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## Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures

Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures honourees for 2021. See FP8, CEO honourees: Canada's 'culturepreneurs'. See FP9, Future-proofing your organization with a strong culture. See FP10.

NATIONAL POST, THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2022



Righteous Gelato staff on Pink Shirt Day, photo above; a team member celebrating Manulife's Elevate initiative, photo below: members of two of Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures, 2021. SUPPLIED

# INSTITUTIONALIZING CULTURE AND THRIVING

MARY TERESA BITTI  
Postmedia Content Works

The new world of work is not defined by how or where we work. Rather, it is defined by how we lead. To be successful, how we lead comes down to culture. Specifically, leaders must institutionalize culture. This is the overarching theme that connects all 51 of the 2021 Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures winners.

It is also critical during this time of flux and uncertainty. Organizations are adjusting to remote and hybrid work environments, to a millennial workforce that has different expectations of employers, and to a state of near full employment. All of these factors are causing top talent to speak with their feet and leave organizations that are not adapting.

"Whether you like it or not, whether your organization is in great shape or not, your culture is changing more and faster than ever. You can allow it to change and try to catch up or you can get ahead of it. Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures are getting ahead of it," says Marty Parker, president and CEO of Waterstone Human Capital and the founder of the Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures Awards program.

How? "They are intentional about their cultures.



They are creating the right conditions for their people to do their best work by institutionalizing culture. They are supporting their leaders in driving and sustaining culture. They are aligning the individual purpose of employees to organizational purpose," says Parker. "It's a lot to take on and even harder when most people aren't coming into the office, but it's what has and will continue to allow organizations to adapt and thrive."

Here's how some of this year's award winners are

institutionalizing culture — and winning.

### ARCHITECTING A STRONGER, MORE RESILIENT FUTURE

Manulife, Canada's largest insurance provider and one of this year's Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures award winners in the Enterprise category, has directly tied company values — obsess about customers, do the right thing, think big, get it done together, own it, and share your humanity — to

performance management, recognition, leadership development and learning initiatives.

"What we do (goals and impact) and 'How' we do it (our values) are equally important," says CEO Roy Gori. "Someone might be excellent at their job but if they can't collaborate or treat others with respect — that's a problem. Our values guide how we do our work."

This commitment was on full display throughout the pandemic. In 2020, Manulife launched a global

recognition platform to enable everyone across the organization to give and receive "in-the-moment" appreciation and gratitude. In 2021, it launched a learning platform for employees to explore digitally curated learning content anytime, anywhere. The company also dedicates an afternoon each month on focused learning time.

"We're creating a culture where people are encouraged to continuously learn, take risks, and embrace big ideas," says Gori. "We've purposefully given the team space for this kind of individual growth."

Manulife created its Leadership DNA program to clearly articulate and support great leadership and to underscore the impact that values, capabilities, skills and mindset have on the company's overall success as a team. Its learning platforms, Inclusive Leadership and All Against Racism, give leaders the tools and knowledge they need to live organizational values and strive for better inclusivity in their everyday interactions.

In 2021, Manulife achieved record engagement scores internally and scored in the 86th percentile amongst global financial services and industry peers and achieved record results.

See THRIVING, page FP8

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## We Build High Performance Cultures

Corporate culture drives performance — it's your company's greatest asset. At Waterstone Human Capital, our team of high performance culture and human capital search leadership advisors offer services designed to meet your leadership training, recruitment, and culture and engagement measurement and assessment needs. On behalf of Waterstone, congratulations to this year's Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures™ and Canada's Most Admired CEO™ award winners.

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“FROM THE MOMENT WE HEARD RUMBLINGS ABOUT THE PANDEMIC, I REALIZED IT’S GOING TO BE OUR PURPOSE THAT GUIDES US THROUGH THIS. WE DIDN’T KNOW WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN, WE JUST KNEW WE HAD TO KEEP OUR PEOPLE SAFE AND WE WOULD GET THROUGH IT TOGETHER. — JILL WAGMAN, MANAGING PRINCIPAL, ECKLER LTD.

