



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

What It Takes to Be the 'Best'

By **Matt Ottinger**

We spoke with leaders of four 2025 Best Places to Work in Indiana companies about their approaches to building award-winning cultures and how they've benefited from the process.

They include:

- **Barry Hall** – managing partner, Kruggel Lawton CPAs (South Bend)
- **Jeff Schemel**, general manager, REGO-FIX Tool Corp. (Whitestown)
- **Doug Shatto** – president and CEO, Lochmueller Group (Evansville)
- **Loren Wood** – owner and custom builder, Loren Wood Builders (Bloomington)

BizVoice®: Have you made the list before? Had you applied before?

Hall: "Yes, this is Kruggel Lawton's second time being named one of the Best

Places to Work in Indiana. Last year was our first time participating, and we found the feedback to be incredibly insightful. The responses were overwhelmingly positive, which provided reassurance that we have been able to successfully grow the firm and our services without losing sight of our goal to provide world-class client services while continuing to uphold the firm's mission and values. Last year's survey brought two key areas of improvement to our attention: our mentoring program and the frequency of structured feedback ... These adjustments have made a noticeable difference in our workplace culture, promoting continuous improvement and stronger team connections."

Schemel: "Yes, I believe this is the fifth time we've made the list. We have used the responses to look at a variety of things – in particular looking at continuing improving benefits like healthcare coverage, communication as an organization both in the

U.S. and abroad. We expanded our offering of benefits based on the responses."

Shatto: "We were selected in 2010 and in every year since 2020, so this is our sixth selection in a row. We perform internal surveys on a regular basis (semi-annually) to better understand what is influencing our culture, both negatively and positively."

Wood: "No, this is our first time making the statewide list, though we've been recognized as one of the Best Places to Work in Bloomington every year since 2019 and have been named a Top Workplace in Indianapolis for the last two years. The feedback from those has been incredibly valuable. It's helped us identify what we're doing well and where we have opportunities to improve."

BV: What do you think are the best aspects of your culture? What do you think staffers listed as most important?

Hall: "Without a doubt, our team sees



Best Places to Work companies from various industries highlight their collaborative environments, requests for internal feedback and team-building activities. They also promote collective buy-in through things like benefits and Employee Stock Ownership Plans.

tremendous value in the firm's culture, flexibility and family-first approach. These are three foundational aspects of life at Kruggel Lawton that we couldn't be prouder of. In 2024, we introduced the 'KL Way' and asked the team to define what that means to them. What we learned is that our approach to client work, supporting and uplifting one another, and creating a flexible work environment are things that are valued and supported at every level within Kruggel Lawton. Simply put, we show up for each other and our clients. The best aspects of our culture include a collaborative environment where teamwork and idea-sharing are encouraged, flexibility that accommodates personal and family needs, and a family-first approach that prioritizes the well-being of our employees and their families."

Schemel: "We believe in a family-like culture. We have frequent lunches and celebrations – yearly Christmas party at a nice restaurant and other recognitions throughout the year. Our logo is a triangle (with the points representing core values of integrity, growth and excellence). (Within the triangle is a mission statement: 'To live our core values on a daily basis.')

Shatto: "Our culture is heavily predicated on our corporate values: creativity, accountability, respect, dedication, integrity and achievement. We use those values to govern our operations and decision-making, with (a focus) on always trying to do things right. Moreover, we place a lot of emphasis on a people-centric culture, transparency in our operations, approachability of leadership (servant leadership) and employee ownership. Our staff frequently echoes those same characteristics in survey results along with our collective benefit programs, particularly our 401(k) and Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) share allocations."

Wood: "At Loren Wood Builders, we take a holistic approach to company culture. It's about more than just benefits, it's about fostering an environment where people feel valued, challenged and supported. A few things that set us apart: a highly collaborative and highly positive work environment; a strong focus on personal and professional development; a commitment to transparency in decision-making; a culture of accountability, where we all take ownership of our work and support each other in reaching high standards; and competitive compensation, solid benefits and a genuine work-life balance. From past surveys and internal conversations, we know that

our team values the sense of camaraderie and purpose in our work. They appreciate that we invest in their growth and that our leadership team is actively engaged in supporting their success."

BV: In what ways are you still looking to improve your culture?

Hall: "By regularly collecting and analyzing feedback from our team, we're able to identify trends, address issues promptly and implement changes that reflect the collective needs of the firm. This ongoing dialogue helps us stay attuned to the evolving needs of our team, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and engagement. Through internal and external surveys, annual town halls and increased opportunities for feedback, we hope to create an even more supportive, collaborative and dynamic workplace culture."

Schemel: "We continually look at ways to improve our growth as individuals and look at ways to improve excellence as an organization. We have monthly 'Learn and Grow' meetings companywide, where we have outside people discuss things like expanding your comfort zones, having difficult conversations, workplace harassment, etc."

Shatto: "We are constantly making efforts to improve communication, almost to a fault, as there are so many means of communications due to technological advancements. We also try to pay attention to sociological changes to make sure that we are not out of step with evolving expectations of personnel, including topics like hybrid work arrangements and comfortable, positive work environments. That includes emphasizing increased employee engagement with our management teams."

Wood: "Like any growing company, we're always evolving. A few areas we're actively working on: ESOP transition – we're currently in the early stages of transitioning to an ESOP, which will allow our team to have a direct stake in the company's long-term success; expanding our training and development – as we continue to grow, we're refining our internal training programs to ensure that every team member has a clear path for career development; and maintaining culture while scaling – with our expansion into Indianapolis and Columbus, we're focused on making sure our core values remain strong across locations." ■