



CINCINNATI'S AWARD WINNING

FAMILY & PRIVATE BUSINESSES DISCUSS CULTURE, HIRING, & EMPLOYEE RETENTION

By studying and benchmarking your success against these award winning companies,



you can analyze your own processes for hiring, retention and corporate culture.

The goal of this interview program is to provide guidance to similar family and privately owned businesses on how to improve and evolve.

HOW DID YOUR ORGANIZATION IMPROVE AND EVOLVE?

This panel interview reveals the practices and methods from five of the six winners of the 2016 Goering Center Family and Private Business Awards, sponsored by the University of Cincinnati's Goering Center for Family and Private Business. Each year the Goering Center determines the award criteria based on a different component of business success; this year's competition centered on best practices for hiring, culture and retaining employees.

For this presentation each award winning company was provided a list of questions and their collective answers are provided in an effort to share how their success could be applicable to your business.



Q1: WHAT MAKES YOU STAND OUT FROM OTHER BUSINESSES WITH REGARD TO YOUR HIRING PRACTICES?

AFIDENCE: Culture is a critical part of everything we do. Finding the right people can make or break a business. We approach the hiring process with great care and attention to detail. Our people possess characteristics that make them stand out from the pack. We want employees with great character and an innovative mindset.

COBCO: At COBCO Enterprises, we understand the importance of attracting, hiring, and retaining great employees. We also understand that our success as a company is contingent upon having the best talent now and for future growth, therefore key pillars for success are our hiring practices and talent development.

Our company has four distinct groups of employees. Each requires a slightly different strategy to attract, recruit, and retain.

- High School Students – Ages 16-18 – Forming strategic partnerships with local high schools
- Millennials and Baby Boomers – Ages 19-55 – Offering schedule flexibility and paid time off
- Seniors (“Act Two Employees”) – Ages 56 and older – Offering 401-k, medical insurance, life insurance, and short- and long-term disability benefits
- Veterans – COBCO Enterprises’ restaurants are part of the large network of McDonald’s restaurants that are recognized as being in the USA’s Top 100 of Military Friendly Employers. Our Human Resources Manager attends military recruitment fairs and is closely involved with the extensive network of veterans and military spouses that are seeking employment.

The company has developed a variety of recruiting strategies and in doing so has been able to develop a series of best hiring incentives, which include:

- Free Meals
- Flexible scheduling and time off
- Numerous benefit options
- Utilization of technology to recruit talent – online applications

CSH: Over the past two years, Clark Schaefer Hackett has invested considerable time and resources into improving the way the firm attracts, develops and retains its staff. We were eager to apply for this year’s Goering Center Award, which focused on how organizations have re-evaluated their hiring and employment practices as they try to seamlessly blend multiple generations in the workforce. We promote our investment in our employees through leadership development, onboarding, a “buddy” program, career coaching, executive mentoring, professional development and career progression. The Ohio Society of CPAs produced two videos that involved CSH. One video centers on our onboarding and training programs, and specifically, The CSH Way: the firm’s guide to creating remarkable client relationships and delivering excellent service. Another video highlights how CSH strives to provide practical work-life balance for its employees.

MELINK: We are a mission-led culture centered upon making the world a more sustainable place and this makes us stand out as an employer.

VEHR: Two things that are integral to the success of our business are employment and hiring practices. We focus a lot on how we hire, who we hire, how we train and support employees and the environment in which we spend so much time each day... time away from homes and families. We think that is part of what makes us stand out. We’re in the people business and how you start is how you finish.

Q2: WHAT MAKES YOUR ORGANIZATION A DESIRABLE PLACE TO BE EMPLOYED?

AFIDENCE: Our leadership genuinely cares about every employee. We believe in a culture of transparency and honesty. Our syncMETHODODOLOGY™ provides a consistent guide for the way we do business and interact internally and externally. This consistency provides a strong foundation for respect, while creating a workplace that encourages collaboration and innovation.

COBCO: Our company conducts a *WOW Orientation* process that creates several benefits to the new employee:

- Better understanding of their new job
- Better understanding of job performance expectations
- Relationship building with managers and employees
- Sense of accomplishment
- Confidence that they can succeed in their new job

Upon completion of the *WOW Orientation*, each employee is assigned a coach within the restaurant where they will work. This coach remains with the employee for 30 days to ensure the transition goes well as they assume their new work responsibilities. This is all part of ensuring the employee is off to a good start as they are integrated into the company.

