

By Symone C. Skrzycki

# Appirio

## Having Fun and Soaring to New Heights

**A**ppirio employees have their heads in the cloud ... and business is soaring.

"We help medium-to-large enterprises move their IT (information technology) from traditional software solutions to the cloud (to the Internet)," explains chief executive officer Chris Barbin, who co-founded the company in 2006. "We do it with leading partnerships that include Salesforce, Google, Workday, Amazon – some of the next generation IT software providers."

Headquartered in San Francisco, Appirio has approximately 650 employees throughout six countries. This year, an estimated 300 more worldwide will join the team. Its downtown Indianapolis office, which opened in 2012 and currently houses 49 staff members, will more than double with the addition of 75-plus positions.

Three core values – team, customers and fun – set the tone.

"We take our work really seriously, but we don't take ourselves all that seriously," declares Steve Pruden, director of consulting services. "That (philosophy) permeates everything."

When a friend at Appirio told Nick Marson about its unique culture, it sounded too good to be true – until he started working there as an associate consultant.

"Culture is a huge, huge thing for Appirio," Marson comments. "Employees who aren't having fun and who aren't happy aren't going to be very productive, so it's important to our culture that everybody continues to have fun."

Opportunities abound with happy hours, community service initiatives and festivities such as the annual "Appirio's Got Talent" show.

"We've had everything from juggling – and not just three balls, but world-class juggling! – to really great musicians," Pruden marvels. "We had two people write and perform in a full musical play."

Biweekly, virtual staff meetings mix business updates (financials, status of annual goals) with celebratory news (recent customer "Go lives" and employee recognition). Senior management honors a "Hero in the Ranks" for outstanding service with a company jacket and acknowledges his or her achievement on Appirio's Facebook page.

In addition, an awards ceremony during the annual company meeting celebrates winners in categories such as Team of the Year and Consultant of the Year.

Senior recruiter Brianne Thomas says small gestures of appreciation also make an impact.

"Even if it's just an email that says, 'Hey, I saw that you were online kind of late last night. You must have been working hard; thanks for that.' It's nice to get those little pieces (of acknowledgement)."

### The sky's the limit

Training – structured and informal – also empowers employees.

On a roughly quarterly basis, new hires from across the globe gather at the Indianapolis office to participate in the Appirio 101 orientation program.

Employees also hone their talents through mentorships and a variety of hands-on activities.

"The technology we work with changes several times a year so you have

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**Working – and playing – hard!** Technical team lead Mike Martin injects humor into the day, while associate consultant Nick Marson cruises through the office during a phone call.



Employees team up at an Appirio Silver Lining philanthropy event to make blankets for children in need.



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to be continuously learning,” Pruden stresses. “Instead of creating tons and tons of rigid structure, we provide lots of different avenues and we let individuals learn the way they want to learn. The company is just there to support (individuals), remove barriers and make sure folks are progressing along the path that they want to.”

Barbin points out that there’s more to running a business than watching it grow.

“It’s (about) building a great company for the long haul and being able to move people from function to function or region to region, and bringing the culture and DNA into other parts of the business,” he contends.

Pruden adds, “You’ve got different views of how companies should be led. Do you stay at the back and point the troops where they need to go or do you grab the flag and charge to hell with them? That’s sort of what we do and we’re not afraid to move folks around based on what they want to do within that spectrum as well. That’s pretty cool.”