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Strong culture fuels impressive trajectories

The evidence shows that building and maintaining a healthy corporate culture helps companies and their employees achieve the highest levels of performance and customer satisfaction. See inside

NATIONAL POST, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2020



Waterstone CEO Marty Parker, top left, and Paladin Security CEO Ashley Cooper, top centre, with staff in Burnaby, B.C. DARRYL DYCK / POSTMEDIA

THE ENGINE THAT POWERS SUCCESS

MARY TERESA BITTI
Postmedia Content Works

When Marty Parker, president and CEO of Waterstone Human Capital — leadership advisers providing services designed to meet the recruitment, culture engagement measurement and assessment, and leadership training needs of growth and entrepreneurial-minded organizations — launched the Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Cultures™ program 16 years ago, organizations were still struggling to articulate just what it was they were about. The connection between strong performance and organizational cul-

ture, and how to make that connection, was not widely understood.

Today, the connection is clear and consistent. “This year, more than ever, the sophistication and commitment of companies and organizations to build and sustain high-performance cultures is front and centre,” says Parker. “It’s one thing to say this is a great place to work. It’s another to say here’s how culture impacts performance, and it’s yet another to say here are the things we do to sustain that performance.”

This year’s winners are doing that and more. Here’s how.

KEEPING CULTURE SIMPLE AND REINFORCING IT

The more complex the business environment is, the more important it is for companies to keep their value proposition simple, says Parker. “This happens when you have a clear understanding of what your culture is, so that you can deliver on it. It’s not the strategy that’s hard. It’s the execution.” To illustrate this he points to the many ways now available for organizations to communicate with their people: town halls, video calls, portals, social media, live streams. Contemporary thinking would

suggest incorporating an element of all these things. “Think about that. Creating a simplicity in not only articulating culture but being able to measure against it.”

Mid-market category honouree Klick Health has thought about it — a lot. The Toronto-based full-service marketing and commercialization agency for life sciences has made culture its competitive advantage and markets itself based on its culture. That culture is summed up in two words: People first. “Skills are important in how we hire and promote but our foundational elements — kindness, empathy, drive — are essential,”

says Glenn Zujew, Klick’s executive vice-president. To that end, Klick produces a personalized yearbook for each employee that tracks the behaviours it wants to see, the projects worked on and the impact of those projects. “This way you can take a look at where your energy went and how you moved the needle,” says Zujew. “We are constantly evaluating and reinforcing what’s important to us. We have a 360 promotion process where managers can trigger a review and it’s all vetted against our cultural beliefs.” The result: Klick grows 30 to 40 per cent a year, every year. See CULTURE on SP9

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We Build High Performance Cultures

Corporate culture drives performance – it’s your organization’s greatest asset. At Waterstone, our team of leadership advisers provides services designed to meet your culture and engagement measurement and assessment, leadership training, and recruitment needs. On behalf of Waterstone, congratulations to this year’s Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Cultures™ and Canada’s Most Admired CEO™ award winners.

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“ IF THESE FOUR LEADERS REPRESENT THE FUTURE, WE’RE HEADED FOR GREAT THINGS. EACH OF THESE INDIVIDUALS IS BUILDING A GREAT SUCCESS STORY AND IS, IN THE PROCESS, DRIVING SOCIETAL IMPACT. I COULD NOT BE MORE EXCITED ABOUT WHAT’S TO COME. — MARTY PARKER, PRESIDENT/CEO, WATERSTONE HUMAN CAPITAL

TAKING THE HELM OF COMPANIES WITH TOP PERFORMANCE

Insights from Canada’s Most Admired CEOs

MARY TERESA BITTI
Postmedia Content Works

Down to earth. High humility. Purpose-driven. These attributes are shared among this year’s Canada’s Most Admired CEO™ honourees, and are also core to how they lead the high-performing cultures they’ve established in four distinct industries. Now in its sixth year, the Canada’s Most Admired CEO program continues to build on its legacy of showcasing the people behind the cultures of some of Canada’s leading organizations.

“If these four leaders represent the future, we’re headed for great things,” says Marty Parker, president and CEO of Waterstone Human Capital and chair of the Canada’s Most Admired Awards programs. “Each of these individuals is building a great success story and is, in the process, driving societal impact. I could not be more excited about what’s to come.”

Meet Canada’s Most Admired CEOs of 2019:

ANTHONY LONGO,
PRESIDENT AND CEO,
LONGO BROTHERS
**FRUIT MARKETS INC.:
ENTERPRISE
CATEGORY WINNER**

How do you support and promote culture?

Treating you like family is how we define our culture, and it’s supported by our values — honesty, trustworthiness, mutual respect and voglia (an Italian word that means having the will and determination to do something) — and the behaviours expected of our team.

It starts with orientation when we talk about the family history and how we started, our core purpose as an organization (we fuel happier, healthier lives) and as a family (we’re here to help make a better world) and how they are intertwined. For me personally, I talk about values, share stories and try to live those values every day.

We also communicate our culture all the time at town halls, regional meetings and daily huddles, and we celebrate the behaviours we want to see. We have wow boards in our stores where we post messages from customers about great experiences they’ve had with us. We launched a mobile learning app called Axonify, where we just initiated a series called “What would you do?” It addresses different situations and options for how to handle them.

What does high performance look like at Longos?

Always doing the right thing by our guests and team members. It’s not financial. Do people feel better about their day when they leave Longos versus when they came in? I would summarize it as caring.

What role does legacy play in your culture?

Thousands of students have worked with us over the years. When I run into them as adults, they tell me

they learned about work ethic, humility and about treating people well at our stores. That’s legacy. That’s helping shape folks into great contributors to the community, and that’s part of culture.

What book has helped shape your approach to culture?

Good to Great by Jim Collins.

CAROLINE RISEBORO,
**PRESIDENT
AND CEO, PLAN
INTERNATIONAL
CANADA: BROADER
PUBLIC SECTOR
CATEGORY WINNER***

How have you achieved a high-performance culture?

We used to measure ourselves on how much revenue we generated. When I started here four years ago, I kicked off a new strategic planning process and said to the organization, “let’s try and dream again.”

From that plan came the major dials we want to move, including how many Canadians we engage in our work, the number of children we impact, effectiveness and efficiency. That was new to the organization and quite transformational because a) it put us all on the same page, and b) it related back to what we are really trying to do: Engage Canadians to change the world.

We also created much richer metrics tied to culture. In the last four years, we’ve grown revenues 25 per cent in a contracting market. Our programs in Canada have grown 400 per cent.

How do you support and promote culture?

As a leader you articulate where you aspire to be, you know how you want to move the dial and you communicate it in all kinds of ways that resonate with people. In the past, the communication came from the CEO and leadership alone. Over the last couple of years, I’ve been very intentional to share my power, and share my platform so all levels of the organization are communicating the power of the culture.

What role does social impact have on performance?

We are a social impact organization in everything we do. To some degree it makes it both easier and harder. On one hand, we attract great talent because people want to ensure their day jobs have a broader social purpose. At the same time, we don’t always have the resources and yet we are trying to tackle the most challenging issue facing society. This is why we professionalized culture.