Job growth is very important to our company. Therefore, to keep our employees motivated, the company has a strong promotion-from-within policy. All managers and staff have personalized development plans. These plans help to reiterate and emphasize the importance the company has placed on building a strong pipeline of employees that are ready to assume new responsibility. These development plans have served to be a strong motivation for employees. As they are able to experience growth within the company, employees become more motivated and more committed to their development plans and to the company.

CSH: At Clark Schaefer Hackett, we believe the strength of our workforce equals the strength of our firm. We operate according to a set of clearly defined values: respect, excellence, accountability and leadership. We invest in employees at every stage of their career with specific resources for their current role and support that prepares them for the next.

MELINK: Melink Corporation's headquarters near Cincinnati is noteworthy, and we like to think, rather visually striking. We're located in a serene pastoral area with a creek and wildlife nearby. We also have a wind turbine, solar arrays and electric car charging stations in our front yard—definitely not what you see at most businesses. Our corporate headquarters is LEED Platinum and Net-Zero Energy and our vehicle fleet consists of all hybrid and electric cars. This mission-led culture makes us stand out as an employer.

VEHR: To succeed in our business, you have to be whip smart, naturally curious, extremely inquisitive and able to shift gears and get up to speed quickly. We hire competitive people who are good team players; people who are genuinely concerned about the collective good of our clients as well as the quality of life in our community. Taking the time to hire the right kind of people who excel in our environment is the key to our ability to attract new employees. We've invested heavily in our office space. Our open office environment fosters teamwork and collaboration. There are no private offices, not even for the CEO, and natural light bathes the entire office. Common spaces are well decorated and have comfortable furniture. The kitchen space is large and welcoming.

Q3: HOW DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION CULTIVATE A CULTURE THAT PROMOTES IMPROVEMENT?

AFIDENCE: At Afidence, we challenge employees to be continuous learners and innovators. We not only reward them when they take the initiative to gain certifications, we also utilize grants for training through the state, and our Professional Employer Organization offers an extensive digital library for online training. Our employees feel comfortable sharing new ideas. Our syncMETHODOLOGY™ displays values that we follow on a daily basis. Open and honest communication is critical to every relationship, whether within our company or outside of it. We utilize surveys and monthly meetings to keep employees informed, motivated and connected.

COBCO: E-Learning – Technology has become increasingly important to the integration and continued motivation of employees. Therefore, to remain competitive and attract quality employees, COBCO Enterprises creates an e-learning plan for all employees. E-learning is a training initiative that teaches employees required operational procedures using computer-based training programs that are available in both English and Spanish. The e-learning platform has proven to be a highly successful tool for the company and allows employees to complete mandatory required training.

Online High School – COBCO Enterprises is firmly committed to continued education for their employees. As a demonstration of this commitment, COBCO Enterprises has partnered with McDonald's to offer an Online High School Diploma Program for employees at no cost.

The company also offers a College Tuition Assistance Program, Archways to Opportunity, that provides financial assistance to employees pursuing their college degrees.

CSH: We are striving to be a performance-based culture. Our main focus is on improving and building remarkable relationships with our people first, then with our clients, then with our community. The CSH MAX initiative has specially designed programs that directly promote or feed into this competency based improvement drive within our firm. Our culture is focused around our firm's Core Values, and those values translate into how we all experience our environment and how we behave in that environment. Those behaviors drive our engagement and improvement results. This is truly what has driven our culture to change.

MELINK: Melink has a rich history of being a place of excellence. Our employees are able to make the most of their expertise, have abundant opportunities to learn and advance their careers and have fun. In short, we're a family that supports each other in our quest to make a measurable difference in the world.

Evaluating and providing feedback to our employees should be an ongoing process and one which is exemplified from the top down. This is why we hold weekly staff meetings where department and business managers update the rest of our leadership and management team. We ask lots of questions to gain clarity on progress toward goals. Providing feedback is a big part of these staff meetings as well.

VEHR: Like many organizations, continuous improvement is critical to long-term success. Again, we're in the people business so we invest in them. Each person who works here has a mentor with whom they meet quarterly to review and adjust the employee's annual goals. Each person has an annual review based on their goals for the future, not solely on past performance. Time for professional development is provided for each employee, and collectively we do agency-wide professional development in the form of lunch n' learns and outside speakers.

