



Matrix Integration

Communicating a Successful Workplace

By Candace Gwaltney

As a company that helps businesses use technology to communicate, it only makes sense that Matrix Integration employees are good communicators. All staff members at the Jasper voice and data solutions company are required to hone that skill through a communications class taught in-house. President Brenda Stallings cites the company's emphasis on maintaining positive attitudes and teaching people to do a good job of exchanging information as what sets it apart.

Vice president Dan Fritch points out that in the technology industry there are a lot of "brains on sticks" – something he jokes about with employees – making communication skills even more important.

"Typically when you talk about people who are brains on sticks, their people skills are sometimes challenged because they are so focused and so analytical and so in tune with what they're doing. I think we've taken the technology industry and added that communications side to it to really deliver to the client," he explains. "I think that is one of the most powerful things that we do."

Those skills are put to use in a workplace in which everyone understands the four quadrants of communications highlighted in the class – and everyone is held to the standards. Human resources manager Debbie Allen notes everyone can confront communications breakdowns – even with managers – without worrying they will offend someone.

"I can look at the president or vice president of the company and say, 'You're being very Q1.' They understand that terminology," which would mean they are being authoritative, she explains. (Q1s are those driven by esteem and independent needs, Q2s are driven by security needs, Q3s are driven by social needs and Q4s are driven by self-realization and the need to understand and be understood – which is the quadrant employees strive to become).

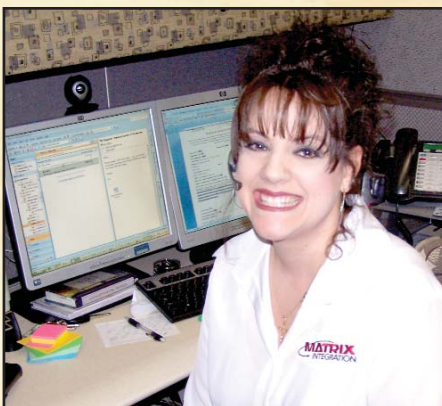
All employees take the course at least once. They can take it as many times as they like – either by self-registration or the recommendation of others. Employees can even recommend that a manager take the class again, Allen explains.

As a repeat Best Place to Work in Indiana, Matrix Integration learned through previous participation that employees also wanted more communications about what's happening within the company.

Employees want to know what other departments are achieving and have the opportunity to share what's happening in their area, Fritch explains. Now, someone from shipping and receiving will be spotted in a sales meeting or an accounting team member will join an operations and technical meeting to foster those communications.



President Brenda Stallings and vice president Dan Fritch note employees' willingness to help each other is part of the company culture.



Personal Attention

When Dawn Ferrier decided she no longer wanted to travel for work, it was the president who helped her transition to a desk job in customer service.

"Every morning (Brenda Stallings) spent an hour and a half to two hours for four months training me," Ferrier explains. "That process hasn't even stopped. She still mentors to this day. She cares that much – this is the president of our company. I think that speaks volumes about who they (company leaders) are."

Staying positive

In an industry that changes constantly, every day is different and employees face high standards, Stallings shares. New employees receive a lapel pin that simply states: "Attitude." The company emphasizes maintaining a positive attitude and a culture of caring.

"Everybody wakes up in the morning, and we can have a choice of how we are going to address the day," Fritch asserts. "And it all boils down to what our attitude is. And that happens when you are dealing with happy customers or upset clients."

When challenges arise (which are inevitable in the IT field), instead of finger-pointing, people attack the obstacle as a team to get the job done, explains Steve Hauser, corporate business solutions executive.

The positive attitude and emphasis on teamwork exuded by Stallings and Fritch filter down to all levels of staff, he adds.