

# Secrets of Their Success

## Companies Take Pride in Consistency

By Symone C. Skrzycki

**J**ust what does it take to become a Best Place to Work? If you were to ask representatives of some of the 11 companies that have earned a spot on the list each year since the program began in 2006, the initiatives they describe may differ, but a common theme connects each: putting people first.

The honorees featured here – Crowe Horwath; Fort Wayne Metals Research Products; and Katz, Sapper & Miller (large company category) and Ash Brokerage, Safety Management Group and KPMG (small to medium-sized category) – credit the program with improving internal processes and validating their belief that their workplace is among the state's finest.

(The other four-timers – Bowen Engineering, Columbus Regional Hospital, Edward Jones, Goshen Health System and VMS).



Fort Wayne Metals CEO Scott Glaze challenged employees to participate in a 60-mile ride last fall, offering \$100 to anyone who beat him.

### Training opportunities

Headquartered in Fort Wayne, Ash Brokerage operates more than 14 offices throughout the United States and offers resources and services to financial professionals in the areas of life insurance, annuity products, long-term care and disability income coverage.

Tim Ash, CEO and president, says that training is a way of life at the company.

"We believe that constantly investing in people will produce growth and opportunity," he emphasizes. "A return on that investment is seeing those people grow and develop into the future leaders of our business."

Training also plays a vital role in staff development at Indianapolis-based Safety Management Group, a leading provider of occupational safety services throughout North America. The company offers educational training allowances, ranging from \$2,000-\$4,000, that employees can apply toward approved classes. In addition, quarterly staff development days highlight areas including soft skills (communication, making presentations) and business writing.

"I like how we use those to promote skills other than (just) safety," remarks president Kent Burget.

### Flexibility and family

Crowe Horwath LLP is one of the nation's top 10 public accounting and consulting firms. In Indiana, it has offices in Indianapolis (two locations), Fort Wayne, South Bend and Elkhart.

The firm supports a strong work/life balance by offering many of its employees an opportunity to telecommute and boosting morale during the busy tax season with a free, onsite babysitting program on Saturdays.

"The ability to provide child care when people are in the office working has been successful not only in helping them personally, but also in affording them the opportunity to participate in important business processes," observes Jim Powers, a managing executive at the firm.

He adds, "We provide free luncheons on weekends, so people can spend time together. We don't make them come in suits and ties and dresses. We try to provide a relaxed atmosphere."

KPMG, a global provider of audit, tax and advisory services, also has a focus on family. Its adoption reimbursement program, for instance, grants up to a \$5,000 reimbursement for any adoption-related cost (legal, travel expenses, adoption leave).

"There is also back-up child care and elder care when emergencies come up," explains Mark Shaffer, office managing partner.

He says that flexibility also is crucial when it comes to work schedules, whether it involves job sharing, a compressed workweek, working from home or other alternative arrangements.

"As a professional services firm, what we have to offer our clients is the experience and talents of our people, and if that (flexible work schedules) helps us retain a talented person or attract talented people to our firm, it's critical to what we do."

## Employee recognition

At Fort Wayne Metals, a leading producer of fine grade medical wire used in a variety of medical applications, employee recognition takes many forms. One of the most popular is the “Atta-boy” award.

“We have given our employees the right to nominate their co-workers for anything they see as above and beyond the call of duty,” comments director of human resources Dennis Rohrs. “They are a great morale builder.”

Winners choose from prizes such as tickets to sporting events and gift cards to restaurants.

## Wellness initiatives

Wellness is front and center at Katz, Sapper & Miller, a CPA firm located in Indianapolis.

“I think our wellness program is one of our biggest commitments to our employees’ success,” declares managing partner David Resnick when describing the firm’s fitness reimbursement policies. “People have to spend the money appropriately, but they have an \$180 a year allowance. They can go to a fitness center of their choice and get reimbursed for aerobics, Pilates, Weight Watchers, different races and runs that are held in the community or any wellness-related activity.

