

## My Best Advice to Companies Thinking About Participating

By Nicole Bickett, vice president of people + administration, Springbuk



Having been a part of the Best Places to Work program with two different companies, my advice to companies considering whether to apply would be to ensure that the core values of the company – and the support from senior leadership – bleed throughout the organization.

A great culture follows a great vision, and employees want to know that your strategy and behaviors match what the organization has set out to do. The plans for that vision all fall into place when the entire team is aligned to it and can get behind it.

The unique programming within your company also plays a part in becoming a Best Place to Work. Thinking creatively and through the mind of the employee helps in creating an environment where people want to be at work. Consider the different types of people in your organization and build programming to meet those needs. For example, tech is big on having game options – if your company is too, make those available for brain breaks throughout the day.

Other team members value connection time and that is often done around food. Providing snacks where people congregate in office kitchens, or opportunities to share experiences together in a breakfast meeting or company celebration, bonds the team, which is crucial when the team is going after big goals. Consider working parents and think about ways you can provide flexible work, vacation and leave options. Many employees consider these items even more important than salary.

Most importantly, make your company a place where people can't wait to get up and go to work. Find assessments that help team members understand themselves better, how they can be successful, and build roles around their strengths. When employees are using their strengths and natural talents, everyone benefits. Create opportunities for team members to openly share ideas and allow them to participate in implementing them. The entire team must work together to create a top culture that everyone can be proud of!

## What We Have Learned From BPTW

By Michael Wilson, chairman, Leaf Software Solutions

Leaf has been recognized for eight consecutive years as one of the Best Places to Work in Indiana. During this time, it has been reinforced within the entire team that being a Best Places company is not an accident. The thing we have learned and re-learned is that you have to be intentional and truly dedicated to being a company where people want to come to work every day.

In addition, we have to clarify the elements that make up the whole. At Leaf, it started with our guiding principles: fairness, kindness, effectiveness and significance. We have always maintained a dedication to excellence. We have been committed to checking our egos at the door and working in an environment of collaboration and

teamwork.

These are only a few of the ideas, strategies and artifacts we have used to build a positive culture at Leaf that is sustainable over time, and a foundation on which to continue to grow our business.

Being a Best Places to Work company is an honor because it is a public recognition of who Leaf is in our private, internal moments as a team. This allows others to see what the DNA is of Leaf's culture. We have learned that if we remain intentional and truly dedicated to building a great corporate culture, we are more likely to continue to receive this recognition.

## What We Have Learned From BPTW

By John Brand, president, Butler, Fairman & Seufert, Inc.



Butler, Fairman & Seufert Civil Engineers (BF&S) has been actively participating in the Indiana Chamber's Best Places to Work program since 2012. Our initial interest was to pursue the ever-important "employee engagement" measurement being plugged by business management publications.

This exercise certainly confirmed employee feedback can positively affect employee morale and increase employee engagement. A double shot in the arm for BF&S – satisfied team members and, as a result, pleased clients. Participating in this program is an annual commitment of BF&S and achieving the designation is always our goal. However, the most unexpected outcome is how this program has added to our overall credibility with both our team members and clients.

BF&S relies on the specific survey results to mold company initiatives focusing on areas where we score below par. We have also initiated an internal employee survey six months into the year to measure movement on areas of concern. Sharing the results, developing action plans with employee input and continuing to measure their feedback sends a message of credibility to our entire team:

"We value your feedback, plan to act on it and

will report back to you – you can count on it."

As we recruit new team members, BF&S repeatedly hears positive feedback from candidates regarding our "Best Place" status. This designation lends credibility to the importance we place on valuing employee input. It lets recruits know we are serious about team collaboration and high employee morale.

An unexpected and rewarding result comes from the many congratulatory calls and emails we receive from our clients when we are touted as a Best Place to Work. Client messages confirm this designation lends credibility to the dedication and level of service of BF&S. It validates our commitment to having friendly, engaged team members and offering high-quality services, which drive overall client satisfaction.