What book has helped shape your approach to culture?

The first 90 days: Critical success strategies for new leaders at all levels by Michael Watkins.

KIRK SIMPSON,
**CO-FOUNDER
AND CEO, WAVE
FINANCIAL INC.:
GROWTH CATEGORY
WINNER**

How do you support and



Canada’s Most Admired CEOs, clockwise from top left: Anthony Longo, Longo Brothers Fruit Markets Inc.; Caroline Riseboro, Plan International Canada (now CEO of Trillium Health Partners Foundation); Kirk Simpson, Wave Financial Inc.; Mohamad Fakh, Paramount Fine Foods. SUPPLIED

promote culture?

Our culture is driven, focused on serving our customers, and being kind to one another. We recognize that we’re in this together, all trying to have our best experiences and ensure that while we are doing the best work we can, we understand it’s all about people.

The biggest role I can have is to ensure the leaders I bring on are very much wired in that same way and value the same things. We’ve built our recruiting and retention capabilities around the idea of ensuring we’re hiring missionaries not mercenaries, that skills and capabilities are equally weighted with the type of person you are and what you value and how you go about doing your work.

What role has culture played in your performance?

In the nine years since we started Wave, we’ve grown from eight to 275 employees. We’ve attracted incredible talent because of the value we place on the person as well as the culture being built in a way that people understand we are here to serve small business owners and we want to make them better.

One of the exciting things

about high-growth companies is you have to constantly be changing the playbook in all aspects of your business and keeping the culture you’re proud of. In the summer we were acquired by H&R Block. That’s a brand new playbook.

How does culture impact innovation?

Empathy for the customer drives a desire to understand their needs at a very deep level, which enables us to have insight on what we need to build for them that’s going to change their life. Internally, we’re very focused on ensuring that we’re provoking greatness from each other. Rather than relying on the first answer, let’s find the best answer.

What book has helped shape your approach to culture?

It’s been a combination of different books: Hit Refresh: The Quest to Rediscover Microsoft’s Soul and Imagine a Better Future for Everyone; Powerful: Building a Culture of Freedom and Responsibility about Netflix; and the Hard Thing About Hard Things: Building a Business When There are No Easy Answers.

MOHAMAD FAKIH,
PRESIDENT AND CEO,



**PARAMOUNT FINE
FOODS: MID-MARKET
CATEGORY WINNER**

What does high performance look like at Paramount?

At the core of everything we do is putting people first. Being high performing is about how well you are getting along with others, how many ideas you are putting forward to be a good family member, a good neighbour.

One idea that came out of this is having Friday lunch together with everyone bringing food representative of their backgrounds so we can get to know each other, because when you want to know a culture you need to taste it.

For Paramount, success is being the favourite of our customers. The only way you can be someone’s favourite is by giving them a special feeling about the entire experience, the entire company, what we stand for.

What role does purpose have on performance?

We call Paramount a movement, not a company. A movement because we absolutely believe we can change the world while we’re doing business. Being profitable but at the same time being good, kind neighbours to

everyone. We want to contribute to the communities where we have locations; we don’t just want to take money.

I want to send a message that everyone should have the same opportunity to succeed. People want a different, better reason to work for a company than just a salary. And people want to support businesses that are purposeful. When we launched the Canada Strong campaign to raise money to help the families of the victims of Ukraine International Airlines flight 752, our people were so excited to help and sales went up because people want to support a company that is doing good for the community.

How is culture helping drive performance?

In the past five years we’ve more than doubled revenues to \$90 million and the number of locations to 68 globally.

What book has helped shape your approach to culture?

Four Secrets to Managing Culture by Danny Meyers.

**Editor’s note: Caroline Riseboro has left Plan International Canada to take the position of President and CEO of Trillium Health Partners Foundation.*

“CREATING A WINNER CULTURE ISN'T ROCKET SCIENCE. IT'S ABOUT BEING PURPOSEFUL AND FOCUSED. IT'S ABOUT TAKING CARE OF OUR PEOPLE, EACH OTHER, AND OUR CUSTOMERS ... I'M PROUD TO SAY WE HAVE A LOT OF GREAT PEOPLE AT THIS COMPANY DOING GREAT THINGS. — SEAN O'BRIEN, PRESIDENT/CEO, RELIANCE HOME COMFORT

RELIANCE
HOME COMFORT

DENISE DEVEAU
Postmedia Content Works

It's not unusual to see members of the Reliance Home Comfort executive team on the road with a service technician, or spending time with front-line team members at the company's call centre.

These “ride-alongs” are just one of many initiatives that have created a winning culture for the two-time honouree in Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures Enterprise category, says president and CEO Sean O'Brien.

He also joins front-line teams as often as possible. “Joining front-line technicians and staff across the business allows us to better understand the day-to-day lives of our teams and how they interact with each other and our customers.”

Reliance Home Comfort is a leading provider of heating, cooling, plumbing and water solutions. Since O'Brien joined the Toronto-based firm in 2013, it has been on a rapid growth trajectory, doubling its revenues and staffing, expanding its geographic reach, and introducing new product lines.

In the past two years alone Reliance has made a number of strategic acquisitions, including three in Canada (Saskatoon, Maple Ridge and Kelowna) and its first U.S. operation in Atlanta. “It's been an interesting journey,” O'Brien says. “I'm proud to say we have a lot of great people at this company doing great things.”

Cultural transformation has been a central focus for O'Brien since he took on the leadership role. His approach is a simple one, he says. “Creating a winning culture isn't rocket science. It's about being purposeful and focused. It's about taking care of our people, each other, and our customers.”

Reliance's cultural foundations are based on five guiding principles: Drive to Win, Outstanding Customer Experience, Better is Better, Proud to be Reliance, and Work Safe, Be Healthy. “These are the goalposts that keep our management and team members centered on driving and growing our organization and supporting a thriving work environment,” he says.

He is quick to point out that Reliance's success goes



Reliance Home Comfort employees at the company's warehouse in Richmond Hill, Ont. From left, Batia Haber, sales manager; Rishie Kamal, install manager; Anthony DeGasperi, install manager; Sean O'Brien, president & CEO; Christian Carrington, warehouse runner; Sherri Woodman, general manager GTA; Dwain Cooke, warehouse manager; and Aaron Cassidy, service manager.

COLE BURSTON/POSTMEDIA

beyond the financial results. “Numeric measurements around profitability and growth are what shareholders get excited about. But there are other things that are important, such as giving back to the community, creating a healthy place for people to develop their careers and provide for their families, and creating new market-leading products and ideas.”

Despite Reliance's expanding size and reach, simplicity and constant communications are key for O'Brien. “Our positive results are directly linked to clear and transparent communication across all 2,400 team members.”

Reliance's clearly articulated business strategy is posted on its Intranet site for all team members. Executive and management teams are also front and center with team members, he adds. “We spend a lot of time doing town halls and interacting with the field. Our regional VPs spent three out of four weeks a month in their markets and only one week at head office to conduct business reviews and management meetings.”

