

Luther Consulting

By Olivia Ober

Serious Work Takes Place in a Fun Atmosphere

Luther Consulting is all about software – but it’s a software company striving to improve the human condition through research.

Employees feel good about the work they do for the public health sector, but they also have fun doing it. Whether it be an afternoon popcorn break, a company outing to the Indiana Repertory Theatre or taking a moment to play catch with the in-office dogs, team members have a variety of options for relieving stress and enjoying themselves.

Career evolution

Jim Luther, founder and president of Luther Consulting, has his Ph.D. in counseling psychology and studied computer science in his undergraduate days. He started out working in clinical practice but went searching for a research position.

Years ago, the Indiana State Department of Health was looking for someone to teach behavioral science to community-based organizations that addressed HIV/AIDS. The Centers for Disease Control released nationwide requirements for HIV prevention that required states to collect health data. Luther had two large binders of data to work with and, in one long weekend, created a web database to assemble data and run calculations.

“We had contracts with state health departments to collect the data on their behalf, and then about four years ago we created a contract with the Centers for Disease Control to collect all of the data for the entire U.S. with our data system,” Luther explains. “And when that happened – and this was something I really wanted to have happen because I was really more interested in the software piece of it – we switched to being about 100% software.”

Before Luther’s software went nationwide, 10 states subscribed. The company, founded in 1998, has grown to 29 employees in its Carmel office and focuses solely on creating software that can track disease outbreaks and organize other health statistics for public health organizations.

Family first

Luther says the business is based on a culture of mutual respect where “everyone is treated like adults.” In addition to vacation time, employees have unlimited personal time. To maintain a work/life balance, Luther encourages employees to stay home if they need to take their grandmother to the hospital, if their children have a snow day or there is a leaking pipe in the basement – without spending paid time off.

“We’re encouraged to take care of our family life first,” explains Marcia Regenstrief, senior associate in the technical support department. “The underlying message is the work will get done. It doesn’t have to be done in the confines of our office.”

The emphasis on family extends to the benefits. Employees and dependent children are fully covered with insurance including medical, vision, dental, long- and short-term disability and basic life. Employees also have regular bonuses and profit-sharing opportunities.

“I think the medical benefits package is outstanding,” says executive assistant Lindsay Olinger. “It is unparalleled to anywhere I have been before.”

Play hard to work harder

When Luther Consulting made its move from Massachusetts Avenue in Indianapolis to Carmel three years ago, Luther focused on creating a “home-like” atmosphere for his employees with several collaborative spaces and an open office environment. The space includes “The Bistro,” a full kitchen and dining area with a coffee and wine bar.

To reduce stress, employees have been known to bake cookies on Friday afternoons or uncork a bottle of wine. To provide a healthy snack option, Luther has added weekly fresh fruit deliveries.

“We realized we were baking a lot of cookies and said, ‘Well, maybe we should look at this,’ ” Luther laughs, recalling the choice to expand the snack options.



Milo and Otis, two Labrador retrievers, relax in the office. Throughout the workday, employees can visit them to relieve stress. “The Bistro,” Luther Consulting’s updated kitchen, provides employees with an environment to prepare healthy group lunches, relax with a latte or even bake cookies to share.

The new office also includes a playroom with a popcorn machine, puzzles, a piano and room to relax. There are also treadmill desks and a weekly yoga class to help keep employees stress free and healthy.

Otis and Milo, Luther's two black Labrador retriever rescues, also offer a break as employees help take care of the dogs. After Luther's previous dog passed away, he and his husband went three days without a new one before they knew they needed their four-legged friends again at home and in the office.

"Interestingly enough, when we brought a dog in to evaluate, we thought it was really fun, and the staff was standing there at the front door (waiting to meet the dog)," Luther recalls. "They (the employees) told me afterward they really, really wanted a dog in the office."

Employee input has been a huge influence in shaping the culture. Though employees have plenty of opportunities to have fun, they believe the company is much more productive and works even harder because of the positive atmosphere.

"It is a place you look forward to coming to," Regenstrief assures. "He (Luther) manages to reduce the levels of stress, and I think it is the people as well. We have a great staff; we have a great boss. You look forward to coming to work, and you don't regret the idea you have to come to work the next day."

All about the team

Luther says he is "very proud" of the product his company produces, but he is most enthusiastic about the way the organization operates.

"If there is anything I'm really proud of, it's that we've been able to create a culture that really does support a work/life balance and that people can earn an income and have a life ... and still have the company move forward," Luther says.



Multiple collaborative spaces provide excellent environments for meeting and relaxing.

One way he tries to boost office morale is focusing on what is going well.

"I'm kind of a typical psychologist, so I try to catch people 'being good' so to speak, and so I try very hard when something goes right to comment on it privately or publicly and encourage everyone else in the company to do the same thing," Luther explains.

The staff participates in biweekly lunches, holiday parties, summer get-togethers, charity outings and other informal events.

"I think that it says a lot to the hiring here that everyone gets along really well ... and is really appreciative and respectful of each other," Olinger shares. "It is just really a great place to work."

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