Q4: HOW DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION TRACK AND MEASURE SUCCESS?

AFIDENCE: We believe in cultivating authentic relationships with clients and partners. Trust and honesty are the hallmarks of our organization. We strive to earn clients' trust with our tireless work ethic, reliability and expertise.

For our employees, we have a system we refer to as EPIC360 wherein we conduct quarterly performance reviews with an annual reset. Utilizing streams of "continue and consider" with ongoing honest discussions allows the employee's growth to be EPIC and all encompassing (360). EPIC360 impacts and relates to their business life and their personal life because it is about the entire person. Unlike traditional performance reviews, these reviews are conversations with the goal of uplifting achievement and finding areas of potential improvement. We encourage employees to honestly convey goals and provide feedback to improve their work and the company.

COBCO: Providing feedback to our employees is an important aspect of our company's culture. To ensure our company creates open lines of communication with our employees, we conduct Communication Days. These Communication Days allow the company and the employees to remain aligned regarding the vision of the company and the employees' performance. These Communication Days occur quarterly.

We also conduct annual performance reviews with each employee, which allows management to evaluate how well employees achieved their annual goals. The company also uses this annual review period to establish goals for the next year.

The company also recognizes that feedback from employees is equally important. Therefore, on an annual basis, the company conducts an employee Commitment Survey that allows employees to provide feedback to the company. This approach cultivates trust and loyalty among employees.

CSH: Clark Schaefer Hackett has created sought-after, supportive and helpful working relationships. At the same time, we built a reputation for performing at an exceptional technical level. We know this because we survey our clients on a monthly basis, asking for their feedback. The results show that our client-service approach to creating relationships has been effective and appreciated throughout our existence.

Internally, Clark Schaefer Hackett employees are formally evaluated twice a year, through mid-year and year-end reviews. The process involves a self-review, where employees have the opportunity to rate themselves on job-specific competencies, provide comments and suggest goals for the upcoming year. Their supervisors receive this information and provide their assessment and feedback. The results of these evaluations are instrumental in helping our employees gauge where they are excelling and where they need to improve in order to reach their career progression goals.

MELINK: We're innovative; we lead by example and we enjoy being able to show others how they can achieve the triple bottom line of: profit, people and planet. We help companies save energy, increase profits and make the world a more sustainable place.

VEHR: Success in our business is tracked in several ways. Of course, company profitability is one measure. Traditionally, we have focused primarily on revenue growth. We also track new business growth. We have a goal to grow 15% in total revenue every year. To achieve this goal, we plan to retain 80% of the prior year's revenue which then requires adding 20% of the prior year's revenue in new business. On an individual basis, each employee tracks their progress against their individual quarterly and annual goals.

Q5: ANY FINAL THOUGHTS?

AFIDENCE: Create a culture that revolves around trust, accountability and innovation. We respect and listen to all employees while presenting a clear vision.

For leaders, it is pivotal to live out the values you want your organization to embrace. The Afidence leadership believes in integrity, honor and quality. At Afidence, every interaction is guided by integrity and honor. Quality service is ingrained in the fabric of the organization. These three elements combined guarantee exceptional service.

COBCO: Hiring and retaining great talent requires a concentrated focus by our company. Our employees are at the foundation of our overall strategic plan. At COBCO Enterprises, we understand the significant contributions our employees make to our company and we work each day to demonstrate to them the value they add to our brand.

CSH: The performance of individuals in an organization is a reflection of the culture it creates. Leaders are responsible for creating a culture that drives individual and collective behavior that produces desired results. At CSH we recognize the key role leaders at every level play, and have intentionally created leadership development opportunities to grow leaders that will drive winning performance.

We define leadership simply; leadership is influence. And influence is a skill that can be developed. As you increase your level of influence, you increase your ability to lead others as well as develop leaders that will follow you.

MELINK: Success comes in many ways. What works for us may not work for others, but a culture of humility and service will always work!

VEHR: We are continuously tinkering with our performance management and budget-tracking systems. We always think there is a better way. We believe that the minute we think we've mastered something; it's time to explore how to improve beyond what we've achieved. None of this is easy. Much of it is not fun. All of it is important.