The company's intranet also has a “Let's Chat with Sean O'Brien” link on its intranet,

where team members have a direct line to email him with questions or concerns. “We believe everyone has a voice at Reliance.”

Even holiday cards are all signed by hand, O'Brien adds. “That's purposeful and meaningful for team members.”

Every time O'Brien visits a regional office, his first order of the day is to join a technician making home service calls. “You always discover a nugget of information when you take the time to hear technicians' and customers'

thoughts and frustrations. Sometimes corporate office insulates management from the reality in the field. If you want to make changes you have to be on the ground looking for ways to improve it.”

The company has also established a broad portfolio of awards and recognition programs. These include the annual President's Club and President's Award recognizing top performers;

the Health & Safety Award; and the monthly peer-nominated Comfort Ambassador Awards. There are also local recognition programs celebrating significant achievements at the branch level; and other managerial and service recognition programs that showcase exemplary performance and/or service milestones.

Whatever they engage in, cultural fit on all fronts is paramount, whether working with customers, newly acquired companies or com-

munity groups, O'Brien says. “Our purpose statement and guiding principles are woven into everything we do, from rewards and recognition programs to transparency in communications to partnerships.”

Even its charity work speaks to those guiding principles. Reliance has had longstanding relationships with the United Way and Habitat for Humanity, as well as local organizations that focus

on supporting low-income families. “Giving back to the communities where we live and work is a big part of our culture.”

When President's Club and President's Award winners travel abroad on the annual trip, they always take part in a Day of Caring and become advocates for the communities. “In Jamaica we bought washers and dryers for an orphanage. In Ireland we donated to a children's after-school music program; and in Lisbon we donated soccer equipment and uniforms to a team of disadvantaged youth,” O'Brien says. “Those kinds of things we do as an organization makes us all proud.”

As for the future, he has no doubts that the growth trajectory will continue. “From a pure business and numeric perspective, there are still untapped markets and new product opportunities. There's a huge upside from a business standpoint.”

That can only be achieved when you have a winning culture, he adds. “Making Reliance a great place where great people want work, and delivering great service to our customers, is always the top priority for us.”

Talent
pipeline
a cut
above
the rest

Over three-quarters of Reliance staff are front-line workers who interact with customers every day. “We have a lot of front-line technicians going into people's home or speaking to customers at our call centre, so we really put a lot of focus on being customer-centric in our training and staff development,” says Kelly DeGurse, Reliance's director of HR internal programs.

Competition for talent is fierce in the HVAC industry, which is why they start their talent searches early in the game, he notes. “We've formed really good partnerships with almost all of the technical training colleges across Canada. We also donate equipment so students are trained on the newest technology, as well as help train them on customer service as part of the curriculum.”

They recruit extensively from colleges and high schools for apprentice positions. Reliance also offers an HVAC scholarship program for identifying top talent. “It helps us get the best people on board,” DeGurse says.

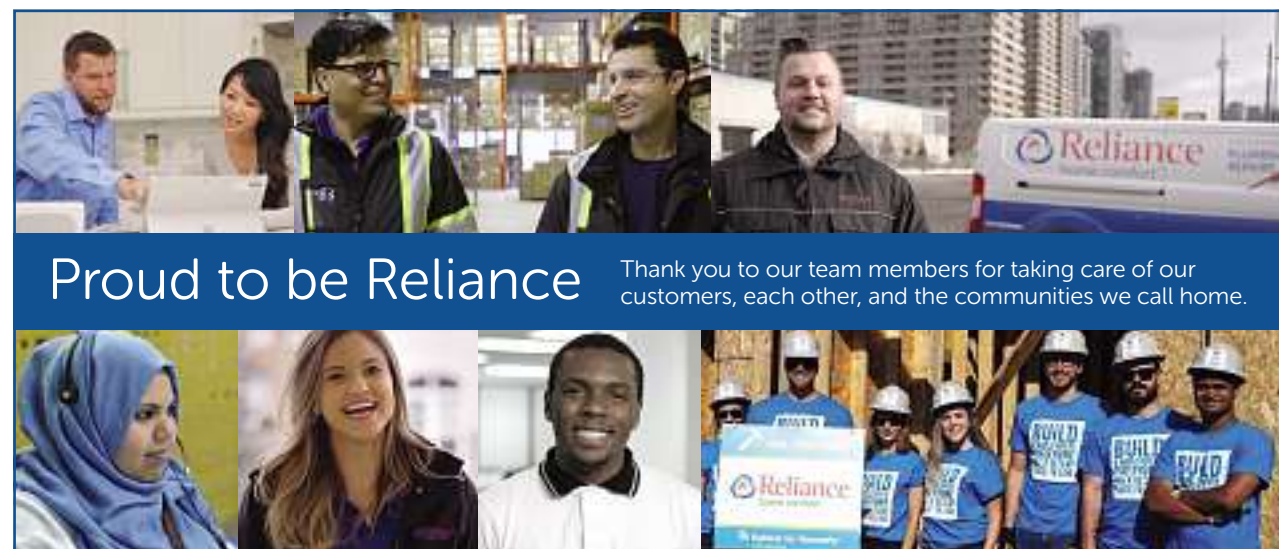
Once on board, Reliance offers many programs to ensure team members remain engaged. These are delivered through dedicated training areas for technical, call centre and management skills development. “Each area really focuses on developing people from within and making sure they are constantly improving.”

In 2017, Reliance introduced a technical training assistance program that provides tuition support to help technicians move up the ladder in their career.

Reliance also offers university students a leadership development program where they rotate through different departments every six months. Over the seven years the program has been in place, nine graduates have assumed leadership positions at Reliance, DeGurse reports.

“Going through all the jobs helps them to find out what excites them in planning their career path. Given our exponential growth, it's extremely helpful in succession planning.”

The end result of these efforts is reflected in outstanding customer experience scores, DeGurse says. “Our scores have increased year over year. Between 2015 and 2020, our net promoter score for service almost doubled from 34 to above 59. Our sales score increased from 52 to 72. That's an amazing improvement.”



Proud to be Reliance

Thank you to our team members for taking care of our customers, each other, and the communities we call home.



Waterstone
CANADA'S
MOST
ADMIRABLE
CORPORATE
CULTURES
2019

Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures 2019

CANADA'S MOST ADMIRABLE CEOs 2019

Broader Public Sector
Caroline Riseboro, President and CEO, Plan International Canada
Growth Kirk Simpson, Co-founder and CEO, Wave Financial Inc.
Mid-Market Mohamad Fakih, President and CEO, Paramount Fine Foods
Enterprise Anthony Longo, President and CEO, Longo Brothers Fruit Markets Inc.

