



# Duke Realty Corporation

## Building and Managing Strong Growth

By Tom Schuman



### You Should Know

Duke Realty associates completed nearly 20,000 hours (an average of 15½ hours per employee) of internal training in 2006. That total does not include extensive external conferences and seminars. Company summary on Page 58

New employees join the team at Duke Realty Corporation often – sometimes one at a time, sometimes in large groups. What they find is a very financially driven organization that hasn't forgotten what has allowed it to become one of the largest commercial real estate companies in the United States.

“One of our main challenges is finding the right talent quick enough to fill open positions,” reports Denise Dank, senior vice president of human resources. The company has been planning for the anticipated growth, however, with day one of two-day senior management retreats focused on talent.

“We put together a strategic planning group, a thought leadership group. They’ve come back with solutions, recommendations that have been instituted,” Dank states. “We’ve tapped into a lot of people who have solved real problems. We treat each other as internal customers. There are no silos or walls between departments. We pay a lot of attention to culture.”

Duke’s beginnings go back to 1972 and development of Building One in the Park 100 Industrial Park on the northwest side of Indianapolis. Today, it has more than 112 million square feet of office and industrial properties in 19 cities. Construction takes place nationwide. There are 6,500 acres of land supporting 94 million square feet of development. Site selection, development, financing, construction, leasing and property management are the services offered.

As new nationwide offices are added, the growth typically takes place slowly, according to Dank, with minimal impact (at first) on headquarters operations in Indianapolis. The typical model was not followed in 2006 when an acquisition opportunity led to 100 new employees at one time in Washington, D.C.

No matter, all are welcomed into an open, largely informal atmosphere. Despite the required financial focus for the public company and a national team that is approaching 1,300 employees (460 in Indiana), Dank points to the following:

- CEO Dennis Oklak is known to all as Denny
- Free soft drinks are available to all employees
- A casual atmosphere, with suits and ties often left at home
- Quarterly conference calls in which Oklak addresses a wide variety of issues
- Top executives traveling to all locations every other year, participating in strategy luncheons and answering employee questions
- A strong intranet, including each of the many public press releases being distributed internally to all associates
- A celebration of successes. When the company reached a record of \$1 billion in development in a single year in 2006, a fun video was recorded based on the Dr. Evil character’s portrayal of a \$1 billion ransom in the Austin Powers’ movies. In addition, all associates received movie tickets and other related prizes

Profit sharing contributions in eight of the past nine years (an employee could have received as many as 400 shares of stock over that time) and a community service program that provides two paid days off for volunteer activities prove popular.

An annual associate opinion survey provides important feedback. A recent sales team assessment identified areas in which members can “go from good to great” in selling skills. That will only result in more of the pleasant problem of finding additional associates to accommodate continued growth.



Aron Reynolds, PE is a development services manager for Duke Construction.

Parkwood West is a new office development on the north side of Indianapolis.

