting, arguably the two most important regions in Northern Italy are Piedmont in the Northwest and the Veneto in the Northeast. In Piedmont, the ice-cold Alps and the warm Mediterranean affect the weather by creating a tug-of-war that produces happy wine grapes and great wine. There is a range of styles created there—from the bold and age-worthy red wines of Nebbiolo to the gentle, sweet, bubbly white wines of Moscato d'Asti. In Veneto, Valpolicella reigns supreme as its own distinct viticultural zone. The Amarone produced here earned DOCG (Denomination of Controlled and Guaranteed Origin) status in 2009, Italy's official top-tier wine classification. This richly flavored dry red wine is truly one of Italy's finest and age-worthy wines, but it's not the only wine produced in Valpolicella.

MORNINGS ARE MADE FOR MIMOSAS

There is a lot to know and appreciate about Prosecco, the Saturday brunch mimosa go-to. In the past, Prosecco was both the name of the wine and the grape from which it came, but Glera is now the accepted name of the Prosecco grape. Prosecco too is made in the Veneto region of Northern Italy, around the city of Treviso just outside of Venice. Typical aromas on the nose are pear, apple, melon, and floral notes such as honeysuckle.

This wine is created by the charmat method, in which the fermented wine goes through its secondary fermentation in big steel tanks, giving it the delightful, festive bubbles we all know and love. The tank method and secondary fermentation is efficient, making Prosecco less expensive to produce and purchase. Efficient, though, doesn't mean this bubbly is unexciting or uncomplicated. Prosecco is made with

highly aromatic grapes, and the cleaner tank method allows those aromatics to shine through, literally bubbling up in the finished product. Prosecco, compared with the higher price point for decent entry-level Champagne, works in favor of the recent trend of indulging more often in an every-person's, everyday sparkling wine. Keep in mind that this wine doesn't age in-bottle like Champagne and is best enjoyed within a few years after harvest.

The king and queen of Northern Italian reds both hail from one of Italy's most well-known regions.

Traditionally poured as an aperitif wine enjoyed before meals, Prosecco also pairs well with seafood, pasta, or fish dishes served with a creamy sauce. Because Prosecco is versatile, it



works as a palate cleanser, cutting through the fat content of these dishes. Use it to complement, rather than contrast, a dish, pairing it with desserts, where the sweetness of the wine will match the sweetness of the dessert.

Proseccos from Adriano Adami Spumanti, Canella Wines, and Ornella Molon Traverso are highly suggested.

LET IT SPARKLE WITH MOSCATO D'ASTI

Moscato is one thing, and Moscato d'Asti is another. Our sparkling friend Moscato d'Asti is more complex than it seems, both in taste and production. Produced in the town of Asti, a subregion of Piedmont in Northern Italy, Moscato d'Asti is made from Moscato grapes. Moscato grapes generally make off-dry wines that are delicate, spritzy, and floral. Flavors of ripe peach, candied orange,

lemon zest, and an entire florist's shop can fill a glass of it. Fresh and light, these wines are not aged long or in oak and can have a candied complexity that satisfies both wine novices and sommeliers.

Moscato d'Asti producers make wine all year long. Producers pick, crush, and then separate the must, or freshly crushed grape juice, into several large lots and chill it. The cold prevents any ambient yeasts from leaping into the sugary must to start a spontaneous fermentation. Cold temperatures also protect the aromatics and halt bacterial growth. Refrigeration, unlike other techniques for preserving grapes, also keeps the fresh, delicate flavors of wine, meaning quality doesn't suffer because of staggering fermentations throughout the year.

While popularity has skyrocketed in recent years, Moscato d'Asti has a 500-year history in Northern Italy, where it is considered

an easy-drinking aperitif or dessert accompaniment. With bottlings from \$15 to \$50, it's easy to see why—attempt a delicious experiment if you're not yet convinced. Try a bottle from La Spinetta, Marchesi di Gresy, or Saracco Moscato d'Asti.

