



Empowering Employees

By Joseph T. Haas

Managing Director, CB Richard Ellis Hawaii, Inc.

My first job was when I was in high school, working nights and weekends as a clerk and delivery boy, at a drug store in Queens, N.Y. Even though I was only part time, I discovered that if you worked hard and did a good job it would be appreciated. As a result I received several raises. There I learned the important values of being nice to our customers and providing the best service I could. I was rewarded with big smiles and big tips after deliveries. The drug store recognized my efforts and, amazingly, offered me a pharmacy scholarship, which I graciously declined.

These early lessons have served me well throughout my career. Again and again, I have found that if you stick to those principles you will succeed. As managing director of CB Richard Ellis Hawaii, the state's largest commercial real estate firm, those lessons still apply. Our organization's core values are:

- Always act in your client's best interest
- Do your best (If you're not doing your best, what are you saving it for? Your next job? Your next lifetime?)

- Strive for excellence (in everything you do and every time you do it)

We truly live these values at CBRE, and as a result, our clients respond favorably to our service delivery.

CBRE's 12 partners have developed a philosophy that encourages our employees to achieve their career aspirations. Two successful brokers on our staff began as receptionists. They had the ability and the desire, so we supported their growth with training, coaching and opportunity. They have transformed their lives while working on behalf of our clients' best interests. We empower every employee in our firm by removing obstacles and providing the resources necessary to help them succeed.

The application of our core values and our commitment to empowering our employees have had an incredible impact on our ability to satisfy our clients, and subsequently, on our growth as a firm.

Over the past three years, our firm has grown from 40 to 100 employees, and we now have branch offices on each major Hawaiian island. Yet, despite our growth, we still operate on a level that we are a "family" business.

I also practice my "Management by Walking Around" technique that includes personalized attention. I never use e-mail or the phone when I can just as easily walk over to an employee who is in the office. To me, it's a matter of being polite and showing respect to each individual.

CBRE Hawaii has cultivated a professional, yet very friendly and easygoing environment. We are committed to helping people who work at CBRE

Hawaii to better themselves, both professionally and personally. We spend a tremendous amount of time at our jobs, so we want to make work an enjoyable experience.

In the commercial real estate business, it is difficult to get peo-

ple to relax. It's the nature of the business. It has not been easy, but we have been able to lighten up our work environment. We actively look for ideas and incentives that help people relax

day cake and other sweets. Then, we tackle the real business — brokerage and asset management activity.

The employees who brokered the smallest deal and the most

deals are awarded a stuffed vulture or a crown, respectively. Mover-and-shaker awards — a dashboard hula girl or boy — are presented to employees for their outstanding work bringing in business. My philosophy is if you can make work fun, then, generally, life is good.

We have been very successful at keeping our employees happy. If they are happy, then they are willing to work hard for our clients. The relaxed work environment, plus our management techniques that provide the tools to deliver excellent services to our clients, equals success for our employees and our firm. It seems that always acting in our client's best interests is also acting in our own best interest.

Next week: Lynette Lo Tom, president of Bright Light Marketing Group



Dana Peiterson, Marlene De Costa, Joseph Haas and Frances N. Okazaki in an executive meeting to review the company's first quarter performance results

and currently have several programs in place.

As an example, I call our monthly staff meetings to order by striking a gong. Following introductions, we recognize everyone celebrating a birthday during the month, with a birth-

Neilville Walker photos