GROWTH

- Active International (Toronto)
- Dejero Labs Inc. (Waterloo, Ont.)
- Intersect (Toronto)
- Isaac Operations (Toronto)
- Kira Inc. (Toronto)
- Mint Health + Drugs (Edmonton)
- Thinkific (Vancouver)
- Unbounce (Vancouver)
- Wave Financial Inc. (Toronto)
- Zulu Alpha Kilo (Toronto)

MID-MARKET

- Backwoods Energy Services (Edmonton)
- The Boston Consulting Group (Toronto)
- Clio (Burnaby, B.C.)
- CMH Heli-Skiing and Summer Adventures (Banff)
- Connect First Credit Union (Calgary)
- G Adventures (Toronto)
- Klick Inc. (Toronto)
- Lifemark Health Group (Toronto)
- Trico Homes (Calgary)
- Weston Forest Products (Mississauga, Ont.)

ENTERPRISE

- Bison Transport (Winnipeg)
- Cadillac Fairview Corporation (Toronto)
- CWB National Leasing (Winnipeg)
- Maple Leaf Foods Inc. (Mississauga, Ont.)
- The Oppenheimer Group (Coquitlam, B.C.)
- Paladin Security Group (Burnaby, B.C.)
- Purolator (Mississauga, Ont.)
- Reliance Home Comfort (Toronto)
- Revera Inc. (Mississauga, Ont.)
- Rogers Communications Inc. (Toronto)

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR

- APTN (Winnipeg)
- Arthritis Society (Toronto)
- British Columbia Institute of Technology (Burnaby, B.C.)
- CAAT Pension Plan (Toronto)
- Green Shield Canada (Windsor, Ont.)
- Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital (Toronto)
- Hydro-Quebec (Montreal)
- Metrolinx (Toronto)
- Michael Garron Hospital/Toronto East Health Network (Toronto)

INDUSTRY LEADERS — CANNABIS

- Canopy Growth Corporation (Smiths Falls, Ont.)

A night to celebrate



Top photo: Marty Parker, president and CEO of Waterstone Human Capital, joins comedian Steve Patterson, event emcee, in toasting the 2018 Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures and Canada's Most Admired CEO Award winners at the 2018 awards gala. Row two, left: Copeman Healthcare team members at the pre-gala reception. Right: The team from The DMZ with their 2018 Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures Award. Row three, left: 2018 Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures Award winners, Baxter Canada. Right: Waterston Human Capital's managing director, Lyn Currie, presents an award. SUPPLIED

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Angela Bains teaching
graphic design at BCIT.

“BY SHAPING CLIO’S FUTURE, OUR EMPLOYEES ARE ALSO SHAPING THEIR OWN PERSONAL GROWTH AND CAREER TRAJECTORY. BEING PERSONALLY INVESTED IN THE COMPANY VISION IS WHAT KEEPS STAFF ENGAGED AND DOING THEIR BEST WORK. — JACK NEWTON, CLIO CEO AND CO-FOUNDER

CLIO’S CULTURE SHIFTS INTO HIGH GEAR

CLIO

DENISE DEVEAU
Postmedia Content Works

Since Clio secured one of the largest Series D funding deals for legal technology in North America, dramatic changes are in store for the rapidly expanding business. One thing it will preserve is the corporate culture it has nurtured since the two founders opened the business in 2008. Since then, the honouree in Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Culture’s Mid-Market category has grown to 500 people with five offices.

Clio, based in Burnaby, B.C., is the leading provider of the legal technology lawyers need to help bridge the gap between lawyers and people in need of legal services. The cloud-based service allows lawyers to run their practices more efficiently and serve their clients better by offering secure client portals, and online billing and payment solutions. The end result is more affordable access to quality legal services.

“With our US\$250 million Series D investment from TCV and JMI, Clio’s ability to take advantage of the opportunity ahead of us has accelerated immensely,” says Jack Newton, CEO and co-founder. “Through this next major phase of growth, we’re being very intentional about scaling our ability to execute on strategic initiatives while maintaining our culture of human and high-performing individuals, which we see as our strongest advantage.”

A MINDSET FOR GROWTH

From the outset, the company has promoted a “founder’s mentality,” where staff are encouraged to use their ingenuity and creativity to ideate their own solutions to problems, and contribute as if Clio were their own company — and indeed, every employee holds company equity as part of their compensation.

If employees have an idea, insight or constructive criticism, they are encouraged to share it and act to the betterment of the company, Newton says. “By shaping Clio’s future, our employees are also shaping their own personal growth and career trajectory. Being personally invested in the company vision is what



Clío at work and at play: Top, Clío employees listen to a weekly company-wide meeting; above right, employees relax during a patio lunch; above left, product team members connect between sessions at Clío’s annual conference. SUPPLIED

keeps staff engaged and doing their best work.”

One important way they achieve this is through their objectives and key results (OKR) framework, which was introduced in 2013. OKRs foster alignment, transparency and purpose throughout the company and help everyone keep their eye on the bigger picture.

Executives create ambitious OKRs at the company level each year with input and feedback from individual employees and teams. Each team is then asked to create its own OKRs. In the spirit of its “no doors, only windows” value, Clio executive leaders host an all-hands meeting every Friday, where they share updates on their progress. At the end of each quarter, the OKRs are graded to evaluate execution.

THE PEOPLE FACTOR

Other processes that have become intrinsic to Clio’s culture are its wide-ranging onboarding and retention initiatives. For example, new hires engage in a num-

ber of interdepartmental ride-alongs and one-on-one meetings. Even before they join, they are “pre-boarded” through Clio’s Slack community, where they can ask questions and make connections leading up to their formal employment.

Every manager undergoes Basecamp training, a multi-week, proprietary leadership development program designed and administered by the internal talent acceleration team. This ensures that all company leaders align with how Clio operates and work toward a common goal, and become champions for the company.

Clio’s people operations team also conducts semi-annual employee engagement surveys, as well as uses the e-NPS (employee net promoter score) framework to anonymously assess staff engagement. Over 80 per cent of staff participated in the most recent survey, and overall eNPS scores rose from 66 to 74.

Lyndsey Hannigan, VP of people, has been an important contributor to this success. She joined Clio

three-and-a-half years ago, when the company had 150 staff members and was just starting a rapid growth trajectory. “I felt it was a unique opportunity in the tech landscape and they were definitely on the right path in terms of their objectives.”

What really sold her on the position was her conversation with the founders. “It was evident from our first conversation that they cared about more than just financial results. It’s a rare thing to see in a founding team, especially when they are on such a rapid growth path.”

She views the new funding round as yet another opportunity to create a new level of maturity for Clio. “It will allow us to develop more consistency and clarity around achieving our business objectives and our priorities without losing the culture they have cultivated over the years. So we’re doubling down on things like team and leadership development, and figuring out new ways to give to the community. More importantly, we are making sure that this is as much a ground-up

versus an entirely top-down strategy and focus.”

Her plans include a “huge development component” that centres on open dialogue and communications. “It’s all too easy for executive teams to tell people what to focus on versus engaging in the consultative process. We reframe that by asking for input and feedback. We’re excited about creating a place that allows people to be the best they can be in their careers and feel good about working here.”