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# Staying true to the culture course

**THRIVING**  
Continued from FP7

“These two things are correlated. This performance reflects our culture, the diversity of our franchise, and the robust demand for our products and services,” says Gori. “We are a better, stronger, more resilient company because we prioritize our people and encourage them to be the best versions of themselves.”

**ARTICULATING PURPOSE AND CULTURE TO DRIVE DECISION-MAKING TODAY AND TOMORROW**

Mid-Market award winner Eckler Ltd. is Canada’s first and largest independent actuarial consulting firm. Its culture of trust has long been a proven differentiator for the private professional services firm competing for clients and talent against large multinationals.

Culture at Eckler starts with the recruitment process, which is focused on finding people who are self-motivated, seek out opportunities and want the freedom to pursue work they are passionate about. It is reinforced by professional development opportunities and a compensation structure that help support performance. “We’re not a high-touch, high-oversight organization. Our people understand the responsibility that comes with that freedom and find it empowering,” says managing principal Jill Wagman.

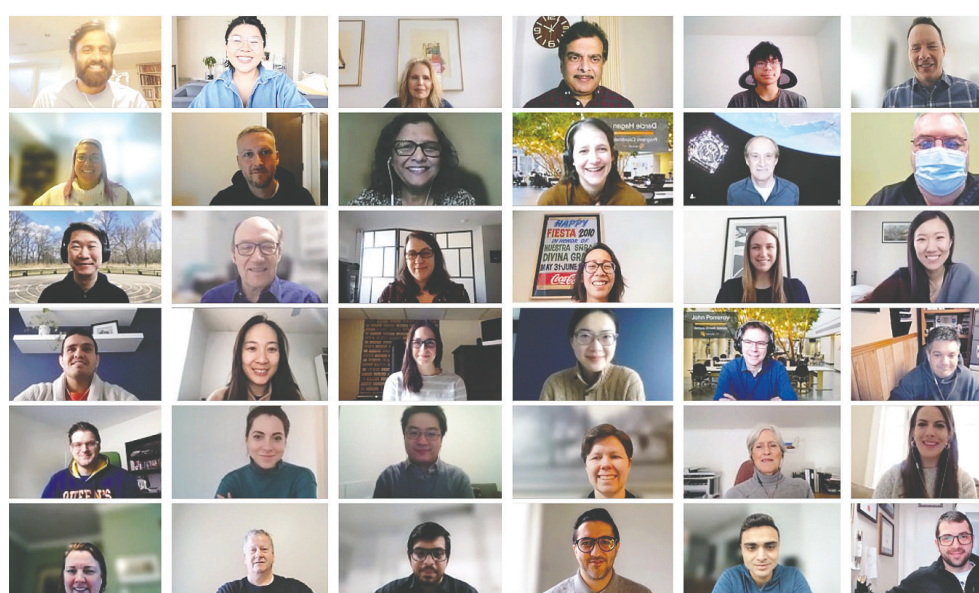
In 2019, Eckler decided it was time to capture and articulate its collective why. Owners and staff of the 330-person firm engaged in facilitated story-telling exercises to unpack their purpose. “They shared what made them proudest of working with Eckler. Some stories were related to what the company achieved, but more often it was about how the company treated them or others in situations of need or challenge,” says Wagman. “This led to our purpose statement: To care and to do right by people so that together we can achieve a brighter, more secure future.”

The timing could not have been better. “From the moment we heard rumblings about the pandemic, I realized it’s going to be our purpose that guides us through this,” says Wagman. “We didn’t know what was going to happen, we just knew we had to keep our people safe and we would get through it together.” The firm did more than get through the pandemic, it thrived.

That clear understanding of purpose continues to guide all decision-making and strengthen the culture. “The next five years are going to be really telling,” says Wagman. “We will probably have to do more and more to keep our culture strong and enrich it.”