THE KING AND QUEEN OF NORTHERN ITALIAN RED WINES

The king and queen of Northern Italian reds both hail from one of Italy's most well-known wine regions: Piedmont. Barolo and Barbaresco are made from the same grape, Nebbiolo, but produced in different subregions within Piedmont. Depending on how and where the wine is made and how long it's aged, divergent aspects of Nebbiolo will come out. Both Barolo and Barbaresco showcase the strong expressiveness of the Nebbiolo grape. Barolo has a fuller mid-palate, credited to its minimum aging requirement of three years compared with Barbaresco's two. Because Nebbiolo ripens a bit sooner in Barbaresco, the wine can be enjoyed a bit sooner than Nebbiolo from Barolo.

Known as big and bad, rich and full-bodied, Barolo is considered the king of Italian wines. A Barolo is solely composed of



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Whether you eat turkey, roast beef, or salmon this holiday season, spend some time preparing your own holiday wine-drinking traditions. A careful selection can turn any party, dinner, or gift-giving session into a long-lasting memory.

the Nebbiolo grape and is produced in the northwestern portion of Piedmont called Langhe. Flavors of rose flower, tar, and dried herbs are common. Barolo is aged for at least two years in oak and one year in bottle. Five years of age, three in oak, is required for Riserva labeling. The cream of the crop when it comes to Italian reds, high in acid and tannins, the Barolo DOCG is the highest classification for Italian wines and denotes specific production methods and a quality guarantee.

That being said, it is perfectly acceptable to pop a bottle this holiday season. Barolo is perfect when paired with mushroom risottos in the fall or hearty steak dinners in the winter. It is one of the most age-worthy wines available—drinkable daily, and collectable, too. A Barolo from La Spinetta or Marchesi di Barolo makes a great gift.

The Veneto is another of Italy's well-known fine wine regions. This region has wine styles as diverse as its climate.

The queen of wine, Barbaresco, is grown in the hills of Piedmont's Langhe area, separated from the Barolo growing zone by the city of Alba. The region has slightly younger soils and is more appropriate for the production of a softer wine. Barbaresco's small growing zone covers just 1,823 acres with an average annual output of 4.5 million bottles. An extraordinary wine to get your hands on, there is only a third as much Barbaresco vinified annually compared with Barolo.

One of Italy's top wines, Barbaresco has, for many years, been one of its most underappreciated gems. Producers have raised the bar, thanks in part to a new generation of winemakers who are embracing more natural farming methods, creating even higher quality wine. This area of Langhe has a unique microclimate because of the proximity to the Tanaro River and the generally lower elevation. The weather encourages exceptional freshness and balance in its Nebbiolo grapes.

Barbaresco is a terroir-driven wine that possesses energy and finesse. Full-bodied and intense, the wine is more about complexity and elegance and less about sheer muscle. The queen of wine boasts enticing scents of violet, red berry, and earthy sensations like leather and underbrush. While Barbaresco can have austere structure, not unlike Barolo, it typically doesn't have the same tannic force as the king of Italian reds. While age-worthy, it tends to be approachable sooner.

A good fit for a featured pour by the glass, or by the bottle to share with loved ones this season, suggested Barbarescos are from La Spinetta and Marchesi di Barolo. The wine pairs brilliantly with a variety of dishes, including pasta dishes topped with savory tomato sauces and four-cheese gnocchi.

DECORATE YOUR TABLE WITH REDS

The Veneto is another of Italy's well-known fine wine regions. This region has wine styles as diverse as its climate. Near the coast, the weather is mild, hot in the center, and cool in the west. The main reds of the region are all made with the same indigenous grapes—Corvina,

Rondinella, Corvinone, and Molinara. All four grapes are grown throughout the region, and, in the area of Valpolicella, they are made into a dry red-style wine with the same name. This is a light, high-acid red wine, and it generally sees no oak aging. Valpolicella DOC (Denomination of Controlled Origin) wines must be made using 45 to 95 percent Corvina.

