

Customized Mechanical Solutions LLC

Crafting a Workplace for the Future

By Matt Ottinger

CMS Corporation's headquarters are in Maumee, Ohio, but when Customized Mechanical Solutions LLC (CMS Mechanical) was recently formed to encompass its Bargersville-based operation, the firm took the opportunity to highlight its workplace by entering the Best Places to Work in Indiana competition.

CMS Mechanical resides in a burgeoning area in Johnson County – an apt fit for such an up-and-coming entity. Employing about 25 staffers, it's a vertically integrated global mechanical building systems contractor that supports design-build and design-bid-build contracting approaches for both new construction and retrofit applications.

President William Beach explains about 60% of its business is in the industrial mechanical space (fuel projects like installing either diesel or aviation fuel systems in commercial and federal sectors), while about 40% is in HVAC work.

"As we have developed our team over time, new people that are entering into the business have the opportunity to learn this very broad ranging skillset in the mechanical trade," he suggests. "And then as part of that strategy to continue our growth, we really have embraced hiring younger skilled tradespeople out of specific trade schools."

He cites talent assets like the Hobart Institute of Welding Technology (Ohio) and Tulsa Welding School, particularly its branch in Jacksonville, Florida, as ideal resources to connect with potential hires with winning attitudes.

"They've got a good basis and fundamentals of the work they're going to be performing, but they do have quite a long trek in terms of becoming really a journeyman-style trades person," Beach reveals. "But they brought a lot of energy, enthusiasm, willingness to learn and perform all the various roles that we have them perform ... and so adding that to our mix of our longstanding team members has really, I think, created a cool culture to be part of today."

It's a strategy that's paying off. Beach credits director of operations Jason Chambers

and his colleagues for understanding the long-term strategy and helping put it in place.

"(Chambers) and his team of superintendents all understood from the beginning if this is the strategy we're going to pursue – hiring these recent graduates and help them build careers here, they're going to have to spend a lot more time working with those individuals in years one, two and three than they would if we went ahead and just tried to hire a 10-year or 25-year veteran journeyman," Beach offers.

Chambers confirms, "We like to hire go-getters – people that are going to actively want their career to proceed upward."

According to project engineer Jose Hernandez, the company's strategy of investing time into its new team members is bearing fruit.

"The first thing I noticed when I joined the company is there's a strong culture that supports teamwork," praises Hernandez, who has been with CMS Mechanical for about two years. "At the same time, not only the company but also each one of the (coworkers) that you work with every day, they really push you to grow professionally."

Keeping the team intact

One aspect of employee-friendly work that sets CMS Mechanical apart is the mere act

of consistent employment itself.

Beach explains that, ideally, construction projects would be simultaneous. However, that doesn't always happen and there are gaps of time between projects. While many companies lay those employees off during that time, CMS Mechanical keeps them on the payroll.

"Our philosophy is that those people, who have been chosen and have continued to be on our payroll, are important to the company," he shares.

Beach says the CMS way "is to present to candidates that join this firm that we will give you a 40-hour workweek for 52 weeks of the year regardless of the transitions between projects that we as a company will incur naturally."

Playing it 'safe'

Another central component of CMS's culture is "safety first," according to Chambers.

"It's about everybody going home the same way they showed up," he says, noting accident hazard analysis preparation is integral.

"Basically, our lowest level team member has the equivalent training and safety as our superintendents," he adds. "So, everybody is truly equal when it comes to safety and everybody has the same training – and it is robust."



CMS Mechanical is building with a focus on young talent, finding "go-getters" who are trainable and enthusiastic.



CMS executive and Indiana Chamber board member Mercedes Enrique gets involved at a Rebuilding Together volunteer event.

Beach adds that safety is imperative when working with the U.S. Department of Defense and high-end commercial and industrial clients. “If we didn’t embrace the safety culture to the extent that we have and continue to, it’s very likely that we would miss fairly attractive opportunities for the firm simply because we didn’t have the safety metrics and processes in place to make that particular client feel comfortable working with us.”

Building bonds

The broader culture has been nurtured as well, with an emphasis on communication and a genuine sense of caring.

“It’s an open-door policy, but it’s a little bit deeper than that, in my opinion,” Chambers asserts. “We know what (coworkers) do; we know how their family is, we know about their personal lives and they know about my personal life.”

Hernandez confirms those sentiments, pointing to why the company’s future looks bright with committed staff that are truly invested.

“If you’re feeling bad about something, they really care about you,” he offers. “They try to help you find a solution for whatever situation you’re going through. And that kind of thing is what makes you willingly go to work the next day; it’s not like a burden on your shoulders.”

Ultimately, that’s what makes CMS feel like more than just a job for its team members.

“That motivates you more than money,” Hernandez concludes. “Working with people that really care about you, I believe, is one of the things that makes the difference.”

RESOURCE: Customized Mechanical Solutions LLC at www.cmscorp.com

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