**CRAFTING THE CULTURE THAT IS GOING TO HAVE THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON PERFORMANCE**

Growth category winner StarFish Medical is Canada’s leading medical device design, development and contract manufacturing company. Perhaps its biggest design project is the way it embeds culture in its systems in foundational ways. “Once you get the right underpinnings, it’s like a spiral going up. Culture reinforces. If you get the wrong things, the spiral goes downward,” says founder and



Top photo: Staff gathering at StarFish Medical; middle collage: Eckler Ltd.; bottom collage: ventureLAB. SUPPLIED

CEO Scott Phillips. The process started about 15 years ago with a deep dive into what made the company’s top performers successful and what StarFish could do to recognize and amplify those behaviours to create the culture it wanted. This led to a list of guiding principles designed to drive toward innovation: dig deep and solve the right problem, cut to the chase, get better, be transparent.

Equally important and a critical value is creating the opportunities for people to do the best work of their lives. To this end, the company created its Superpowers program. “We have monthly meet-ups and talk to managers about their team’s superpowers and how we can start incorporating recruiting questions for specific roles based on the superpowers of their best performing people,” says Pamela Potts, people and culture director. “For example, project manager is a key position for us. Problem-solving and creativity are two of the superpowers people in that role have.”

StarFish also launched the SMART program (StarFish Managers: Acting, Reflecting, Transforming) to support all levels of management in ensuring culture drives performance.

“It’s a year’s worth of re-

flecting and sharing leadership learning,” says Phillips. “As we grow, we want people to grow. We can only win together.”

The company has achieved double-digit growth each year over the last 10 years. Phillips has also created an aspirational goal the firm calls 100 x 100: to help 100 clients achieve \$100 million market valuation. StarFish has helped 12 of its customers achieve this benchmark so far. Says Phillips: “I believe if we can achieve our financial value goal we’ll also touch the lives of 100 million people.”

**ALIGNING INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE AND MEANING**

Small batch gelato brand (and one of the Emerging category award winners) Righteous Gelato’s founder and CEO James Boettcher has a clear north star: to build a company you want your mom or dad to work at. “As an employer, as, essentially, a custodian of people’s lives, I play an active role in their lives. It’s not just about compensation. Money is a requirement, but there is the additional element of happiness, pride, belonging and safety,” he says. “I believe the workplace has

who did not feel well for any reason (mental as well as physical) could take paid time off and production was postponed as needed. The company has since earned some of its highest employee satisfaction and loyalty scores.

**MAKING A HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURE A STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE**

Not-for-profit innovation hub, and one of 2021’s Broader Public Sector award winners, ventureLAB is on a mission to build globally competitive tech titans that build to scale in Canada. It does this by helping founders raise capital, develop talent and commercialize technology and IP.

In 2019, under the leadership of president and CEO Melissa Chee, ventureLAB took the steps to answer the question: How do we create an organization that is performance-driven and culture-based?

“We gathered with the team to define the culture we want,” says COO Matt Skynner. That culture is RIVIR: Relentless, Inclusive, Visionary, Innovative and Results-focused.

To institutionalize these behaviours, ventureLAB built culture into its performance management process. “Our goals are evenly split between culture and business objectives,” says Skynner. “Everyone is evaluated on RIVIR. Did they increase the net promoter score for clients? Did they help clients raise capital?”

The performance management process itself is embedded in how leadership and their teams create objectives. “Every year, we do a strategic planning process,” says Skynner. “Each person on the team creates their own strategic implementation plan that aligns with the overall strategy and vision for ventureLAB. This creates more buy-in and accountability, and gives the management team the tools to reinforce the culture.”

The company also has regular town halls that start by talking through RIVIR and include culture check-ins with team members sharing a win they had, a shout out for someone on the team, and the behaviours that helped them achieve as well as outlining a challenge and how to do better. Wins, challenges and shout-outs are also part of weekly department meetings. “Embedding the culture in this way helps sustain it,” says Skynner.