At the end of the day, participation in the Indiana Chamber's Best Places to Work program has boosted our credibility with our BF&S team, potential recruits and the valued communities we serve. Being a Best Place to Work firm helps us determine how to improve our company and enhance the loyalty of our clients. Reaching this goal adds credibility to serving and advising in accordance to our mission – Civil Engineering Solutions for Better Communities.

## What We Have Learned From BPTW

By Rick Dennen, founder and CEO, Oak Street Funding



The number one thing Oak Street Funding® has learned from participating in Best Places to Work is how our being named a Best Place to Work for the past seven years reinforces our commitment to our culture and creates a sense of pride for our current and future employees. This in turn translates into a consultative, knowledgeable and caring approach with our clients and a distinctive client experience, which reinforces our continued employee focus.

Since 2003, as founder and CEO, I, along with my leadership team, have worked to make Oak Street Funding an employee-focused organization providing diversity, inclusion and a sense of community and pride. We purposefully recruit only those individuals who will fit within our employee-centric mindset. While it may take a little longer to make the right hire, in the long run this results in greater employee engagement and lower employee turnover.

We define our success by the quality of the relationships we have with our employees, our clients and the communities we serve. By focusing on

the employee experience first, we are rewarded with heightened employee engagement and a strong sense of pride. Our philosophy is if you take care of your employees, they will take care of your customers.

Additionally, we make it our focus to provide training and continuing education not only to keep skills sharp for an employee's current position, but also to prepare them for advancement within our company. Many find new roles that appeal as they progress through the company. And, more often than not, we promote from within.

We also have a robust referral program for hiring as many of our employees know others who will fit within our culture. Birds of a feather, as it were. These measures allow us to maintain and strengthen our company culture.

Being named a Best Place to Work exemplifies that we are living our company culture every day and, as a result, positioning both our employees and our customers to be successful. We are proud to once again be named a Best Place to Work.

## My Best Advice to Companies Thinking About Participating

By Brian Owens, senior director of engineering, Carbonite



What a great honor for Carbonite to be chosen as a 2019 winner for the Best Places to Work program with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce. When asked for my best advice to companies thinking about participating in Best Places, I automatically thought about what we do that our employees respect and appreciate.

First and foremost, we strive to provide challenging and meaningful work for our teams. Everyone likes to be challenged. If the work is mundane or repetitive, team members will end up just counting the hours until they can leave. But if there are significant problems to solve, with the proper amount of urgency placed on solving them, it creates an environment where some amazing things can be accomplished.

Placing the appropriate amount of relevance and time commitment to those problems is also vital. Don't make a lack of planning turn in to someone else's emergency.

Considerable care about the health and welfare of our teams is also essential. This can entail a variety of things. One of my personal mantras regarding leading

a team is to promote the idea that there are some things more important than work. Health is one of the most obvious. Family is also at the top of that list and on people's minds. We understand that if someone is ill or has family issues, it will naturally cause stress in their work life.

For your employees, make sure they know what your priorities are and work with them to have a good work-life balance. This doesn't mean that work is not important as well, but it creates the conversation about balance. Know that they will be able to focus better on their work if they are not feeling overwhelmed by other factors.

It is important to enjoy what you do in life. Nobody has a good day every single day. At Carbonite, we pride ourselves on offering a good work-life balance for our employees. As leaders, we enjoy what we do, and we appreciate the contributions that our team makes daily. And I think that appreciation rubs off on the team. We can't always control our team's attitude, but we can control our own attitude. As a leader, that's a key to success.

## What We Have Learned From BPTW

By Clayton Jennings, president, Hylant-Fort Wayne, and David Norris, president, Hylant-Indianapolis



Clayton Jennings



David Norris

Hylant is celebrating its sixth year as a winner of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce Best Places to Work award. Each year we are awarded this honor, we learn more about showing our employees their value. After all, it's our employees who make our business successful.

Over the years of participation, we have learned that as our industry evolves and becomes more complex, ensuring our teams are armed with the development, tools, resources and capacity they need to best serve our clients is critical. The feedback we receive yearly ensures we are able to pivot as needed to keep our employees satisfied with work, providing an environment of engagement, showing them value and empowering them to take time for themselves and their families.