Amarone della Valpolicella is made entirely from dried Valpolicella wine grapes. Amarone translates to "great bitter" and is a full-bodied, slightly raisinated wine with a pleasantly bitter finish. Its taste is balanced by hints of dark berries and some cocoa notes. In Ripasso della Valpolicella, fresh Valpolicella Classico wine is mingled with leftover skins from Amarone winemaking. Often referred to as "Baby Amarone" by producers, this process takes all the flavors and elevates them even further to reveal more alcohol, body, tannins, stewed fruit, and raisin flavors.

The big reds of Valpolicella work especially well for the holiday season on the shelf and on wine lists. They are available at a range of prices, which gives more people the chance to enjoy them. Amarone lands at the highest price point; Valpolicella Classico is a pleasant, inexpensive, and fruity wine; and Ripasso covers the middle ground. Look for brands produced by Speri Viticoltori, Tenuta Santa Maria, Tommasi Family Estates, and Castellani Wine Company.

Whether you eat turkey, roast beef, or salmon this holiday season, spend some time preparing your own holiday wine-drinking traditions. A careful selection can turn any party, dinner, or gift-giving session into a long-lasting memory.

Charlotte Young is creative & PR manager at Imperial Beverage. The Kalamazoo-based distributor brings a diverse portfolio of imported and domestic wine to local retail stores and restaurants, as well as thousands of beers, spirits, and non-alcoholics. A long-standing member of the Michigan beverage distribution community, Imperial Beverage was established in 1933 after the repeal of Prohibition and purchased by Kalamazoo's Cekola family in 1984. With 390 employees and four locations in Kalamazoo, Livonia, Ishpeming, and Traverse City, Imperial provides statewide coverage that serves every Michigan County, every week, all year long.

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LUCAS RAMIREZ



The speaker, author, and CEO of the student mentorship organization The Gathering Place sat down with Ron Kitchens to talk unity, group behavior, and murmuration.



What do you think is the most critical aspect of leadership today?

If you look at our world, our communities are increasingly divided and filled with judgmental rhetoric. It's concerning. That negativity and division can quickly become violent if we're not careful. It could tear apart a business; it could tear apart our nation. Unity within diversity is the most paramount pursuit that a leader can commit to. Even on our American coins, we have the phrase "E pluribus unum," which means "Of many, one." We know that being one amidst our diversity is critical. That's why when you look at the most successful companies that have outperformed any imagination, they are the teams that somehow discovered the magic of unity. **I understand you have a new book. Can you give me the Cliffs Notes version?** My book, "Design for More," casts a vision for why unity matters so deeply. In it, I try to introduce one more word into the vocabulary of leaders: murmuration. It is a natural phenomenon that describes the flocking of starlings in flight. But calling murmuration just a normal flock of birds wouldn't do it justice. If you are not familiar, Google the word and watch a quick video—it's marvelous. So much so that scientists had to give it a new name. The birds are swooping and swirling in perfect unity. It is majestic art in the sky.

Do we know why and how these birds do this?

There has been new research through GPS tracking and advanced video technologies that is uncovering more and more. The starlings use murmuration to confuse predators while keeping together groups of huge numbers. I dove into this research to pull what we can learn from it in our human endeavors: How can we achieve this effortless, beautiful unity and collective movement that we so long for in our families, politics, and businesses? **So what can leaders take away from murmuration?**

In the book, I outline seven principles from the murmuration to help us achieve unity in collective movement. One of the principles of the seven is: If you divide, you die. Every time a starling splits off from the flock, they instantly become the target of a predator. If we don't understand the principle that in our division comes

our demise, we're going to suffer the consequences long term. **How can leaders guard against division?** I think the trick is to redefine our flock. We as humans tend to divide into cliques when really our definition of our flock should be much larger. The danger comes when we over-identify with smaller groups and create conflict with other splinter groups when we all share more common interests than we realize. ✨

LEADER²LEADER

STEVE HESSEN

MANAGING SHAREHOLDER/PARTNER AT
KREIS ENDERLE HUGGINS & BORSOS, P.C.

CAITLYN CAREY

ASSOCIATE AT HONIGMAN MILLER SCHWARTZ & COHN LLP

WHAT DOES GOOD LEADERSHIP LOOK LIKE ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS?