It also drives impact. “We are trying to help companies create jobs, generate revenue and raise capital. From 2019 to 2021, the jobs within the companies in our program tripled, revenues went up by a factor of five, capital raised increased by 10 times. We would not be where we are without the culture we have created.”

**CANADA’S MOST ADMIRABLE CEOs AND CORPORATE CULTURES 2021**

**CEOs**

- Enterprise** John Ferguson, President & CEO, Purolator (Mississauga, Ont.)
- Mid-Market** Wayne Chiu, Founder & CEO, The Trico Group (Calgary)
- Growth** Judi Hess, CEO, Copperleaf (Vancouver)
- Emerging** Zak Hemraj, Co-founder & CEO, Loopio Inc. (Toronto)
- Broader Public Sector** Michael Lavis, CEO, Creative Options Regina (Regina)
- Transformational Leadership** Lori Nikkel, CEO, Second Harvest (Toronto)

**ENTERPRISE**

- Bayer Canada (Mississauga, Ont.)
- Compass Group Canada (Mississauga, Ont.)
- Corus Entertainment Inc. (Toronto)
- goeasy Ltd. (Mississauga, Ont.)
- Hershey Canada Inc. (Mississauga, Ont.)
- Ledcor Group of Companies (Vancouver)
- Longo Brothers Fruit Markets Inc. (Vaughan, Ont.)
- Manulife (Toronto)
- Mattamy Homes (Toronto)
- OpenText Corporation (Waterloo, Ont.)

**MID-MARKET**

- BlueShore Financial (North Vancouver)
- Book Depot Inc. (Thorold, Ont.)
- Eckler Ltd. (Toronto)
- Endy Canada Inc. (Toronto)
- KUBRA (Mississauga, Ont.)
- Nicola Wealth (Vancouver)
- Nordia (Laval, Que.)
- Penguin Random House Canada (Toronto)
- Questrade (Toronto)
- SCI Group Inc. (Toronto)
- Securiguard Services Limited (Vancouver)

**GROWTH**

- BOWEN Group, a division of Agilus (Calgary)
- Copperleaf (Vancouver)
- Cowan Insurance Group (Cambridge, Ont.)
- Financeit (Toronto)
- Helcim (Calgary)
- Mitsubishi HC Capital Canada (Trois-Rivieres, Que.)
- Molded Precision Components (Oro-Medonte, Ont.)
- Security Compass (Toronto)
- Sharethrough (Montreal)
- StarFish Medical (Victoria)

**EMERGING**

- Accent Inns Inc. (Victoria)
- Corporate Finance Institute (CFI) (Vancouver)
- FISPAN (Vancouver)
- Impetus Digital (Toronto)
- Insurance Insight Inc. (Oakville, Ont.)
- Jan Kelley (Burlington, Ont.)
- Klue (Vancouver)
- Litco Law (Calgary)
- RFP Design Group Inc. (Mississauga, Ont.)
- Righteous Gelato (Calgary)

**BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR**

- Alberta Blue Cross (Edmonton)
- City of Surrey (Surrey, B.C.)
- Halton Healthcare (Oakville, Ont.)
- Lakefield College School (Lakefield, Ont.)
- Medavie (Moncton, N.B.)
- Opportunities NB (Fredericton, N.B.)
- Plan International Canada (Toronto)
- SE Health (Markham, Ont.)
- St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton (Hamilton)
- ventureLAB (Markham, Ont.)



