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BUSINESS CHAMPIONS 2010

WINNER: WORKFORCE

# Beekley Corporation

Beekley Corporation a Model for Workforce Development

# Business CHAMPIONS



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Employees who embrace Beekley's vibrant corporate culture are a key to the Bristol firm's success.

**H**aving been selected twice by "Best Places to Work in Connecticut" in collaboration with the Hartford Business Journal, Bristol-based Beekley Corporation knows something about creating a strong and satisfied workforce. Beekley has also been named a 2010 Business Champion for Workforce.

"We are an innovative sales and marketing-driven company with an amazing focus on our customers, both inside and out," said Ayn S. LaPlant, president and CEO of Beekley Corporation.

Beekley, which employs 86 people, is a manufacturer and marketer of specialty medical and hospitality products, and has made a name for itself through its innovative skin marking system for

mammography. Its hospitality brand, Prestige Lane, includes promotional and luggage tagging products, making the company the market leader in both areas.

LaPlant said being named one of the best places to work in the state is a source of pride because the company works hard to create a work environment that encourages employees, who they call associates, to thrive.

"We're people-centric," LaPlant said. "We share a philosophy of respect and dignity for all, and we empower our associates to learn, contribute and grow."

Beekley puts a different spin on the typical sales, marketing and customer service departments. The marketing team is known as the customer enhancement team. What other companies might call sales, Beekley

calls the customer astonishment team, and customer service is known as customer care.

The teams have regular meetings, in which they come up with five team goals.

"We spend 15 percent of our time in continuous learning and improvement," LaPlant said. "It's done in very much a team atmosphere within your own team, and then we come together every six weeks for information exchanges with the whole company."

At Beekley, all employees are responsible for developing their own goals and reporting on them. Everyone is measured on three success factors: attitude, results and continuous improvement.

"We have a high expectation, high performance culture," LaPlant said. "This is not a place where you can get lost in doing your job."

But Beekley works hard to make sure it's associates are satisfied.

"I believe to be able to astonish our customers, you have to have really happy, productive, internal customers — our associates," she said.

To make sure potential employees have what it takes to succeed at Beekley, they're

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exposed to the company culture when they come in for interviews. They're often brought in on special event days. They're shown the facility's workout and meditation rooms, which helped Beekley earn the "Fit Friendly Company" designation from the American Heart Association, and told about special fitness contests and programs organized by Beekley. They're told how the company gives birthdays off, encourages associates to dress up for Halloween, and holds other special events.

"Our attention to finding the right people and positioning them for success is a big factor in getting and keeping people," LaPlant said. "We are very open to change and trying new things to find what works."

Beekley is so open to new ideas that associates are encouraged to focus on results, rather than the method to achieving them.

"It allows our associates to find the best way to meet and exceed expectations," LaPlant said. "We don't tell them how to do it."

Above all, LaPlant said associates take pride in the company's products, especially the role Beekley plays in fighting breast cancer.

"Our people are selling something that makes a difference and saves lives," she said. "We're a very passionate group of people."

Beekley Corporation has taken its commitment to fighting breast cancer one step further by making a large contribution to Bristol Hospital. The funds will go towards the creation of the Beekley Center for Breast Health and Wellness at Bristol Hospital, which is expected to open in 2011. ■

The graphic is a celebratory award for the "2010 Business Champions" in the Hartford region. It features a yellow-to-orange gradient background with three large, upward-pointing arrows in yellow, green, and blue. The text "2010 Business CHAMPIONS" is prominently displayed in a large, bold, white font with a black outline. Below this, it reads "Hartford Region's Fastest Growing Private Companies". The graphic includes several inset photographs: a man in a suit, a group of people, a person in a hard hat, and a group celebrating. At the bottom, it lists sponsors and presenters. A small "SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION" label is in the top right corner.

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