



# Employment Plus 'Knocking Clients' Socks Off'

By Tom Schuman

If the focus of your organization is to help other employers "hire, develop and administrate," the best place to start is to perform those same functions at a high level with your own workforce. Fast-growing Employment Plus is doing just that in its Bloomington home, as well as numerous branch and on-site locations throughout Indiana and Kentucky.

It's a long way from the beginnings in the basement of a house in 1993. Spend a few minutes with president and company owner Mike Ross, though, and you will see that passion and determination are in high quantity. He expects each of his employees – 72 in the fall of 2006, 100 in mid-March at the time of this interview and expected to be near 115 soon with the addition of several new branch offices – to share that drive to serve.

"Respect and appreciation are words we use a lot around here," says Ross as he rocks back and forth in his conference room chair. Asked what he looks for in new employees, he adds, "Attitude, effort, somebody who wants to make a difference. At orientation I ask who wants to be the best. I make a big point at orientation that our goal is to knock our clients' socks off."

epicStrategies (professional training and coaching) is one of the six Employment Plus divisions. The company makes those same services – both internal and external coaches, including one-on-one sessions – available to employees.

A Partner on Premise staffing program for large volume customers doesn't require a contract and has a 100% retention rate. Competitors say that's not possible, but Ross relishes in meeting with company officials and telling them directly that "we will knock your socks off." The proof, he says, is in the numbers, and it's due to his employees and the services they provide in a comfortable atmosphere.

"At the top of our organization chart is our job seekers and clients. I'm at the bottom. We all recognize that the flow goes the other way," continues Ross, who, like others, answers the telephone and serves on kitchen duty. "At one time, over a six-year period, 80% of the people who left here asked to come back. Most who do quit are because our clients see what they can do and offer them jobs."

Jon Jeffries, vice president of human resources and loss prevention, adds, "We have people who want to come in and make a difference. We have a product they can be proud of. It's a synergy that has been created – the best product and the best people."

Open communication keeps the company on track despite the various geographic locations. Employees come together for an annual holiday party, picnic and various awards. Web cam conferences provide a constant link and internal promotion is common.

"Once indoctrinated to the Employment Plus culture," contends Jeffries, "people understand how they can communicate, and they know to stay involved."

Just like the early days in that basement office, Ross maintains a simple philosophy. He notes the disbelief when he tells people he doesn't have any five-year or other long-range goals.

"If every day we're doing that (knocking people's socks off), sales are going to come and profits are going to come. If you do that, at the end of the day you can pat yourself on the back. But tomorrow it doesn't count. You have to do it all over again."



The status quo is not an option for president and owner Mike Ross (left) as Employment Plus expands its reach.



### You Should Know

Employment Plus has also been a winner in the Kentucky version of Best Places to Work. Gold Line Research recognized the company (from more than 2,000 potential honorees) as one of the top 10 most dependable staffing agencies in the Midwest.

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New employees go through extensive training and orientation to learn the company's practices and culture.