STEVE HESSEN: Leaders must be willing to say and see what makes others uncomfortable. Without this, a leader is simply preserving the status quo. It is also important that the team knows our goal is to get better every day.

CAITLYN CAREY: A leader is someone who's actively engaged, takes pride in their work, and goes out of their way to set goals and be involved. Anyone can be a leader. Your actions throughout the day are what make you a good leader.

Leaders must be willing to say and see what makes others uncomfortable. Without this, a leader is simply preserving the status quo.

STEVE HESSEN

HOW DO YOU ESTABLISH THE CULTURE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION?

STEVE: Our culture was initially established by the founding members of our firm, and we are fortunate to have attorneys and staff still with us who experienced that culture. Like many professional organizations, our culture is tied to the governing personalities and vision for the future of our firm. Our governance has changed over the years, but the values of hard work, accountability, and respect still remain our culture's bedrock.

CAITLYN: I am an attorney. In my field, there is a lot of unpredictability in day-to-day tasks, and you often have to put yourself in uncomfortable positions. Culture becomes a matter of how we choose to approach projects. Maintaining confidence and a positive outlook is how I try to strive to maintain our culture.

HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN YOUR TEAM'S DAILY MOTIVATION?

STEVE: Fortunately, I am part of a team [where motivation maintenance] is not really necessary. Our employees are dedicated and hard-working, and they do not need me meddling in the daily performance of their duties.

CAITLYN: Every day is a new challenge. I have to know what motivates a paralegal to do one task, and what motivates the other associates to do their tasks. I'm a puzzle person; I know that I am not going to wake up in the morning with all the pieces put together. I have to be able to find what each teammate needs and help them put their puzzle together.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR YOU CONSIDER WHEN HIRING?

STEVE: A person's ability to generate business. Someone who is excellent at delivering legal

services is very important and is a must, but we are always searching for people who have or will have the potential to generate business.

CAITLYN: My firm makes sure that each hire is a good fit. To assess fit, I am involved in taking candidates to lunch, having conversations, and getting to know them. Our firm wants our feedback. We look for someone who is self-motivated, takes pride in what they do, and has a passion for their work. I think passion is the most important: You're going to be working with these people every single day, so you want someone who is just as engaged as you.

WHO HAS HAD THE MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON YOU AS A LEADER?

STEVE: My father. He is 82 years old and unfortunately going through dementia. When he had his faculties, he always said what needed to be said. I think he probably was far more polished in his delivery than I am, but talking about the difficult [things] is frequently the only way to progress.

CAITLYN: For me, it was one of my high school soccer coaches. Not only did he teach the importance of hard work and running sprints, but he instilled in us the need to be

prepared for the task ahead. He would hold brainstorming sessions. It's funny to think about now of going to a soccer practice, and instead of actually doing soccer drills, we would be sitting in front of a whiteboard, defining what makes a team.

WHAT DO YOU DO TO CONTINUALLY IMPROVE YOUR LEADERSHIP?

STEVE: I found early on that simply relying on other lawyers at my firm resulted in a narrow focus. I have a group of longtime trusted clients whom I will meet with regularly and discuss different business issues. It is amazing how sometimes solutions are obvious to someone with a fresh, non-legal perspective.

CAITLYN: At my firm, we have an electronic bank of resources with lessons on everything from leadership to team-building. I also learn a lot by watching, so I try to put myself in situations every day where I can be with a veteran attorney and see their everyday practice.

Culture becomes a matter of how we choose to approach projects. You want people who are ambitious, but when they walk in, do they come in with a smile on their face?

CAITLYN CAREY

WHO WAS YOUR ROLE MODEL GROWING UP?

STEVE: My mom. I have never met a more welcoming and forgiving person. She was always concerned about providing a place in our home for others, particularly at holidays. It did not matter how sordid a person's backstory was or how much trouble my brothers and I caused; she would always welcome you and treat you respectfully. I ask myself regularly, "What would Mom do?" It usually leads me to a better response.

CAITLYN: My father has been in the sales field for 40 years and taught me the importance of hard work and how to navigate life's obstacles. In sales, there are great times and low points. He taught me to approach adversity with a

sense of pride and to not let that one failure define you.