This renewed focus is especially critical given the company expects to add another 100 to 200 staff by the end of 2020. “The challenge for us is making sure we bring into focus the great work we’ve done in building quality relationships, and ensuring everyone has a clear and aligned vision.”

When it comes to hiring for fit, Hannigan has her own spin. “I like to reframe the idea of culture fit as culture add. You absolutely need people who align around your mission and values. But you also need to look for unique and different

ways candidates’ competencies can add to your culture, and bring new ways to handle problems. An important question is, what can you learn from them?”

If Clio wants to carry on its mission to transform the practice of law, for good, she says, “we have to do that as a team. No one can get there on their own. Clio has done a great job of connecting our mission, our strategy, our execution and our personal development. A large part of achieving that is creating a space for conversation and investing in everyone’s personal development.”

A NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTION

One outcome from the recent funding round is the creation of a new role to help navigate its future direction. Meggie Javid recently became the company’s first senior director of strategic initiatives. “When you have that type of investment, it opens up a lot of opportunities to accelerate a company’s efforts to achieve its goals,” she explains. “At the same time, you have to focus on better decision-making and aligning strategy with execution.”

A strategist’s role can be many things to many people, she adds. “For Clio it’s about building cross-functional collaboration at all levels and accelerating the company’s growth. My job is to operationalize that, from the senior leadership to front line staff.”

Alignment is something many organizations struggle with, especially when they are growing at such an accelerated year-over-year rate, she adds. “You need alignment at all levels. With that you also have to be passionate about building the business. It starts with empathy around how people understand priorities, connecting the dots between different levels of business, and having a clear and meaningful strategy. In order to do that, you need to make sure everybody is supported operationally and professionally.”

Clio is well ahead of the game given its size and stage of growth, she says. “They have a strong operational mindset, a strong foundation, and a high-performing and people culture. They’re ready to level up and take the company through the next growth phase. A lot of great talent wants to be part of driving Clio’s future over the next 10 years.”



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“WE FUNDAMENTALLY BELIEVE THAT WHOEVER HAS THE BEST TALENT AND THE STRONGEST CULTURE IS GOING TO WIN IN THE LONG RUN. AT THE HEART OF THAT IS OUR PEOPLE ... OUR PEOPLE ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT WORKING HERE AND WORKING AS A TEAM. — JIM REID, CHIEF HR OFFICER, ROGERS COMMUNICATIONS



Rogers is successfully responding to the changing workforce by building an inclusive experience for all its employees. SUPPLIED

Building the workforce of the future

ROGERS COMMUNICATIONS

DENISE DEVEAU
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One of the enduring signs of a high-performing corporate culture is the ability to adapt to changing times. Rogers Communications, honouree in the Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Cultures of 2019 Enterprise category, has taken that to heart in response to the demands of a shifting workforce and business landscape.

“We fundamentally believe that whoever has the best talent and strongest culture is going to win in the long run,” says Jim Reid, chief HR officer. “At the heart of that is our people.”

Last year, Rogers took a major step forward in reinforcing its cultural alignment by crowd-sourcing feedback from its 26,000 team members across the country and all levels of the organization.

“The engagement from our people was incredible. Our people are passionate about working here and what we stand for as a team,” Reid says. “We didn’t change the core values we have lived by over the years, the values on which Ted Rogers built this company 60 years ago. He set our values and purpose, but it was seldom written down. With this exercise we were able to define them together as a team: people, customers, integrity, innovation, teamwork and community. Now

we can proudly say that our values are shared and loved by our team of 26,000 people.”

That’s only one part of the process, Reid says. “A successful growth architecture has two dimensions. First, you have to be clear about what you don’t want to change. For us, that’s our purpose and values. The other element is to be open to changing your strategy and culture as the workforce changes. That has to be built from the inside out. People have to believe it and live it everyday in order for it to work.”

Like any organization today, Rogers is not immune to the realities of a shifting workplace, he adds. “In 10 years’ time, the world will be a different place. To be successful you have to adapt.”

Today, 54 per cent of Rogers’ workforce is comprised of millennial and Gen Z employees. “In five years, it will be 75 per cent. We’re focused now on what changes we need to make to our employee experience, to ensure we are one of the best places to work in Canada over the next decade and beyond.”

While Rogers has always had a wide range of professional development, compensation and rewards programs, more focus is being placed on hiring the right people within the context of future skills requirements, strengthening leadership training and wellness initiatives, and giving back to the community.

Reid says career development changes start with the management level. “Younger people today want to work with great leaders. We are

putting more work behind teaching our leaders how to develop talent and build skills from within. We talk to them about their responsibilities around building the right teams, and being transparent and open in their communications. It’s a simple change but signals to everyone that we are behind them and are serious about their growth and development. Here at Rogers, it’s a top priority for us.”

Management and executives are encouraged to communicate regularly with teams. CEO Joe Natale hosts a monthly open Q&A with all employees in person and on live streams. He also posts bi-weekly video blogs where he discusses strategic priorities, addresses hot topics, and celebrates key achievements.

Rogers has a 360 program to support leader development, where leaders are evaluated by their peers on how well they demonstrate leadership behaviours. This feedback is included in the annual leadership scorecard, along with their values-focused performance rating. Employees are also asked to provide feedback on leadership effectiveness. The 2019 leadership effectiveness score was 83 per cent — up three points from 2018, which is a best-in-class achievement.

Another major focus for Rogers has been building its pipeline of young, top talent. To that end, it expanded its new graduate leadership program — a rotational program where new graduates gain experience in different parts of

the business. In 2019, it hired 40 new graduates out of 3,000 applicants. Over the next two years, the plan is to increase participation to 250.

“We are focused on building the workforce of the future and attracting top talent from universities and associations across the country in key areas such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence, software engineering and digital,” Reid explains. “For example, we’re increasing the number of people in science and technology. These are the people who will be the face of our future workforce.”

When looking for new people to join the team, Rogers looks for talent that not only lives the company values but are excited to take on the challenging and meaningful work in its day to day operations.

To reinforce that message, it launched a new campaign in 2018 called “Life at Rogers,” showcasing what makes the company a great place to work. The kick-off video was produced by and starred its own employees. This was followed by regular LinkedIn content sharing its teams’ activities, and a new employee ambassador program.

Rogers has also invested heavily in creating a modernized, collaborative workspace, and it is now expanding its wellness programs to include on-site medical clinics and nurse practitioners focused on overall well-being. “We’re looking for ways to be more progressive as an employer and offer the things that matter most to the future workforce.”

It is also increasing its investment in more training programs, coaching and leadership tools, as well as access to online training content and workshops such as psychological safety and unconscious bias.

Rewards and recognition programs are another integral part of a positive employee experience. Three times a year, the Ted Rogers Awards program honours top individuals and teams who have made outstanding contributions to support customers, communities and teams. There are also peer recognition programs, where employees receive reward points they can redeem for gifts and experiences.

Rogers has also laid plans to increase its corporate social responsibility activities. In 2019, it donated over \$60 million in cash and in-kind community investments to charities and non-profit organizations.

