

# R-E-S-P-E-C-T

## Find Out What It Means to Best Places to Work Honorees

By **Symone Skrzycki**

**A**t the end of the day, it's not a huge salary, corner office or prestigious title that many employees covet most. They desire respect. "Compensation is not the highest on their satisfaction scale," asserts Guy Hulen, vice president of operations at Contact by Design, a lead generation and sales outsourcing company in Bloomington. "It is more important, we found, that they feel as if they're being listened to and that they have a part in the bigger picture."

Peek into the workplaces of other Best Places to Work in Indiana honorees to see how they incorporate respect into their cultures – and how it benefits their companies.

### Starting off on the right foot

At Contact by Design, employees are taught about the importance of respect from the get-go.

"I think the big thing is orientation," Hulen maintains. "We talk about diversity and we talk about respect. One thing we make clear is that we all come from different backgrounds, skills and opportunities, and we have to appreciate those talents that everybody brings to the table."

Chuck Baldwin, managing shareholder of the Indianapolis office of Ogletree Deakins (a national labor and employment law firm) says respect starts with the hiring process.

"We're very focused on hiring the best talent available at all levels," he remarks. "You need to keep them motivated, demonstrate to them how they're valued and how their contributions are critical to the success of the office and the whole firm. Showing them the respect they deserve for their effort is one cornerstone of being a successful employer."

### The golden rule

David Harding is president and CEO of Harding Poorman Group, one of North America's leading commercial graphics providers. He stresses that in addition to talent, it's crucial for individuals to possess strong people skills.

"What we're saying is, maybe one of your first recruiting mantras is to hire nice people," he states. "They could be the most talented person in the world, but if they're not nice and are difficult to be around, they're going to spread cancer in your organization and your productivity will go down."

Jeff Henry, managing principal at commercial real estate services firm Cassidy Turley (formerly Colliers Turley Martin Tucker), agrees.

"How you treat (your employees) and how they treat others makes the difference in whether you're successful or not – both internally and externally," he contends. "We have a lot of people who have been with us for several years. We don't have a great deal of turnover, so it's (respect) key in helping us retain our best people."

### Knowing your neighbors

One of the ways Design Collaborative, an architectural and engineering firm in Fort Wayne, makes respect a priority is by emphasizing camaraderie among staff.

"There's something really simple that is fundamentally important – at least in our culture – in how you build respect," declares president Pat Pasterick. "It comes down to spending time together. The more you get to know someone, the more you can respect them."

During Monday morning staff meetings, for instance, all 37 company employees share highlights from their weekend. In addition, staff-wide events – such as a Putt-Putt contest held in the office during the Masters golf tournament or a go-carting outing to celebrate the Indianapolis 500 – develop rapport.

Consulting firm RW Armstrong has 200 employees in Indiana

Nearly 70 Cassidy Turley employees and associates spent two days building a playground for 170 Indianapolis Public School students and the surrounding neighborhood as part of its child-focused inFuZion program.





Each year, RW Armstrong staff members participate in a tug-of-war challenge with a 147,000-pound FedEx Boeing 727 for Special Olympics Indiana.

and nearly 600 globally. Headquartered in Indianapolis, it operates additional offices in Merrillville, Evansville and South Bend.

Donna Gadiant, vice president of global HR and a partner in the firm, says that spending time together outside the business setting can also be beneficial for supervisors and their employees.

“We want them to work one-on-one with our staff and spend time with them socially and casually so they can build that rapport. Once you know that person as an individual – and not just as a supervisor – respect comes more easily.”

### Promoting wellness

At Benefit Associates, a health care professional services firm located in Indianapolis, employees are supported in their efforts to juggle professional and personal responsibilities.

“We’ve made a concerted effort in the last several years especially to respect each of our employees as a whole person,” explains chief operating officer Amy Knauer. “We’re constantly

looking for ways to honor and respect their hard work and their need for work-life balance.”

Each individual receives one paid wellness hour per month to pursue activities such as yoga or exercising. Educational seminars cover topics including relaxation and nutrition. Plus, all employees serve on the company’s holistic wellness committee for one quarter.

### Giving kudos

Each year, Cassidy Turley conducts an awards ceremony to recognize employee performance. Nearly all of the company’s 200 Indianapolis employees attend (the company is headquartered in St. Louis.)

“We go through each of our different divisions,” Henry observes. “We also award people for community service. It’s an event we really look forward to on an annual basis to recognize those people who make us successful – both in our company and in our community and profession.”

Managers at Benefit Associates often reward outstanding employee performance with thank you notes, Starbucks gift cards and free lunches.

“We train our managers around recognition,” Knauer notes. “It’s (about) equipping managers to focus on recognition every day.”

RW Armstrong recognizes anniversaries starting with 10 years of service (and in five-year increments thereafter) with \$1,000 and a personalized gift.

“We give them a monetary award, but what’s most special for them is we take time to search and get them an individualized gift,” Gadiant reflects. “If you’re a photographer, you get a very nice camera in addition to the monetary award.”

### Compassion in difficult times

When OneAmerica – a nationwide network of companies offering a variety of products including retirement plans, individual life insurance and employee benefits – reduced its workforce last year, delivering the news compassionately was top of mind for management.

“The focus throughout the organization was making sure everyone was treated with as much dignity as we possibly could,”



Both Ogletree Deakins (left) and Harding Poorman employees proudly display the Company that Cares award, which recognizes organizations that make exceptional commitments through United Way campaigns and partnerships.



In 2009, OneAmerica employees helped construct a Habitat for Humanity home.

recalls assistant vice president of employment Ashima Kapur.

In addition, the company's employee assistance program (EAP) offers round-the-clock, free assistance for counseling and support services.

"It's confidential," Kapur explains. "There's an 800 number they (can) call for a lot of different services: people going through personal, family or kids' issues, finding an attorney, finding a counselor.

"The EAP is not just (helpful) when you're in trouble. It's also for little day-to-day things."

Kapur, for example, received referrals when she was considering child care options.

## A matter of trust

Harding says an important element of respect in the workplace involves trust. One way this comes into play is if an employee works from home.

"Part of respecting employees is trusting employees," he emphasizes. "By that I mean trusting that they will get their job done whether they are at the office or not. When you don't have trust, the culture will break down.

"Respect is a state of mind. In other words, it isn't based on what programs you have for employees; it's based on how you interact with employees. A company can have a bunch of great programs, but still treat people poorly."

### INFORMATION LINK

**Resources:** Benefit Associates at [www.workingwell4you.com](http://www.workingwell4you.com)

Cassidy Turley at [www.cassidyturley.com](http://www.cassidyturley.com)

Contact by Design at [www.contactbydesign.com](http://www.contactbydesign.com)

Design Collaborative at [www.designcollaborative.com](http://www.designcollaborative.com)

Harding Poorman Group at [www.hardingpoorman.com](http://www.hardingpoorman.com)

Ogletree Deakins at [www.ogletreedeakins.com](http://www.ogletreedeakins.com)

OneAmerica at [www.oneamerica.com](http://www.oneamerica.com)

RW Armstrong at [www.rwarmstrong.com](http://www.rwarmstrong.com)

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