“We think that better wellness can have a big impact on our success, both as individuals and as a firm.”

Individuals also can utilize the firm’s free corporate gym membership.

## Having fun

Burget credits Safety Management Group’s familial atmosphere with motivating workers.

“We try to have a pretty casual, flexible culture that in itself facilitates hard work by our folks,” he notes. “My doors are open. It’s casual. We try to keep family a priority.”

In fact, Burget sometimes even brings his dog to work.

Burget enthusiastically describes how the company plans to continue to host fun activities in spite of the recession.

“We’re going to try and do things that are cost efficient, but still fun,” he shares. “We’re going to have the worldwide championship of cornholing right in the back of our office. We’ll probably get a ping pong table for the office.”

## Giving back

Shaffer contends that encouraging community engagement among staff members at KPMG not only appeals to current employees and creates a unique workplace culture, but also attracts talent.

“I think community involvement is a really important part of why we’ve been ranked the last four years,” he reflects. “We have a volunteer time release program and each employee can have one hour per month within normal business hours for volunteering.

“I especially think our younger professionals coming out of college are very community minded and are very interested in getting involved in the community.”

Internal committees at Katz, Sapper & Miller also support



Katz, Sapper & Miller replaced its vending machines with refrigerators stocked with free healthy snacks for staff.

employee involvement. They include recruiting, wellness, Go Green, community involvement and mentoring.

## Teamwork

A “we’re in this together” mentality and dedication to going the extra proverbial mile are helping Ash to flourish despite the challenging economy.

“We joke that we’re just choosing not to participate in the recession like everyone else,” Tim Ash offers. Every day, we’re looking at, ‘What are the ways we can continue to add staff value, not only internally, but to our customers and making sure we’re doing above and beyond what is asked of us.’ (It’s about) giving that extra effort, which during tough times is remembered.”

## Celebrating success

For honorees, one of the most exciting things about making the Best Places to Work list is sharing the news with employees.

“In all of our offices, and in particular here in Indiana, it is something we trumpet,” Powers relates. “We love to have a number of our people participate in the (awards ceremony) event and we certainly try to use that as well in broadly marketing the firm to any perspective employees and clients. Most importantly, it is the source of pride and communication internally and externally.”

Shaffer comments that at KPMG, “Annually, we have a town hall event where we bring everyone together in the office, and we talk about successes like this.”

## Benefits of participation

Ash considers feedback from the anonymous employee survey – positive and negative – as a major advantage to participating in the program.

“In areas where our scores weren’t where we like them to be in the first year or two, we have improved,” he remarks. “We have stepped up our training and implemented some better communication.”

Rohrs agrees, asserting that the feedback helps answer the ongoing question, “What can we do to better meet our employees’ expectations?”

Another incentive is that earning a spot on the list can

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serve as a powerful recruiting tool.

"It's been a tremendous help for us in college recruiting," Resnick proclaims. "Students go directly to our web site, and they see that and it really impresses them."

Burget chimes in, "To be the best, we have to be one of the best places to work so we can attract the best people. (Participating in) the program has helped us throughout the years to continue to improve ourselves. A lot of our initiatives over the last four years (golf league, employee recognition and exercise programs) are a result of trying to be one of the best places to work."

### INFORMATION LINK

**Resources:** Ash Brokerage at [www.ashbrokerage.com](http://www.ashbrokerage.com)

Crowe Horwath at [www.crowehorwath.com](http://www.crowehorwath.com)

Fort Wayne Metals at [www.fortwaynemetals.com](http://www.fortwaynemetals.com)

Katz, Sapper & Miller at [www.ksmcpa.com](http://www.ksmcpa.com)

KPMG at [www.us.kpmg.com](http://www.us.kpmg.com)

Safety Management Group at  
[www.safetymanagementgroup.com](http://www.safetymanagementgroup.com)