Three major initiatives are the Ted Rogers Scholarships, Ted Rogers Community Grants and the Jays Care Foundation, which are dedicated to supporting and inspiring youth to unleash their potential. In 2019, Rogers awarded 150 scholarships to youth aged 17 to 24 through 15 community partners; 215 scholarships to the dependents of its employees; and 84 grants to community organizations to support youth set to attend post-secondary education. The Jays Care Foundation raised almost \$10 million for programs and facilities that support physical activity, education and life-skill development among Canadian youth.

Other activities include Give Together Volunteer Days and paid days for employees to volunteer time to their favourite charity. During its Give Together Month, Rogers matches dollar-for-dollar donations up to \$1,000 per employee. Another program called Connected for Success offers low-cost broadband Internet to people living in non-profit housing.

This year Reid says they will be evolving their community efforts even further. “Giving back to our communities, volunteering, and supporting charitable organizations has always been an important part of our culture and who we are at Rogers.”

With the groundwork laid for the future, Reid is confident that Rogers’ strong culture will bring winning results. “We will keep the purpose and values that Ted built our company on 60 years ago and have driven our success to date. At the same time, we are learning how to adapt to meet the needs of our customers and our workforce.”

He sees their efforts as fundamentally “humanizing” the company. “We considered what people are looking for in a great workplace they can join and build a rewarding career. It wasn’t easy, but it is simple and focused. Our overall strategy is really about making people feel included in our journey. At the end of the day, our people are at the heart of our success.”



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“OUR PEOPLE DELIVER THE SUPPORT AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT ENABLE RESIDENTS TO LIVE THE LIFE THEY WANT IN A FULFILLING WAY. WE BELIEVE THAT SERVING OTHERS IS A NOBLE PROFESSION. TO REALLY GET THE MOST OUT OF THE EXPERIENCE YOU NEED A HUGE EMPATHY CHAIN. WE LIVE, TALK, FEEL AND BRING OUR VALUES TO LIFE EACH AND EVERY DAY. — TOM WELLNER, CEO, REVERA INC.

A PASSION FOR LIFE

REVERA INC.

KATHRYN BOOTHBY
Postmedia Content Works

Respect, integrity, compassion and excellence. These are the values that resonate through the halls of Revera communities every day. Here, employees are passionate and committed in their drive to improve the lives of older adults. It is a dynamic workplace where careers grow, and purposeful work is done every day to make a difference.

Becoming part of the Revera team is a careful and conscious decision for those looking to effect change for seniors. From the executive suite to personal support workers (PSWs) and those working behind the scenes, employees stand behind the company values. “Our people deliver the support and opportunities that enable residents to live the life they want in a fulfilling way. We believe that serving others is a noble profession. To really get the most out of the experience you need a huge empathy chain,” says chief executive officer Tom Wellner. “We live, talk, feel and bring our values to life each and every day. This is our culture.”

That culture has earned Revera a Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Culture Award in the Enterprise category.

With a vision to celebrate ageless spirit, the organization delivers industry-leading care and, of equal importance, is committed to improving the lives of seniors through innovation. That commitment includes a \$20 million investment in the Revera Innovators in Aging program, which invests, partners, guides and offers pilot sites to help companies bring new products and technologies to life. These encompass communication, mobility, soft-tissue, incontinence and vision-related issues. Some of those seeking investment



Cathie Brow, senior vice-president of Revera, left, and Tom Wellner, president and CEO of Revera. NICK KOZAK / POSTMEDIA

have lived in Revera communities for weeks at a time as they trial, listen and fine-tune their innovations on site. The resulting inventions help seniors, their families and/or staff.

A side benefit of the focus on innovation is its impact on Revera’s cultural transformation. “It has empowered employees, who are interacting with seniors every day, to bring forward their own ideas to elevate the resident experience and enhance care and services,” says Wellner. To further inspire staff, a biannual iChallenge competition invites proposals that solve challenges through innovative thinking and invention. Last year the winning solution helped significantly reduce falls with injury.

Welcome Home, a new program Revera is rolling out across Canada over the next year, helps new customers and their families acclimate to the Revera community. Moving can be very stressful. As experts in retirement liv-

ing, training and retention. The key is to find the right fit, for the long term. Recruiting for fit is not based solely on experience and education, however. “We are looking for people with the right attitude and personal

alignment with our values. Those are top of the list. A behavioural interview asks candidates how they have demonstrated respect, compassion, integrity and excellence throughout their life and career. That is very important to

us,” says Cathie Brow, senior vice-president of human resources and communications. With its best-in-class onboarding program, Revera’s new hires receive the introductions and training they need to thrive. “Just as we give personalized experiences to our residents, we aim to do the same for our employees. We tailor each onboarding program to meet the needs of the individual. This employee-centric approach sets everyone up for success,” Brow says. “Online day-in-the-life videos also show our values in action and what it is like to work in a particular role. They are also a valuable tool in career development.”

Revera recognizes employees through a range of programs, including on-the-spot shout-outs and peer-to-

peer and individual awards tailored specifically to the recipient. Performance bonuses, and sales and long-term incentives, are also part of the employee recognition package.

Career training cultivates leaders and helps employees so that they stay and enjoy long and rewarding careers. “The longevity and connectivity of employees is extremely important to our residents and helps bridge the gap with family members. That is why we proactively invest in training and development, central to which are the leadership programs offered through Revera University (RU),” says Brow. “RU programs focus on three streams: lead self, lead others, and lead functions to develop competencies in each of these areas. There are many diverse career opportunities at Revera. Employees who invest in themselves can take a path that, over time, can lead to an executive role.”

Revera’s commitment to helping seniors live their fullest life extends beyond its residents. Through the Revera Giving community engagement program, the organization invests heavily in the communities where employees and families live, work and play.

Habitat for Humanity is Revera’s charity of choice. The company is one of the charity’s largest corporate sponsors. Since 2018, Revera has raised and donated over \$1 million in funding, services and goods to help families across Canada achieve affordable home ownership. Employees also roll up their sleeves to help build homes. Like Habitat, Revera believes that offering a helping hand can change lives and communities for the better.

In addition to its work with Habitat for Humanity, Revera has also raised more than \$1 million for the Alzheimer’s Society and contributes annually to the Royal Canadian Legion in recognition of the sacrifices made by veterans and their families.

Turning the tide on ageism

At Revera, challenging ageism is a passion. “I believe we must do everything we can, not only to make the aging experience better but to help the broader community appreciate the significant value that older people bring to society,” says Tom Wellner, chief executive officer.

Revera is a thought leader in the field of ageism through its AgeIsMore.com platform and actively recruits employees in the 65-plus range. A few years ago, the company proactively removed the upper age

restriction for hiring and employee benefits. With more than 800 people over the age of 65 working in its Canadian operations, Revera now has more older workers than average across Canada, and the number continues to grow.

The company’s oldest employee, at 99 years, is chief elder officer and former Mississauga, Ont. mayor Hazel McCallion.