Similarities abound between these award-winning companies, regardless of differences in size and/or industry. Each focuses on the employee, implements new technology and develops environments that thrive on opportunity, achievement and recognition. They understand that employees are the face of the business and engaged employees mean better business. Leadership is at the core of each company's success. The leaders of these businesses work to put their mission and values into practice every day, which influences all employees to do the same.

Hopefully, due to the diversity of the companies represented in this interview, you can glean some value from this piece to apply to your own business. If you would like to learn more about a particular function, feature or how a company achieved their overall success, please visit their corporate website and contact them.

To learn more about the annual Goering Center Family and Private Business Awards or about joining the Goering Center ranks, please visit www.Goering.UC.edu

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

FAMILY AND PRIVATE BUSINESS OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Each year the Goering Center holds their annual recognition program honoring Cincinnati regional businesses that exemplify the best in family and private business practices. Criteria for these awards is changed every year and is based on a different component of business success. Only six companies are named Business of the Year out of the over 500 businesses that apply annually. For more information on the Goering Center and the Business of the Year Awards visit www.Goering.UC.edu



GOERING CENTER FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE BUSINESS

**SPECIAL THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT ON THIS ENDEAVOR*

Established in 1989, the Goering Center for Family and Private Business serves nearly 400 members, making it the country's largest university based educational non-profit for family and private businesses. The Center's mission is to nurture and educate family and private businesses to drive a vibrant economy. Affiliation with the University of Cincinnati and the University of Cincinnati's Carl H. Lindner College of Business provides access to a vast resource of business programming and expertise. Goering Center members receive real-world insights that enlighten, strengthen and prolong family and private business success. Visit www.Goering.UC.edu to learn more.

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CENTER

AFIDENCE, *Best Family Business: 26-100 Employees*

**SPECIAL THANK YOU FOR INITIATING THIS PROJECT AND COMPILING THE QUESTIONNAIRE*

Afidence is a technology consulting and services firm launched in 2010 with a goal to earn trusted relationships by surrounding our clients with clear, transparent and honest solutions unmatched in the IT Industry. We serve over 80 active clients in the Cincinnati-Dayton region, extending into 30 states and 15 countries. Headquartered in Mason, Ohio, we also maintain support offices in Miamisburg, Ohio. To learn more about Afidence, please visit our website www.afidence.com



COBCO ENTERPRISES, *Best Family Business: 101+ employees*

COBCO Enterprises is a privately held company that owns and operates six (6) McDonald's franchises in Greater Cincinnati.



CLARK SCHAEFER HACKETT, *Best Private Business: 101+ Employees*

Founded in 1938, Clark Schaefer Hackett is one of the 100 largest CPA and advisory firms in the nation. We offer best-in-class technical expertise in audit and assurance, risk management, benefit plan consulting, forensic and litigation support, valuation and transaction services. Our mission is to better the lives of our clients, people and communities; and we actively work to fulfill this mission. Visit the CSH website to learn more: www.cshco.com



MELINK CORPORATION, *Best Private Business: 26-100 Employees*

We are a global provider of energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions for commercial buildings with four offerings: Intelli-Hood Kitchen Ventilation Controls, HVAC Test & Balance, Solar PV Development and Geothermal HVAC. For 30 years, we've been helping companies save energy, increase profits and make the world a more sustainable place. Our corporate headquarters are LEED Platinum and Net-Zero Energy, and our vehicle fleet consists of all hybrid and electric cars. This mission-led culture makes us stand out as an employer. Visit the Melink website to learn more: www.melinkcorp.com



VEHR COMMUNICATIONS, *Best Private Business: 1-25 Employees*

People ask us if we are a PR firm, a marketing firm, a creative firm, a social media firm or a digital agency. In truth, the answer to all of the above is "YES." We're a strategic communications firm. We do what is required to help our clients achieve their business objectives; to tell a story that moves the target audience from inaction to action. At Vehr Communications, we tell stories to share a promise; to inform and to inspire; to forge new relationships and to strengthen existing ones. Simply put, we get it done for our clients. Visit the Vehr Communications website to learn more: www.vehrcommunications.com



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**SPECIAL THANK YOU FOR DESIGNING THE LAYOUT AND FORMAT*

FUSIONWRX is a marketing engagement and activation agency that specializes in guiding organizations to communicate their brand in memorable, engaging and highly personable ways. We provide complete strategic marketing services or work as an extension of your marketing and public relations teams, on a project or event basis. Join the revolution! Visit www.FUSIONWRX.com

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