



Fort Wayne Metals

'Fabricating' a Positive Work Experience

By Matt L. Ottinger

When talking with the staff and leadership at Fort Wayne Metals, one notion becomes abundantly clear: They believe what they do is important. Why? Because the wiring they make will be used in medical devices. Everyone realizes they too could be a customer at some point in their lives, according to chairman and CEO Scott Glaze.

"Everybody here seems to have a story about a mother or a cousin who has had a procedure involving our wire," he says.

Building success by breaking down doors

Glaze's father, Ardelle, started Fort Wayne Metals in 1946. He was a research scientist who wanted to operate a company that made wiring for the medical industry, and Fort Wayne was attractive because of its resources. Scott, who took over in 1985, explains Fort Wayne is still "the world's center for diamond die fabrication."

Fort Wayne Metals also continues to strive to "fabricate" a worker-friendly environment. And according to their employees, it's a success.

Eric Dorman started in the shipping department 20 years ago, and now he's the Plant 2 manager (Fort Wayne Metals has four plants and a production facility in Castlebar, Ireland). As he's elevated himself through the ranks, Dorman has taken advantage of the company's tuition reimbursement program and earned a bachelor's degree in management from Indiana Wesleyan University (the company also serves as a satellite site for Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne and Purdue University courses).

In addition, Dorman is utilizing the personal tutorship of Solstice Coaching & Consulting Inc., a service Fort Wayne Metals provides for its employees. Dorman takes part in a 45-minute session once a week with a professional in order to help him calibrate his responsibilities.

"I'm taking it to help balance work and my personal life," he notes. "The company realizes that if you're not happy in one of those aspects, both will suffer."

Cassie Tucker, a 13-year veteran of Fort Wayne Metals, is now team leader of the spooling department in Plant 2.

"I set a goal for myself 10 or 11 years ago that I'd be a team leader here someday, so I'm very satisfied with how I've progressed," she explains, crediting the access to courses geared toward training and moving up within the company.

"The president and CEO here are just great people," she surmises. "They bend over backward for the employees, and if you're having issues, they have such an open door policy. I feel very comfortable around our CEO; if he's walking around, I don't feel nervous or anything."

Dorman echoes this notion.

"This is a large company, but management doesn't have walls like other places," he adds. "There are open doors for communication; anyone can talk with our CEO."

Resourceful humans

Dennis Rohrs, human resources director, beams with pride when discussing the caliber of people who work at the company. He says this is made possible by the extensive hiring process, noting employees must pass eight tests before they're granted an interview (this includes the Wonderlic Personnel Test, an intelligence test made famous because of its use by National Football League teams during the draft process).

"We look for genuine people with good hearts," claims Rohrs, explaining they must have a passion for the work. Although, in a literal sense, the company also motivates staff to build "good hearts" by helping employees who hit certain health targets with assistance on insurance premiums as part of the wellness program.

All told, Rohrs explains it's the employees who are the heart of Fort Wayne Metals.

"I have the easiest HR job in Indiana because of the caliber of people here," he proclaims. "Others have to deal with disciplinary issues, but I just deal with passionate people."

Cassie Tucker has taken advantage of Fort Wayne Metals' course offerings on her way to becoming a team leader.



While the company uses an abundance of new technology, executives feel the genuine nature of their employees is what truly drives the collective machine.