

E-gineering 'IT'S JUST LIKE HOME'

By Rebecca Patrick

Like any great team, E-gineering knows how to play to its strengths, stay in contention and find the winner's circle.

This year marks the third time the software solutions consulting firm has claimed first place in its Best Places to Work category. Not once in eight straight years of participation has E-gineering finished outside the top three.

Back in 2011 when *BizVoice*® first visited, the employee count stood at 25. Today, that number has tripled. So too has the office space on the northeast side of Indianapolis, which now includes an annex on another floor that features workstations and an amazing hospitality venue.

But what I was struck by most was how things that truly matter – to employees, clients and guests – have stayed the same: an inviting atmosphere, positive attitude and genuine warmth.

The E-gineering way

“Our standards haven’t changed (as we’ve grown). It’s to serve and serve well. What we do is take care of people and give

them a good environment, and let the demand take care of the rest. Fortunately, we are in an area that is in such high demand,” shares Nick Taylor, one of the five equal partners.

Still, he admits it’s been a challenge to maintain the same “intimate” culture. But a new internal process has helped alleviate any growing pains.

“We reminisce about knowing everybody when we were small – how their lives were, what was going on, their children’s names. Now it’s harder, so what we’ve done is to empower others to be responsible to care and to give them an opportunity to participate in leadership,” Taylor offers.

“On Wednesday afternoons, we have what we call a steward’s meeting where we are grooming these leaders.”

Partner Troy Kelley puts it this way. “We have a responsibility to our people. We have a responsibility to our clients. Empowering people to be the best they can be; that’s our mindset when leading.”

Dan Taylor, lead solution architect and no relation to Nick, pinpoints how E-gineering is different.

“I’ve worked at a wide variety of companies the last 20 years – at Microsoft in Seattle, at large consulting firms, local start-up companies here. There’s always some kind of mantra about how people are the most important, but here it’s followed through on just again and again. And the consistency of the decisions

made are made in the interest of the people.”

He continues, “One of the things I worried about when switching employers is you kind of have to build up a bank of trust before you can effect change. When I came in here (less than two years ago), I felt like I was instantly trusted and with that trust came the feeling of, ‘I want to live up to this; I want to follow through on how much they believe in me.’ That switch in dynamic is one example of how they prioritize people.”

Another is remaining firm that E-gineering employees are required to only work a traditional 40-hour week – unusual for the tech industry.

That’s a big deal for .net developer Christa Kay, mother to two young kids. She also appreciates the camaraderie and encouragement.

“Some places are about climbing the ladder and stepping on people to get there. I’ve never felt that way here. We push each other, but we push each other together – to help each other grow, not the opposite.”

Consultant Greg Eades believes it comes down to the fact that the “owners are so down to earth and authentic. ... Their character and integrity is what most impressed me (during the interview process) and that continues to be the case three years later.”

Flat, fun and family-oriented

One of the things that resonates the



It's hard to top E-gineering's annual March Madness celebration with big screens to watch the basketball games and a catered lunch.



E-gineering puts a focus on providing employees the opportunity to get together in fun, camaraderie-building activities both inside and outside the office.

most with project manager Brenda VandeWater is “how flat the company is.”

“There aren’t managerial levels but you can advance in so many ways professionally – learn new skill sets, tools and technologies. Or attend different conferences and make other connections and grow the professional community that you belong to. ... There is so much personal advancement that you don’t find on a business card.”

The owners also “live it out as flatly as they can” – as Nick Taylor calls it – in other ways.

One is sharing among interested staff all the company’s season tickets for the five major sports teams in Indianapolis. “I went to one Pacers game this year,” he smiles. “That’s because everyone wants to go and it’s all raffled off.”

The mentality of taking care of employees is embodied in a variety of tangible practices.

E-gineering offers a generous benefits package, which includes paying everyone’s health insurance premiums. And just this year, the owners made changes to the 401(k) plan.

“We went from a 2% match to a 5% match and immediate vesting. ... That’s a big investment for a growing company,” Taylor states.

The company also has been intentional about creating a gathering place – the downstairs annex – because that’s what families do: They hang out.

“Our location is hospitable to our employees, our clients, our

friends and, as we’ve grown, now we have baby showers, game nights and anniversary parties,” he explains.

“It’s to the point where you now need a calendar to sign up if you want to do it because there is demand. Why have the space just sit here after work hours? That doesn’t make any sense. With the blend of work with life, let’s respect the space but it’s for the employees to use.”

Chili cook-offs, pie bake-offs, frequent luncheons, Lego Day (for employees and their families) and an annual trip to Sky Zone for staff, family and friends – in which E-gineering rents out the venue – are all big hits.

Don Taggart is the partner who is charged with cultivating the fun and hospitality.

“(Our employees) know they could walk next door and get \$10,000 more a year, but most of the people who work here value our culture. They won’t get the March Madness pizza or the snacks and coffee,” he quips.

Nick Taylor interjects, “And it’s really not the food or whatever, it’s the mentality or gesture behind it. It’s, ‘You’re important and we care more about your spouse and kids or aunt and mom, and we want to rally around that and be there.’ Now we don’t always know. Some are more private than others, but we will pray for them, be there for them, go to the hospital because we care.”

Dan Taylor experienced that firsthand recently.

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“I was in the hospital for a few days and one of the owners stopped in and sat down with me for an hour. I’m not a lifelong employee or anything like that. ... It wasn’t just a gift basket; it was the gift of time, which is a lot more valuable.”

Giving back and what matters most

E-gineering took the same thoughtful approach when natural disasters hit Florida and Texas in 2017, donating to Samaritan’s Purse, the philanthropic organization founded by the late Rev. Billy Graham. The original goal was a dollar-for-dollar employee match up to \$10,000. That was achieved so quickly they did a second round – raising \$40,000 in total. But it didn’t stop there. Kelley took a group of six to Texas for a week to frame roofs and help with other restoration.

“To go down there and see it firsthand built more of an appreciation for what it’s really like. And just to be there to help is very important,” he notes.

It’s also part of a recent push, Kelley says, “to be more intentional about us finding opportunities for our folks to serve together in different ways, to build relationships with one another in our community or other communities.”

VandeWater, for one, was “amazed” by the Samaritan’s Purse project. “I got tears in my eyes. I’m going next time! It was rewarding to me to see what they had given to others. I’m constantly impressed by everyone across the board here.”

Hind Salin – a software tester approaching her one-year anniversary – can’t see herself anywhere else and says E-gineering makes life easier.

“The way I feel here is priceless. I feel safe, secure; I feel accepted and I feel supported. I started a new career here when I joined; it was



Partner Troy Kelley sums up the management team’s mentality: “Most days, I get up and I enjoy coming to work – I really do. I want that for everyone here!”

my first time to do what I’m doing. I had a lot of people guiding me through it. They were patient ... you don’t do everything perfect at the beginning, so that’s important.”

VandeWater adds, “From day one of working here, it’s been like having another family. It’s so supportive ... it’s just like home.”

These sentiments are exactly what the owners are striving to accomplish.

“It’s not about growth, numbers and profitability. It’s about lifestyle and having a place to call home, and as that family grows and matures, a place they can retire,” Nick Taylor asserts.

Taggart believes “there’s an awareness here that this work thing, while important, is not the most important.

“On our deathbed, we are not going to be thinking about work. It will be about the people. And everybody knows that here.”

RESOURCE: E-gineering at www.e-gineering.com