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INNOVATIONS

CREATIVE CULTURE

Company Loyalty?

PGC co-CEO Susan Cary-Hanson would prefer employees to be loyal to the work and each other.

PGC recently completed a survey in which company employees said the company's top attribute was "the people they work with." No finding would have been more pleasing to Susan Cary-Hanson, co-CEO at the Edina-based custom manufacturer.

Cary-Hanson places a high premium on a culture of satisfied employees, not so much as a hot-button weapon in her HR arsenal but to squeeze as much quality and productivity as she can from her personnel. Employee loyalty is merely a side benefit.

In the end, Cary-Hanson says she cares less about loyalty to PGC than having employees show loyalty to the work they're doing and the people they're doing it with. "If push came to shove," she says, "I'd rather have employees have friends at work, because the more friends they have at work, the more difficult it is to leave. They're a fabric of your life and everything you do. Our employees do a lot of celebrations together that we don't even know about, but I think that's wonderful, and I'd rather have that. I'd rather instill a culture of teamwork.

"I'd rather have the people work together to solve the problems at the level that they can solve them," she adds. "We spend a lot of time working with staff to work together."

PGC is a 67-year-old custom manufacturer based in Edina. Cary-Hanson, a nurse by profession, joined the company when her husband, Steve Hanson (the other co-CEO), purchased the company through a leveraged buyout in 1996.

"It's about continuous improvement. Our machines don't operate on their own," Cary-Hanson says. "Someone has



PGC co-CEO Susan Cary-Hanson says working on company culture always takes much longer than you think it will.

to program and run them. And so, you work in lockstep with your employees and listen to their feedback. You're as good as your weakest link, and if you don't put in the efforts to hear your employees, then how can you expect them to achieve objectives?" she asks.

An education committee provides PGC executives with input on their training expectations. "We expect people to be lifelong learners," Cary-Hanson says. That means employees must fit the PGC model of business, and put themselves in a position to grow into something more. "So, as people learn our processes, they usually can be more effective and efficient and productive, and want to learn, they'll have

a natural career path.”

PGC uses a comprehensive software package to help the company conduct mandatory training four times a year for compliance. Employees can use the software on work or personal time.

PGC inaugurated its wellness program in 2010 when the Hansons brought in a personal trainer to work on stretching techniques with employees. After that, several employees pitched in and purchased a Universal weight machine and placed it in the company’s “backdoor” workout facility. Realizing

“I’d rather have employees have friends at work, because the more friends they have at work, the more difficult it is to leave.”

an opportunity to improve the company’s culture—as well as mitigate the company’s risk—the Hansons bought the weight machine from employees and installed shower facilities so employees can work out on their schedules, before, during, or after the workday.

Today the trainer participates actively on the of the company’s employee-driven wellness committee, chaired by their HR manager and consisting of employees who represent every department within PGC. The committee’s wellness agenda has expanded beyond physical fitness and today encompasses a holistic package of wellness elements that address emotional, spiritual, financial, and social aspects.

But the centerpiece of their employee-based priorities is a pair of innovative performance-based paid-time-off incentives. Exempt staff can earn extra weeks of vacation by accomplishing objectives on a division scorecard. Hourly staff can acquire up to six additional days off per year by meeting a series of targets based on attendance, safety, quality and on-time delivery. ■

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