“There has been a great deal of emphasis on keeping millennial employees engaged. While there is

value in growing new talent, organizations must also consider building a culture that respects, encourages and supports the abilities of older workers,” says Wellner. “We hope our example serves as a reminder to other businesses to look within their office walls and recognize these assets in their own organization.”

Revera is also taking steps to dispel the myths of ageism beyond its home. In 2013, a partnership with not-for-profit Reel Youth helped create the Revera and Reel Youth Age is More Film Project.

This intergenerational initiative partners Revera residents with young filmmakers across Canada. During the making of a short, three-minute film, the barriers to ageism are broken, allowing young people to better understand and ap-

preciate the life experience of the seniors whose stories they are telling.

To date, over 200 poignant short films have been created through the Reel Youth project. Each is presented at a gala event with families, residents, staff and creators in attendance.

“It is a magical experience for all. Families often learn a great deal about their parent or grandparent. And, many participating filmmakers have committed to learning more about their own family as a result,” notes Wellner.

Revera aims to continue to shed light on ageism, challenge the assumptions of aging, and recognize the value of older adults to society. “Organizations that address ageism in the workplace will not only continue to grow strong, they will create a better future for Canada’s workers,” he says.



Hazel McCallion meets well-wishers at a celebration for her 99th birthday. The iconic former Mississauga, Ont. mayor defies time and the stigma of ageism by serving as Revera’s oldest employee — she’s chief elder officer. NICK KOZAK / POSTMEDIA

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Phyllis & Tiffany
Resident & Employee of Revera

“WHEN I MEET WITH EMPLOYEES, THEY WANT TO KNOW WHAT WE ARE DOING WITH THE FRUITS OF OUR LABOURS. THEY WANT TO KNOW THAT IT IS REINVESTED BACK INTO THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH WE WORK AND LIVE. THIS DIALOGUE ENSURES WE LIVE OUR UNIQUE BRAND INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY.

— ZAHID SALMAN, PRESIDENT/CEO, GREEN SHIELD CANADA

Six decades of giving back

GREEN SHIELD CANADA

KATHRYN BOOTHBY
Postmedia Content Works

Green Shield Canada’s unique brand, culture and values have made it one of the strongest and fastest-growing performers in its sector. Throughout its 60-year-plus history the company has demonstrated a deep commitment to the health of Canadians. Green Shield Canada (GSC) is the country’s only national not-for-profit health and dental benefits provider, and its purpose is clear: ‘we make it easier for people to live their healthiest lives’.

GSC’s values define a vibrant social enterprise with a track record of extraordinary growth, innovation and evolution, and a focus on keeping health benefits affordable and sustainable. “Our success comes from who we are as a company,” says Zahid Salman, president and CEO. “Our purpose represents the underpinnings of our growth, drives engagement in our team, and supports the high level of social impact that we have achieved.”

Its culture is one of the pillars on which GSC is built. “Culture is something we value, and while we appreciate that we cannot ‘create’ it, we know we can do a great deal to influence it,” says Mila Lucio, executive vice-president of human resources and social impact. “What matters is that our culture aligns with our values and enables us to deliver on the mission to give back in meaningful ways — and allows us to have fun along the way. A big part of that is being mindful of what happens in the workplace, watching how people react and behave in any given situation, and by listening.”

Clearly, the approach is working. GSC has received a Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Culture Award in the Broader Public Sector category.

The organization’s social impact strategy is a key contributor to its culture. The strategy is a diverse roadmap focused on employee, community and corporate



Green Shield Canada president and CEO, Zahid Salman, third row on the left, and Mila Lucio, executive vice-president, human resources & social impact, third row on the right, with employees at the offices of Green Shield Canada. *NICK KOZAK / POSTMEDIA*

citizenship impacts. Each segment supports GSC’s mission to improve health and well-being in local communities, especially in the areas of mental and oral health. This is achieved through giving, a commitment to corporate social responsibility, and by creating shared value. “When I meet with employees, they want to know what we are doing with the fruits of our labours,” says Salman. “They want to know that it is reinvested back into the communities in which we work and live. This dialogue ensures we live our unique brand internally and externally.”

Employee impact fundraising and volunteering campaigns are directed by the assisting communities through service (ACTS) committee, a cross-departmental group of employees (aka GSCers). Company-wide initiatives have helped organizations such as Canadian Mental Health Association, Centre

for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and Easter Seals. Employees are also encouraged to donate a few dollars from each pay cheque to the ‘Give Where We Live’ initiative, which supports employee-nominated, community-based, not-for-profit organizations.

GSC’s community impact initiatives support not-for-profit health-care organizations. These larger projects provide immediate assistance through granting opportunities and facilitate long-term change in communities. One such program is ‘Six 4 Six’ through which GSC has granted \$6 million to six community foundations across Canada to be used to fund areas of greatest need in oral and mental health. These monies are helping to make real change at the local level. In return, these communities provide numerical data and feedback that helps drive GSC’s advocacy at the system level.

The corporate citizenship impact programs shape GSC’s day-to-day business and support the corporate values of putting clients’ needs first, positioning its people for success, and committing to a culture of excellence, innovation, and agility.

“GSC is recognized in the industry for delivering superior service, but without the teamwork, commitment, collaboration and tenacity of our employees none of it would be possible,” says Lucio. “Having the right talent allows us to stay competitive and build the type of lasting client partnerships that we are known for, so we need to get it right.”

Getting it right means thinking for both the short and long terms. “When recruiting we not only think of the immediate need, we do everything with the long game in mind. We look beyond skill sets and competencies, to how a person aligns with our cultural DNA,” explains Lucio. “Once on board

it is important that everyone feels connected and part of something bigger than themselves, and that they are inspired by how we lead. To do that, we provide meaningful opportunities for growth to fuel their passion to continue delivering on our mission. We want to help them optimize their potential from day one.”

From the start, custom onboarding creates a strong foundation for success and provides the tools and resources for new employees to contribute and feel valued early in their tenure. Ongoing continuous feedback is encouraged as part of performance optimization processes and company-wide employee communications — including ‘fire-side chats’.

Recognition starts with the day-to-day ‘GSCers undoubtedly doing outstanding stuff’ (GUDOS) program that includes cards of thanks from peers, spot swag awards from leaders, or gift cards up to \$200. Nominated employ-

ees are invited to personally present their successes to company executives. The annual Think-a-Thon event motivates and recognizes employees for their innovative ideas, and a Spirit of GSC Award annually recognizes an employee who exemplifies the spirit of the company through charitable efforts.

Talent development is key to GSC’s future. Each year employees create an annual development plan to support their own growth. In 2019, the company invested more than \$2,000 per employee to learning and development — well above the Canadian benchmark. Another \$100,000 was provided through the educational assistance reimbursement program.

“Our culture is a representation of our employees,” says Lucio. “We are proud and privileged to be recognized with a Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Culture Award. It is a testament to our dedicated team.”