“PART OF MY ROLE IS TO SET THE CULTURAL TONE FOR THE ORGANIZATION – BUT THE CULTURE OF AN ORGANIZATION IS NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ANY ONE PERSON. ULTIMATELY, IT’S EACH AND EVERY EMPLOYEE. AS A LEADER, IT’S IMPORTANT FOR US TO EMPOWER OTHERS AND SUPPORT THEM AND NURTURE THEM TO HELP THEM SHINE BRIGHT. – MICHAEL LAVIS, CREATIVE OPTIONS REGINA

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# MOST ADMIRED CEOs: CANADA’S ‘CULTUREPRENEURS’

MARY TERESA BITTI  
Postmedia Content Works

As the world navigated another year of pandemic-related uncertainty and the Great Resignation took hold, Canada’s Most Admired CEOs fully embraced their roles as “culturepreneurs.” This is to say they adapted – crafting and adjusting culture to meet market realities not just today but into the future.

“This can only happen if you put culture at the centre of organizational strategy,” says Marty Parker, president and CEO of Waterstone Human Capital and chair of Canada’s Most Admired CEO Awards program. “This year’s honourees have done that. As a result, they are winning the people and leadership game and their organizations are thriving – even during a global pandemic.”

Here are Canada’s Most Admired CEOs of 2021.

**JOHN FERGUSON,  
PRESIDENT AND CEO,  
PUROLATOR:  
ENTERPRISE  
CATEGORY WINNER**



Canada’s Most Admired CEOs (clockwise, from top left): John Ferguson, Purolator; Wayne Chiu, The Trico Group; Judi Hess, Copperleaf; Michael Lavis, Creative Options Regina; Zak Hemraj, Loopio; Lori Nikkel, Second Harvest. SUPPLIED PHOTOGRAPHS

## How does culture impact performance at Purolator?

Community is baked into our culture. Promises delivered. That’s our purpose. We look at what the package being delivered means to a small business, to a household, to a hospital, to a long-term care facility.

Another key aspect of our culture is the pride in what we do in our communities, such as our Purolator Tackle Hunger program where our frontline volunteers have generated and delivered almost 20 million pounds of food to food banks across Canada since 2003. This sense of purpose and pride shows up in performance. Over the past two years we set records across almost every metric: health and safety, customer satisfaction, our e-commerce business grew almost 70 per cent, we hired almost 3,700 new people.

## As a leader, what’s your role in crafting, building and promoting corporate culture?

Purolator is a 60-year-old company. When I joined, there was already a good culture in place. I wanted to harness that and enhance it. I brought in the concept of “One Team”. It means you are thinking of the whole process, the whole ecosystem, versus just your own functional area. We defined and aligned around our values and focused on continuous improvement, health and safety, wellness. That was possible because I emphasized leadership and culture as our competitive advantage. We put systems and training in place to ensure we were recruiting and developing and motivating the right type of leaders.

## What’s inspiring you?

I listened to a podcast recently on Bobby Clarke, who was prominent in the Stanley Cup-winning Philadelphia Flyers of the ‘70s. On reflecting back on what was really unique about the Flyers at that time, he spoke of an unbreakable commitment: no single individual was bigger than the team. Decisions and actions were based on what was best for the team. In a challenging business, particularly during COVID, and what has gotten us through is our shared sense of purpose as a team.

**WAYNE CHIU,  
FOUNDER AND CEO,  
THE TRICO GROUP:  
MID-MARKET  
CATEGORY WINNER**

## What role does purpose play in your culture?

Our corporate philosophy is doing well by doing good. This philosophy has created the purpose for the organization. We do good by creating value for our customers, by providing good customer service, by being good citizens to our community, by being a good employer to our teams. In return, we are able to do well by being a profitable business.

Our name represents our core values: Trust, respect, integrity, community and opportunity. It all goes back to how we run our business. Our culture, purpose and the core philosophy of how we run the company all marry together. I think business has to play a role in civil society besides making profit. Part of our purpose is making quality housing that is affordable for people.

## How do you define a high-performance culture at Trico?

A high-performing culture at Trico comes down to teamwork and thinking like an owner. Each team member has to be respectful, innovative, responsible for their work. With this foundation we are able to make sure we perform well as an organization and for each other.

