



Attitude, Values and Workers' Comp

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Photo by Mandy Leigh

To work with The Matrix Companies, an employee must have the "Matrix attitude" and follow a few basic principles: play well with others, do what you say and say what you do, act like you own it, and do the right thing. According to Brent Messmer, president and CEO, as simple and sensible as these rules sound, they are what keeps the employees and the company successful.

"I meet with every new employee that comes on board and tell them about these core values ... if they just do those basic things, they'll be successful," Messmer says. "Work hard, that's a given, but do these things because you're the one that creates the environment for other people around you."

This philosophy earned Matrix a spot on the "Best Places to Work" list from the Business Courier for the last four years and one of the "Top Workplaces" from the Cincinnati Enquirer for the last two years. Messmer attributes the title to the culture that Matrix has created, but knows that awards and titles aren't the most important thing.

"We have been named as one of Cincinnati's best places to work for several years in a row. We've also been fortunate enough to win some awards for growth. But throughout the process, you realize that the most important thing is the people," he says. "People are spending more time here than at home, so we want to create an environment that people want to get up in the morning and come to, an atmosphere that is very light. We work hard, but we play hard too."

Even during the recession when the company had to make some changes, more than 80 percent of employees still responded on a survey that Matrix was a great place to work.

"We are different than other companies. We go above and beyond a paycheck and benefits," Messmer says. "It's in the little things, like everyone has a window, we have music playing in the halls, we've got wellness foods in the lunchroom, monthly massages, and we do happy hours and other things to get people together."

The company also sets goals and objectives for employees, which if met, are rewarded with casual days or gift cards. Messmer says this is important because "every employee can lead to an increase in revenue and retention."

Matrix is a risk management company that specializes in Ohio workers' compensation claims administration. They also do unemployment claims management, case management, which aims at getting injured workers back to work faster, and investigations. There are quite a few companies that provide this service in the area, but Matrix can differentiate itself from the competitor.

"We do it differently because our model is different. Our clients would say it leads to better service and better results. We've maintained our unique model since we've started," Messmer says.

Although it has been recognized as one of the fastest growing companies in the nation, Matrix has not strayed outside of its single-point contact, small caseload model. According to Messmer, committing to the model is sometimes challenging and less profitable, but they "never jeopardize the model because that's what the client wants."

The model may never change, but The Matrix Companies keep growing. Since they have clients in Ohio who have operations in other states, Matrix is moving to other areas.

"Regional expansion is definitely our next move and it'll probably be our clients who take us there," Messmer says.

The company is investing in technology that will help in regional growth. With new technologies, Matrix has the sophistication of larger companies, but maintains the "boutique" feel. In December 2011, they were even able to add the City of

Cincinnati as a client without "skipping a beat," Messmer says.

But despite the growth in other areas, Messmer still feels it's important to be involved in Tristate community organizations. For example, they are very involved with St. Joseph's Orphanage, the Assistance League and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Messmer is also on the board at Big Brothers Big Sisters, where he is a Big Brother, Thomas More College, his alma mater, and the Hamilton County Development Company, which helped to start The Matrix Companies.

"I try to be focused on things I'm really passionate about. Boards can take a lot of time, so you have to be on it for the right reasons," Messmer says.

Messmer gets his employees involved by doing things like inviting them to participate in ping-pong tournaments at his house to benefit cystic fibrosis research, or have them pay to dress casual for a week and then donating the proceeds to an organization. Either way, Messmer works to instill a good attitude, core values, and passion into his life and his company without compromising his vision.

"We have had nice growth and I'm proud of that growth ... but it doesn't matter to me how fast we grow. We can quadruple every year for all I care," he says. "As long as we don't compromise what we do, how we do it, and why we do it."

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BUSINESS focus

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