WHERE WOULD YOU GO IN A TIME MACHINE?

STEVE: The first day of college. I loved my entire college experience at Central Michigan University and would love to do it again.

CAITLYN: I could flip through a history book and pick out so many different events that I would love to be a part of, but where I want to go is to the future. Will there really be flying cars and hoverboards? Is the University of Michigan ever going to win a national championship again? I would love to fast forward 100 or 50 years from now to see where we are as a society and see what kind of thumbprint I left on the future. Did I leave an impact in some way, however small?

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE HOLIDAY TRADITION?

STEVE: Using my definition of a holiday, it's attending the Detroit Tigers home opener every year. I have attended approximately 40 home openers with my parents, brothers, children, closest loved ones, and friends. Every single year it is among my top days of the year. April 4, 2019!

CAITLYN: My family members all live in different places now. For us, a holiday isn't necessarily a certain date; it's the time that we can all spend together, sitting around the table, having good conversation and good food. It's a few hours we can spend together playing many rounds of euchre while not being distracted by phone calls and emails. As a kid, I took that for granted; I'd be sitting at the table thinking, "Hey, let's get to dessert. I'm ready to go play with my toys!" Now, there is not enough time.

WHAT WOULD BE THE TITLE OF YOUR BIOGRAPHY?

STEVE: It has to be something with some kind of baseball meaning, like "Can of Corn" or "High Cheese." Let's go with "Covering the Bases."

CAITLYN: I don't know if I can answer that yet—the story is still being written. It's exciting to think about the legacy I could leave behind, but I still have time to decide what twists and turns my story will take. I am not ready to publish yet.

WHERE WOULD YOU GO IN A TIME MACHINE?



The first day of college. I loved my entire college experience at Central Michigan University and would love to do it again.

STEVE HESSEN



I would love to fast forward 100 or 50 years from now to see where we are as a society and see what kind of thumbprint I left on the future. Did I leave an impact in some way, however small?

CAITLYN CAREY



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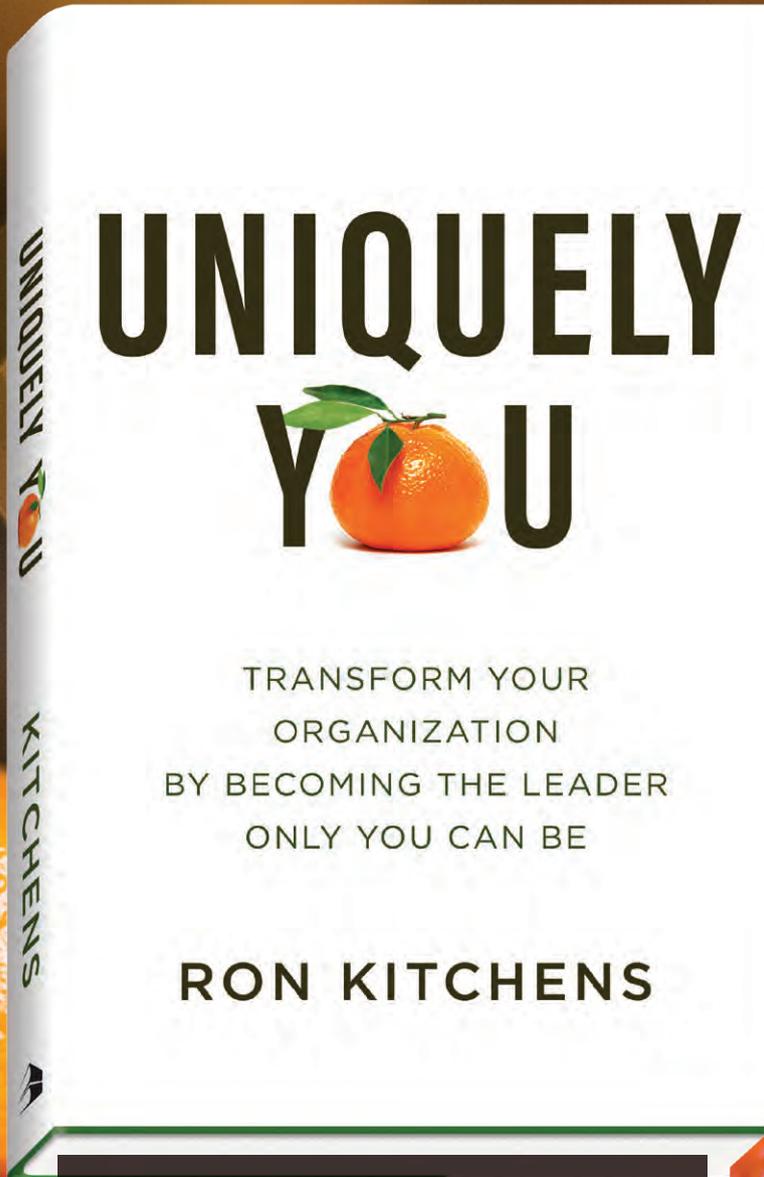
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Tomorrow's Workplace Is Being Built Every Day