## How is your culture helping your organization thrive through the pandemic?

When we went into lockdown, we tried to work out what was the worst scenario for us as a company. Could we bear the maximum loss that would bring? When we figured out that yes, we could handle that loss, we tried to keep everybody employed. Six months after the lockdown announcement, the business stabilized.

But something else happened. The team became more loyal and engaged. We gained more trust. I can proudly say we became an employer of choice in Calgary. Our financial performance also improved. Since 2020, revenues are up 25 per cent and our workforce increased by 15

per cent to 175 people. Our culture and philosophy helped us grow.

**JUDI HESS, CEO,  
COPPERLEAF:  
GROWTH CATEGORY  
WINNER**

## How does culture impact performance at Copperleaf?

Our culture is the key to our success. If you don’t build the right culture you might be successful, but we want to be determined about our success. Our culture is about delivering exceptional value to our clients, providing them extraordinary experiences with a huge focus on teamwork and creating joy within our teams and our clients.

One of the key pillars of our culture is to be agile. The market is always moving, things are always changing and we have to be open to new ideas and be innovative and able to change. We saw 52 per cent growth in our annual recurring revenue at the end of the third quarter. We hired more than 100 employees around the globe this past year.

## As a leader, what’s your role in crafting, building and promoting corporate culture?

I co-created the culture with our whole team in 2012 when we were 30 people and we refreshed it in 2020 when we were 250 people. This is not for the faint of heart. It meant involving everyone in the whole process of reviewing our culture, understanding what we needed to do, and adjusting going forward. It was an eight-month process.

Our culture is about how we think, act and interact. It’s not just internal; it affects everybody we interact with outside the company. I give our three-hour culture course to every single new team member because it’s that important. We get team members to come back to the culture course at least every two years.

## What’s inspiring you?

A documentary called 14 Peaks. Nirmal Purja and his team had a vision to make the impossible possible: summit 14 peaks that are greater than 8,000 metres in seven months. It had never been done before. When you look at what made them successful, it was teamwork. It was celebrating successes, being

kind, compassionate, brave and caring about each other and the amazing sheer determination in removing roadblocks.

**LORI NIKKEL, CEO,  
SECOND HARVEST:  
TRANSFORMATIONAL  
LEADERSHIP  
CATEGORY WINNER**

## How have you built a culture of innovation and transformation?

When I started at Second Harvest we were a Toronto-based, grassroots organization. The transformation began because we recognized we needed to see the big picture. If we’re working on food loss and waste, let’s try to understand what the actual problem is, but there was no data in Canada about how much waste there was or where it was.

Step two was going beyond the bricks-and-mortar operations we had in Toronto. How can we work as that networker connecting the 61,000 charities and non-profits across Canada that provide food? That led to the creation of the Food and Rescue app, connecting food businesses to charities.

When the pandemic hit, we had to execute on this three-year transformation plan in three weeks. We wanted to have a huge impact and make sure no Canadian was left behind. Second Harvest created the Food Rescue Canadian Alliance Task Force, which included industry, national and regional charities, the Government of Canada, Indigenous communities. We used the Food Rescue app to connect organizations with food and funding. By the end of 2020, Second Harvest helped more than 2,500 non-profits and 4,300 food programs across nearly 700 communities in Canada.

## As a leader, what’s your role in crafting, building and promoting corporate culture?

I believe in good role-modeling, providing people the tools they need to do their job successfully, including meeting their financial requirements. There’s this misnomer that if you work in a charity, you should volunteer. High-performing people get paid.

I’m a firm believer in vacations and taking time. Last

year, we gave frontline staff two weeks vacation in addition to the four weeks they already have. We have a mental health committee. We believe in transparency and talking about things. We now have an HR department. You can’t just rely on the CEO. We are all in this together.

## What’s inspiring you?

It’s always people I find inspiring. I’m listening to people in my sector, such as Sylvain Charlebois, director of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University to learn about food analytics and supply chains; Dr. Elisa Levi, who was critical in the formation of the Alliance. There are so many.