We know listening to feedback and implementing their recommendations keeps our employees engaged and happy. Over the years, our employees have told us they would like more professional development opportunities, increased performance feedback and flexible working hours. We have proudly implemented these changes and found our employees to be happier and more successful.

Our core mission to strengthen and protect the businesses, employees and communities of our client family, by embracing them as our own, extends to our employees as well. Each time we hear their feedback, we can provide for their needs and continue to grow.

## My Best Advice to Companies Thinking About Participating

By Randie Dial, managing principal, CLA Indiana



The Indiana Chamber's Best Places to Work program is an experience that offers value and recognition. I would highly recommend participating, but only if you feel you are ready for it!

Let me explain. As the managing principal, I have been leading the charge for CLA in Indiana the last five years. You will notice we have not been on the Best Places to Work list in recent years. Why is this? Simply put, I didn't feel we should participate. This program should be for those companies that truly believe they are one of the Best Places to Work. Our leadership team did not feel, until this year, that we had the employee engagement, culture, family atmosphere and many other facets that are important to truly be one of the Best Places to Work.

Between 2015 and 2018, we saw a monumental shift in Indiana for CLA. We have worked hard over the past few years developing talent, building trust, knocking down silos, recognizing our strengths and getting to know our market very well. This has led to an unlimited number of opportunities that have been

created for our clients, our people and our community.

As we gained momentum over that period, our central strategy was simple ... look different, create opportunities and build inspired careers. As a professional services firm, our industry is full of competition. On the surface, it can be difficult to tell us apart.

However, with our industry-focused wealth advisory, outsourcing and CPA/advisory services, we are one of a kind. We are private business and owner focused. We are proactive, not reactive. We bring strategy along with compliance. As a result, we have had the pleasure of being able to show our people, clients, prospects, partners and the community overall that WE ARE DIFFERENT. We truly are one of the Best Places to Work in Indiana!

You will continue to see CLA in the market going forward, and if you have not met us yet, I encourage you to do so. You will find we communicate and engage differently. We are here to get to know and help those we cross paths with, and our ultimate passion is to simply create opportunities!

## My Best Advice to Companies Thinking About Participating

By Joe Kirsch, executive vice president and commercial market president, Busey Bank



Busey Bank is honored to be named one of the Best Places to Work in Indiana. As a corporation, we have participated in other Best Places to Work awards programs in Illinois, Florida and Missouri, as well as at the national level.

The best piece of advice I would give to organizations considering participation is to identify internal partners within your organization early in the awards process. From the benefits assessment and employer questionnaire to communicating survey information and publicizing the results, our organization has utilized associates in human resources, information technology, marketing and communications throughout every step of the process. Getting early buy-in from these partners establishes timelines while also building teamwork and camaraderie across the organization.

We've also found that leading by example is critical to success. When emails for the awards program survey come through, it can be easy for your staff to ignore the notes because everyone is busy. Through effective communications with your group and personalizing the message, it shows your employees that the company is genuinely invested in this program. When you seem enthusiastic about the program, it will project onto your staff, encouraging

them to participate. This strategy led Busey to a 76% participation rate in our latest survey – one of the highest across our market footprint!

Through the employee surveys, the Best Places to Work awards program gives the organization a chance to reflect on how we are investing in our associates. While this process can be time consuming, it's important to get a pulse on where you're at and the programs and benefits you offer. I encourage leaders to take the time to read employee responses, find trends and themes, and act upon their feedback. This information helps make culture improvements and assists with recruiting – and retaining – your most valuable asset, your employees!

Additionally, the survey portion of the program gives your team an opportunity to share open and honest feedback. Through talking with associates and getting feedback on the values and mission of the organization, we can gauge the company culture.

Ultimately, the best thing about the Best Places to Work awards program is how it encourages honest feedback from associates. Winning awards is great, but Busey's real motivation to participate in this program is to build upon our service-minded culture, ensuring we're a best place for associates to work.