ACHIEVE THE FUTURE ONE STEP AT A TIME

THE AMERICAN WORKFORCE IS CHANGING, AND THE WORKPLACE IS CHANGING WITH IT.

As unemployment numbers plunge downward, highly skilled workers are in demand, allowing people the option to be picky about where they work. Job seekers are happy to spend 35 percent of their waking hours at work doing what they love, but absolutely no one is content spending 35 percent of their life being miserable. So today, businesses are making space for ping-pong tables and on-site fitness in an escalating race to attract the best minds.

However, the biggest factor in creating a wonderful workplace is not spending oodles of money on new, state-of-the-art nap pods, or an Olympic-sized swimming pool. When it comes to workplace culture, it's all about one thing: driving engagement.

If you have ever ordered a fast food meal from a teenage worker who would rather be somewhere else, you know what it looks like when a team member is disengaged. If you have ever spent hours on end waiting in line to renew your driver's license, you know how a stale work environment operates. But when teams are fully engaged, there is an energy you can sense as soon as you walk in the front door: It's palpable—electric. When teams are fully engaged, everyone wants to be there, there is dramatically lower turnover, productivity goes through the roof, and going above and beyond is just part of the job description.

Engagement works. People are even willing to take a significant pay cut at a new job if it means a chance to do what they love with people they love. But engagement itself can be elusive; depending on the team, different levers could be adjusted to

create the optimal environment. Engagement demands constant attention to culture and a commitment to incremental improvement.

At Southwest Michigan First, we call this "Challenging and Changing Your Best Every Day." In company culture, as it is with everything in life, if you're not actively getting better, you're only going to get worse. Organizations that think that they can take a season off risk complacency.

This is critical to keep in mind at a time when improvements in technology of connectivity have already had a huge effect on the modern workplace. We have seen the cubicle walls torn down, making way for open offices and leaving leaders trying to keep up, but at the same time wondering, "What's next?" Going forward, our definition of "workplace" might have to change again, and so will our engagement strategies.

Moving into the future, I doubt many workers will spend their days in a traditional office space. Today, you can easily arrange a face-to-face conversation with someone on the other side of the world, and you can do it through your watch. As technology and the internet continue to bring together people from every corner of the globe, it gets easier and easier to stay connected on the go. In the years ahead, people aren't going to be sitting behind desks all day in a static

space. Preparing to meet that future will take a dedication to continual improvement as we move forward one step at a time.

So, when it comes to doing what's best for your team today, I think the most important thing you can do as a leader is this: Ask your team what they want. Ask what they think about the traditional benefits you provide, like healthcare and vacation days, but also the nontraditional, like the food you stock in the kitchen and other policies like the dress code. You may be surprised at what you discover.

The organizations that take the time to do this, and are willing to continually adapt, are the ones attracting the best talent. Thankfully, all over Southwest Michigan, there are incredible workplaces that are home to even more impressive teams. In the pages of this edition, we honor those we identified as the best of the best. In truth, our region's map is dotted with wonderful workplaces in every city and in every industry. It's inspiring to hear their stories and imagine what we can accomplish next.

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