**ZAK HEMRAJ,  
CO-FOUNDER  
AND CEO, LOOPIO  
INC: EMERGING  
CATEGORY WINNER**

## How have you built a culture of innovation and transformation?

It was always our ambition to be a high-growth company. That set the tone. If we want to build a high-growth company we all have to have a high-growth mindset, and that means reinventing ourselves regularly, being curious, constantly learning and building values around that ethos.

A lot of the culture we built was a byproduct of how the three co-founders worked together: with mutual respect and collaboration. We are constantly striving to find that balance of being an ambitious high-performing company and still have a warm environment where people are supportive, look out for each other, grow and learn together.

## How do you define high performance at Loopio?

I see it in three layers: people, customers and revenue. We are a people-first company. We do pulse surveys and pulse checks, ask-me anything sessions, checking the sentiment and engagement of the workforce. We’ve had more than 100 promotions in our team in the last three years. As a software company, our customers are also our end users. What is their level of engagement in the product? Are customers referring others to us?

Revenue is the final measure of performance. It shows all the other stuff is working. Through the pandemic, we grew 50 per cent year over year. The team grew from 120 employees to more than 200 now. Our employee retention numbers get better quarter over quarter, and customer retention metrics also continue to thrive. In early 2021, we raised \$200 million.

## What’s inspiring you?

I’m reading and listening to Cal Newport. He’s the author of Deep Work and Digital Minimalism and has a podcast called Deep Questions. His work is inspiring how I try to live my life. It’s a different lens of how we think of the world. So much is focused on moving faster, being more connected, using more technology. This is an opposite mind frame. It’s about taking control and finding ways to disconnect. It’s inspiring to think we can thrive in this hyper-connected world by actually doing the opposite.

**MICHAEL LAVIS, CEO,  
CREATIVE OPTIONS  
REGINA (COR):  
BROADER PUBLIC  
SECTOR CATEGORY  
WINNER**

## What role does purpose play in your culture?

Our culture is our central purpose: to nurture, teach and sustain the experience of connectedness, companionship and community. Our purpose helps to connect us all to the work, our goal and our collective why. The central purpose is true for both the employee and the people whom we serve.

From the employee perspective, it’s important we nurture an environment where people feel safe, valued, supported and connected. As an organization we’ve embraced a philosophy called gentle teaching. It has evolved into a culture of gentleness, and we’ve taken this culture of gentleness and woven it throughout the fabric of the organization. It’s reflected not only in our approach to care but it’s reflected in our governance, our people practices, every aspect of how we do business, engage with funders, partners and families.

## How do you define a high-performing culture at COR?

Are employees engaged, connected? Are they feeling values alignment? Are they experiencing a high degree of trust and autonomy in their role? Are we empowering people, both our employees and the people we support? A high-performing culture is one where people feel safe and feel valued and respected.

Over the last couple of years, we have had a heightened focus on employee well-being, prioritizing the physical, emotional and financial well-being of our people. In 2020/21 our budget grew by 32 per cent and in the next fiscal year it increased an additional 23 per cent. We have 307 employees today, up from 222 in 2020.

## As a leader, what’s your role in crafting, building and promoting corporate culture?

Part of my role is to set the cultural tone for the organization – but the culture of an organization is not the responsibility of any one person. Ultimately, it’s each and every employee. As a leader, it’s important for us to empower others and support them and nurture them to help them shine bright.



“ PRACTITIONERS OF CULTURE IMPROVEMENT HAVE SHOUTED FROM THE ROOFTOPS FOREVER THAT CULTURE MATTERS AND IT NEEDS TO BE A PRIORITY; IT DRIVES THE BOTTOM LINE. NOW, AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC, MANY MORE ORGANIZATIONS AND CEOs ARE REALIZING THAT CULTURE IS THE DIFFERENTIATOR. — NICOLE BENDALY, WATERSTONE HUMAN CAPITAL

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# FUTURE-PROOFING YOUR ORGANIZATION WITH CULTURE

MARY TERESA BITTI  
Postmedia Content Works

The global pandemic paved the way for remote/hybrid work models and the Great Resignation at a time when a younger workforce with different expectations of employers than the preceding generation is coming on stream full-force. The result: an unprecedented level of volatility and unpredictability in the recruitment space with the overwhelming majority of candidates entertaining multiple opportunities.