Ascended from humble beginnings

The story of Green Shield Canada began in 1957. Its founder, Bill Wilkinson, was a pharmacist in Windsor, Ont. A young mother had walked into his store with a prescription for herself and

her daughter, but she could only afford to fill one. In the 1950s about half of all prescriptions went unfilled because patients simply could not afford them.

Wilkinson’s desire to find

a way to bring affordable access to prescription drugs led to the creation of North America’s first prepaid drug plan. He and four other members of the Essex County Pharmacists Association invested a total of \$750 to get Prescription Services Inc., now Green Shield Canada (GSC), off the ground. In its first year, revenues were just \$1,000.

In the 1970s, universal physician services became a reality across Canada. It

was also during this period that GSC developed a dental plan, then vision care and extended health plans. By the end of the decade, most insurance companies in North America were offering prepaid benefit plans based on the GSC model.

The 1990s saw GSC incorporated as a not-for-profit and this is when the company’s mission really came to life, with support going to a wide range of health-related causes.

True to its founding purpose, GSC remains a not-for-profit social enterprise today. The organization’s commercial activities fund charitable giving and health system advocacy that supports improved wellbeing in local communities.

“The story of how our business was created to fill a social need is still very much front of mind. It’s the biggest link between our past, present and future,” says president/CEO Zahid

Salman. “As we grow, it is important to remain conscious of, and true to, the social and client focus that we want to protect. That said, we must also be flexible enough to succeed in today’s business environment. Sustainable growth will help us to expand our social impact and fulfill Bill’s mission on a grander scale.”

Today, GSC’s team of almost 1,000 employees serves over 4.2 million Canadians across the nation.

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“WE WANT TO CREATE A FOUNDATION OF TRUST WITH OUR CLIENTS AND OUR VENDOR PARTNERS, BUT TO DO THAT IT STARTS WITH A HIGH-TRUST INTERNAL CULTURE. OUR CULTURE HELPS US DELIVER OUR BRAND PROMISE — WE COME UP WITH THE BEST IDEAS AND STRATEGIES TO BENEFIT OUR CLIENTS — AND THAT’S THE LINK TO HIGH PERFORMANCE. IT’S WHAT HAS LED TO OUR GROWTH. — ANDREW BULMER, CEO, ACTIVE INTERNATIONAL

High performance powers impressive growth

CULTURE
Continued from SP1
**ALIGNING
HIGH-PERFORMANCE
TO CULTURE**

Media company Active International, one of this year's Growth category winners, has built its culture and business model on trust. “We want to create a foundation of trust with our clients and our vendor partners, but to do that it starts with a high-trust internal culture. Our culture helps us deliver our brand promise — we come up with the best ideas and strategies to benefit our clients — and that’s the link to high performance,” says CEO Andrew Bulmer. “It’s what has led to our growth.”

That growth is impressive: 62 per cent top-line growth over the last few years. What enables high trust at Active International? Acting with integrity, treating each other with respect, having engaging, challenging conversations. “We speak very transparently about the business. Our people know our business goals, how we are performing against those goals, how their roles fit into the heartbeat of our business,” says Bulmer.

The company also changed its incentive program so it’s now based against EBITDA. As a result, everyone is focused on how

to introduce the business to new customers, on developing new revenue streams, and being more efficient. “Our theme for 2020 is ‘Own it’. Everyone here acts like owners because of the trust we built. We have an engaged team that wants to stick around, and that helps our customers and media vendors stick by us.”

**A FOCUS ON
LEARNING AND
DEVELOPMENT**

Being a leader in the digital age and managing a multigenerational and increasingly diverse workforce that is bringing different expectations to the work environment is complex and difficult, says Parker. “It requires different and new tools. This year’s Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Cultures winners understand this and are making a big commitment to developing and training the next generation of leaders who really live the culture.”

For organizations in traditional industries that may not be viewed as leading or forward-thinking in this area, changing that perception adds another layer to the challenge. Enterprise category honouree, Vancouver-based Paladin Security, is doing just that by growing careers for people with its strong promote-from-within culture. “We are here to protect and make people safer. To

do that we provide second-to-none education and support to our staff to make them top professionals,” says CEO Ashley Cooper. “Historically, our industry has been one where people park themselves in the role of a security guard until they figure out the career they want to have. We’ve changed that with our culture. I’m one of the beneficiaries. I started off as a security officer and now I’m CEO. Our whole company is built on people who have grown into senior roles supported by the training and education we provide.”

To that end, Paladin has a well-earned reputation as a learning organization. It has a team dedicated to developing online training

courses. Each branch across North America has trainers conducting hands-on orientation, physical training and education.

courses. Each branch across North America has trainers conducting hands-on orientation, physical training and education.

**CONNECTING PURPOSE
AND PERSONAL IMPACT
TO CULTURE**

“Purpose is what allows someone to decide if there’s meaning in the work for them,” says Waterstone’s Par-

ker. “The leader then has to show them where they are making an impact. This is particularly important for millennials. When millennials are engaged and feel they have impact, look out. In my 30 years working, I’ve never seen anything like it. It’s immensely powerful.”

Smiths Falls, Ont.-based Canopy Growth, an Industry Leaders award honouree, has built its culture around making history by using cannabis as a way to improve the lives of people around the world. In its six years of operation, with that purpose front and centre, it was the first company to introduce the now-standard concept of compassionate pricing to make medical cannabis

and that means everyone has to own their role in the company and get our day-to-day tasks done to achieve our visionary goals,” says president Rade Kovacevic. “Everyone understanding what they’re doing and how that plays into the larger vision for the company and how we impact the world is what brings everyone together. It’s that sense of belonging and purpose that allows us to break through barriers and go above and beyond.”

**CREATING AN
ENVIRONMENT
WHERE EVERYONE
FEELS SAFE**

“In order to have a safe environment you have to trust that your ideas/thoughts are not going to be judged, that there is not going to be anyone making fun of you,” says Parker. “It’s easy to think this should be a given, but that environment — one that makes people feel encouraged and comfortable to take risks and share ideas — needs to be created. This is not something taught in business schools, but it is something Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Culture companies are very focused on.”

Julia Hanigsberg, president and CEO of Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital (Broader Public Sector category honouree), says psychological safety is mission critical for

her organization. “Our team provides care to children with physical and intellectual disabilities. You can only provide safe care in an environment of psychological safety,” says Hanigsberg. “Our team is under incredible pressure every day and we need to be serious about what it takes to support them to be well while they are delivering care. We know they can’t care safely unless they themselves are safe. They cannot be as compassionate as they want to be if we are not equally compassionate with them.”

With that understanding, Holland Bloorview was the first hospital in Canada to bring in a program called Schwartz Rounds for compassionate care. And a year ago, the hospital hired its first executive lead for equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) to ensure that everyone felt comfortable bringing their “whole” selves to work, whether that speaks to sexuality, gender identity, race, religion or cultural background.

“The idea (with Schwartz Rounds) is to provide a safe, private space where the team can be vulnerable and discuss their emotions and feelings about care and share what they can’t talk to anybody else about,” says Hanigsberg. “We get more than 100 members of the team in each of these rounds.”

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