

MEDIUM COMPANIES: FINALISTS



As company philosophies go, this one is so simple it's a wonder any other would ever be needed: "If you speak to a customer, you own that customer issue until resolution," says Ken Honeck, chief deposit officer for BankLiberty. Yes, he notes, there is a policy manual, but under the direction of CEO Brent Giles, employees don't live by the book. They all follow policy, Honeck notes, but "we are not driven by manuals outlining every procedure. We make decisions that are good for the company and good for the customer." A formula that works for the growing bank is promoting from within when possible, feeding the staff's personal growth with tuition reimbursement, and generous medical coverage that even includes a fully bank-paid option.



Some business owners are looking strictly at experience when they hire. Not Bart Walker. He pays the costs of training unskilled workers to become journeyman electricians for Bart's Electric—then does his best do hang onto them. That strategy has worked well for 20 years, since Bart's debuted with two people. Today, Bart's has 140 employees who know that the company's merit-based recognition will give them the chance to advance into leadership roles as foremen, filed operation managers or project managers. Bart's also places a high premium on communication, with the entire staff engaged in monthly meetings to discuss current trends and company goals. Competitive wages, bonus packages, a healthy roster of benefits and more are also part of the deal.



As a CEO, Steve Seggerman doesn't just maintain an open-door management style: He has two open doors, both near the front entrance at Bishop Spencer Place, "which may make him the most accessible person in the organization," quips HR director David Lite. "He's never too busy to talk with any employee who stops by his office." Those doors, though, are a visual metaphor for the retirement community's corporate culture, one grounded on openness not just as a workplace, but as a gathering of shared interests that included management, staff and Bishop Spencer's residents. It also reinforces the emphasis on information-sharing that drives performance, right down to the financial data that keeps 105 full- and 25 part-time employees focused on where the center stands as an organization.

INGRAM'S BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR



It's 50 years old, but perish the thought of a mid-life crisis at Midway Ford Truck Center. On the contrary, it continues to shine for a resurgent flagship company, notching 18 consecutive years among Ford's Top 100 Volume Dealers. For the past 11 of those years, Midway has earned Ford's President's Award for customer service, an honor that goes to less than 10 percent of dealers nationwide. So, just in case any dots must still be connected: Customer service does *not* emanate from a sour and dour work force. "We owe our longevity and success to our talented and loyal work force," says HR manager Kathy Mandacina. How loyal? Nearly one-fourth of the company's 220 full-time employees have more than 25 years of service.



When your senior management staff can send collegiate alumni checks to the same institution—in Lawrence, Kan.—an unusual but predictable workplace benefit would be company-paid outings to, oh, let's say basketball games at the University of Kansas. It's just one example of the thinking that pervades administration of the Shawnee company, which specializes in communications technologies and equipment. For years a staple on *Ingram's* annual list of the region's fastest-growing companies, SKC was up 30 percent again last year. Much of the reason for that: a staff plied with a full range of benefits, streaming video of March Madness on the company plasma TVs, promotion from within and programs that encourage staffers to train one another on various computer applications.



In a technical field, you're as good as your staff's level of training. That's one reason Terracon, an environmental consulting and engineering concern, offers a dozen programs and initiatives to foster professional development and train the 200 employees at its offices in Lenexa and Olathe. It pays the costs of training and certification for staff members, membership fees and meeting costs, then gives employees paid time off to participate. Advanced degrees? Terracon pays as much as half the cost. Another perk that demonstrates a true family feel at this employee-owned firm: As a matter of policy, employees are allowed to donate unused vacation time to their colleagues stricken with health issues.