



#2 – LARGE EMPLOYERS

At Patterson-Schwartz, strength locally grown

Written by Aaron Nathans, *The News Journal* – Top Workplaces August 16, 2014

Employees say a collaborative culture uses the company's small size to its advantage

Independent, locally owned real estate companies are increasingly rare, said Joe Pluscht, the president and CEO of Patterson-Schwartz.

Having one not only works out well for the community it serves, he said, it also registers as a meaningful way for employees and agents to spend their days.

Patterson-Schwartz, based in Hockessin, has earned a second-place ranking among large businesses in the 2014 Top Workplaces survey, conducted by The News Journal Media Group with WorkplaceDynamics of Exton, PA.

The company, founded in 1961, was recognized for what employees and agents there say is a collaborative corporate culture that uses the company's relatively small size to its advantage.

"We're kind of the last independent standing" in Delaware, Pluscht said. Larger companies have expressed interest in buying Patterson-Schwartz, but the owners, Christopher S. Patterson and Charles E. Schwartz II, have always believed the leading firm in an area should be locally owned and operated, he said.

The company has 350 sales associates, all independent contractors, he said. There are also about 50 employees who support the sales associates, in areas like financial services, marketing and technology.

In a survey of employees, employees and agents said they found their co-workers helpful and encouraging, praised the flexibility and pay, and the opportunity to learn to do their jobs better.

Three-quarters of the company's business, Pluscht said, is in New Castle County, with the rest in Kent and Sussex counties, as well as in Cecil County, Maryland, and southern Chester County, Pennsylvania.

The company listens to concerns of the people who work there, said Marcus DuPhily, assistant manager in the Greenville office. He said he has walked into Pluscht's office with recommendations about improving the company's intranet, and had the recommendations enacted.

The company is compassionate enough that it absorbed some of the impacts of the financial downturn on agents for several years, DuPhily said.

Shana Delcollo, an agent and assistant manager in the Hockessin office, said the company is "always training," helping people understand how to stay on top of the latest technology.

"You feel like you're part of a team, your opinion counts and matters. Everyone's very approachable," Delcollo said.

In times good and challenging, Pluscht said, the company's guiding principles remain to "serve our customers in everything we do." Pluscht said he tries to reflect that in his leadership, "and hopefully that transcends to the other individuals in the organization."

Being a smaller company, there aren't a lot of layers of leadership, he said.

"As market conditions change, we can adjust accordingly, very quickly."

