



Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company Building Relationships – Inside and Out

By Tom Schuman

What do regular chapel services, a simple walking path, an internal Toastmasters initiative and a carefully crafted professional development program have in common? They are some of the pieces of the puzzle that allow Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company to maintain a special workplace culture and best serve the tens of thousands of churches and related ministries it insures.

Mark Robison – chairman, president and a 16-year veteran of the organization – explains how his company is different.

“We’re about a relationship, not a transaction, and that’s the response we get from our customers (especially when they come and view or participate in a chapel service),” he contends. “If we’re just an insurance company insuring churches, what difference are we? We partner with them, back them up, free them up to do the work of the church.”

The mission of “advancing the kingdom by serving the church” is played out daily. “We’re doing this for somebody else,” Robison adds. “We’re paid by the tithings of someone else – parishioners and church-goers. Their sacrificial gift allows me to have a job. We have to make sure we’re worthy of that sacrificial gift.”

The history of Fort Wayne-based Brotherhood, with current outreach to 39 states and the District of Columbia, dates back to 1917. An expansion project slated for completion this summer will complement recent company growth. Current associates say teamwork is unlike any they have experienced elsewhere.

Li-Ming Liu, an associate actuary, tells of receiving a personal thank you from the vice president of another department after the completion of a successful project. “I know I will receive the appreciation of the person I’m working for, and that is another type of reward for me.”

Chris Harvey says the weekend or evening hours sometimes necessary in his role (manager-network services) “doesn’t feel like a burden or hassle” because of that same appreciation. Any conflict that does exist (and it always does to a degree) is handled in a “cordial” manner. And Tammy Harris, an assistant manager in customer service, notes her experiences have only “grown my passion” toward the company’s clients and its independent agents.

As far as some of the amenities mentioned in the opening:

- Chapel services, which originated in the 1940s, are completely organized and guided by employees. They reflect the diversity of the various religious communities, prove to be a powerful bonding tool for the workers and send a strong message to visitors.
- The 600-meter outdoor walking path installed about five years ago is “probably the best fringe benefit we’ve ever done,” Robison claims. Its significance is exemplified by walking meetings (it takes an average of eight minutes to circle the course), break time strolls and maintenance crews that clear the snow for wintertime use. An inside wellness facility is also available.
- Toastmasters is an international program that develops leadership and public speaking skills. Brotherhood’s chapter usually includes about a dozen participants. The “little safer” internal effort, Robison contends, helps people in making future company speeches and presentations.
- Brotherhood has long been active in helping pay for continuing education efforts. Several years ago it partnered with Taylor University to craft its own professional development program, featuring portions of the master’s in business administration (MBA) curriculum, as well as case studies and projects that are directly tied to the company. Approximately 50 employees are currently taking part, with a third class starting this fall.

“These are the future leaders of our company,” Robison states. “They’re building relationships, friendships across different departments. We give answers to why we do things the way we do.”

Harvey is a participant, taking advantage of the increased connectivity with other departments. Harris began working toward her MBA before the company program came into existence. She cites the “investment Brotherhood has made in me,” having already received several insurance licenses and designations. “That obviously leads to happier employees.”



An outdoor path provides health benefits and also serves as the site for “walking meetings.” Tammy Harris delivers a presentation during a company Toastmasters meeting.