

PERFORMANCE SERVICES

'I Get to Do What I Do Best Most Days'

Each year, Performance Services asks team members a dozen questions (developed by Gallup) focused on employee retention and high-performing companies. One of the responses shared there and in the Best Places to Work survey: "I get to do what I do best most days."

Tim Thoman, founder and president of the design build firm focused on energy conservation projects, listens to that comment and reacts:

"As I've grown as a leader and manager, I've realized how important it is to find what people are wired to do naturally and to try to put them in a position where they can do that most of the time. We all have to do things we don't like or love, but we want to minimize that."

Performance Services was No. 1 on the small/medium Best Places to Work list in 2009. Its only other year of participation yielded a No. 2 ranking in 2016. It is back at No. 1 in the medium category for 2020. Employee numbers for those three years – 46, 115 and now 186 – document the growth, along with what is currently nine offices in as many states.

Thoman admits the challenge that brings: "We've grown in terms of employees, markets served and offices (with the question being): How do we maintain consistent and strong culture when we are not having a lot of face-to-face time together?"

A Mexican or other resort area retreat, which features more bonding than planning, continues. There is an annual gathering in Indianapolis, semiannual branch reviews at each office and monthly web meetings. It appears to be a winning formula – 98.4% positive responses on the most recent employee engagement evaluation.

Josh Drake, director of HR and talent acquisition, says it simply comes down to Thoman and management that "cares deeply about people. I'm able to be the best version of myself professionally ... and for my family as well with the work-life balance."



Time together away from the office is key to building even stronger relationships among team members.

Employees are provided the necessary tools. An annual physical (and a few other wellness requirements) earns a \$3,000 Health Savings Account contribution from the company. Drake points out that weekly nurse and dietitian visits assist with "having the resources here to navigate the wellness journey."

In a story that is becoming quite familiar, the annual physical resulted in an early diagnosis and treatment of an aggressive cancer for one employee.

Recruiting resilience

As with any organization, keeping the right people on board is greatly enhanced by attracting top talent in the first place. Thoman concedes it is not always easy to match the required culture fit – including the all-important high integrity – with elite skills. Two recent openings took eight months and six months, respectively, before the right person was hired.

Drake notes that Thoman's approach "removes all barriers for why top talent would not join us. He puts all the pieces in place. We have incredibly low turnover. Tim really cares about people."

The guiding principles remain the same as when the business was formed in 1998: "Taking care of employees and customers is at the very top," Thoman asserts. "By living that and putting it above short-term financial performance, it's worked out well for us."

Performance Services has remained disciplined in its expansion. The most recent office addition (North Carolina) has two employees. Texas is the fastest growing market, with the employee count doubling in size last year to 25, with the potential to do the same in the next two years. Several big project wins in that state complement Indiana projects that include, among others, a \$50 million addition/renovation for Avon schools and a new jail and sheriff's office in Tipton County.

"We like to grow organically instead of buying companies because culturally it's hard to go to a group of people who have been working

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together and say, 'Here's your new culture.' We find it's slower but better to grow organically," Thoman reveals.

Strategic approach

Bike rides and group runs are part of the daily routing for those that wish to participate. Anniversaries at five-year increments are celebrated, as well as the occasional retirements. New ideas are brought into the mix on a regular basis. "If it works out well, we keep it; if not, we replace it with something else," Thoman offers in a practical outlook.

After working for large organizations earlier in his career, Thoman started Performance Services and adopted a stewardship model. Despite the evolution in size and reach, it is a strategy that remains at the forefront today.

"I feel very blessed that we are where we are. The right people have come at the right time. I didn't really have a vision of having nine offices, growing at the rate we're growing and doing the business we're doing," he shares.

"What I like about it is that we very much maintain what is a family feel. People still really matter even though there are a lot more of them. And we want to take really great care of them. I think it still feels very much like that. And we have people take care of each other. We try to create a culture and environment where that's supported and encouraged."

RESOURCE: Tim Thoman and Josh Drake, Performance Services, at www.performanceservices.com. View the May-June 2009 Best Places to Work story on the company in the archives at www.bizvoicemagazine.com