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G & S Research: Excelling in the ‘People Business’

By Tom Schuman

Small/Medium Companies

For a business that “started in our spare bedrooms” in 1997 and a few years ago was still a “draw-the-play-in-the-dirt company,” G & S Research is on the road to success.

George Grubb and Gary Schwebach, Ph.D., are the co-founders of G & S. Schwebach credits his partner with frequent use of the philosophy that, “We hire smart people, and we stay out of their way.” Grubb is so intent on a two-way match during the interviewing process, that he claims, “If it is done right, that’s the last time they need to pull out their resume.”

The company focuses on health care research, working with pharmaceutical companies and start-ups in the biotechnology area. In addition to the Indiana base, offices on both coasts help maintain close relationships with current and potential clients.

“As a service-based company, what we are is a collection of people,” Grubb states. “We have a strong emphasis on hiring the best and brightest we can. Schwebach adds, “We put people in a position where they can achieve.”

How does G & S build that camaraderie that is so essential? Through personal hedgehogs and a bus, of course.

The personal hedgehog is a concept from the Jim Collins’ “Good to Great” book that was also mentioned by several other top honorees as a strong influence. After they have been with the company for a short time, employees are asked three questions that focus on how their skills and interests will help them uniquely contribute to the company’s overall goals.

The answers, the co-founders say, are often surprising and enlightening. The employee then receives a Beanie Baby hedgehog, which becomes a point of pride in how it is displayed.

The bus comes into play at the annual meeting to discuss and refine company goals and objectives. Before the meeting ends, all members of the team sign a framed picture of a bus, which is displayed in the front lobby of the office building.

Schwebach explains, “This serves as a reminder that there is someplace we have to go, the bus is the vehicle to get us there, and we’re all on board together.”

While symbols, the hedgehogs and the bus are also indicative of what the company hopes to maintain – teamwork and respect for each other – as it continues to grow. Schwebach says controlled growth is always a good goal, “But when customers find about you and want your services, unless you turn down business, they control you. As you get bigger, it gets more difficult in how you organize processes to run efficiently, but keep that culture.”

Avoiding complacency is top of mind for Grubb.

“We don’t want to get too comfortable in assuming we know what’s out there or that we know everything. We need to be our own harshest critic. We need to push to improve, to have things in place to reward that, to stimulate that and encourage that.”

After all, Schwebach says a phrase coined by his partner sums it up: “We’re not in the research business serving people, but in the people business providing research.”



G & S Research

Description: G & S Research is a primary market research firm focused on health care. Specializing in custom quantitative strategy and longitudinal assessment programs, the company provides advanced analysis, detailed project management and on-time actionable deliverables.

Primary Indiana location: Carmel

Web site: www.gs-research.com

Full-time employees in Indiana: 25

Part-time employees in Indiana: 11

Average salary (non-exempt): \$13.00/hour

Average salary (exempt): \$84,000

Job applicants last fiscal year: 100

Job hires last fiscal year: 10