For many organizations, the current environment has forced a deep dive into who they are, what they stand for, and what sets them apart. They are reflecting on the behaviours that have gotten them this far and planning for what they will need to help them move forward. Simply put, they are focusing on culture and acknowledging the connection between culture, people and performance.

PwC’s 2021 Canadian Culture Study states 66 per cent of C-suite executives and board members now say that culture is more important to performance than an organization’s strategy and operating model. Why? Waterstone Human Capital’s Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Cultures Awards program, which recognizes companies with best-in-class, high-impact cultures, has found that organizations that put culture at the centre of their business strategy have improved employee engagement scores, increased happiness, and better retention — all essential to drive performance.

“Practitioners of culture improvement have shouted from the rooftops forever that culture matters and it needs to be a priority; it drives the bottom line,” says Nicole Bendaly, executive director of the Waterstone Culture Institute. “Now, as a result of the pandemic, many more organizations and CEOs are realizing culture is the differentiator. People are leaving for culture, for what is meaningful to them, for the experience they want to create.”

Conversely, organizations that have prioritized and established people-first, high-impact cultures are experiencing what Bendaly calls the “boomerang effect.” People are returning to companies because of culture.

“In the past, compensation and opportunities for advancement were the top two reasons to move,” says Lyn Currie, Waterstone Human Capital’s managing director of executive search. “Now we are seeing people making decisions based on values, whether there is an alignment with an organization from an equity, diversity, inclusion perspective, corporate social responsibility perspective, from an ethical, social impact perspective.” Not surprisingly, this has led to high demand for people and culture (formerly human resources) professionals.

The question is no longer does culture matter? The question is how do we leverage culture and operationalize it so it is not just the responsibility of the CEO and human resources. “Focusing on culture needs to be the culture. It needs to be embedded in your employ-



Waterstone Human Capital's Lyn Currie, left, Nicole Bendaly and Marty Parker. SUPPLIED PHOTOGRAPHS

ee value proposition and in your talent attraction and assessment strategy. It’s a big shift,” says Currie.

“Traditionally, when we asked employees who drives culture in your organization, the answer was largely the CEO and HR. Now we are seeing in high-performing organizations a majority of people are also including themselves, along with the CEO, HR and leaders as responsible for driving culture,” says Bendaly. “That tells us culture is operationalized. People in the organization know culture doesn’t happen to them. It is created by them, and it is their responsibility to craft a culture that will drive performance and enable them and their colleagues to bring their best selves to work. That’s what keeps people and that’s what attracts people.”

It’s not easy to do. Culture change does not happen overnight. Organizations that have already focused on culture are ahead of the pack. They are building on something that is already strong. It is far more difficult for wholesale culture transformation, especially if the starting culture is toxic or not aligned with where it needs to go to survive and thrive. It’s challenging but it doesn’t have to be complex. The organizations that handle culture well don’t make it complicated. Rather, they get back to basics, says Bendaly.

## HOW TO OPERATIONALIZE CULTURE

Marty Parker, president and CEO of Waterstone Human Capital and the founder of the Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Cultures program, coined a term to capture the mindset and steps to transform and operationalize culture: the Culturepreneur Operating System. It starts from the top, with a belief that culture needs to be a priority and the understanding that culture drives performance. Leaders then take the organization through a structured five-step process to create the culture they want.

Here, Bendaly breaks down each of these steps: **1. Assess** To operationalize culture, organizations and senior leadership need to truly understand the current state of the culture. “When I say culture, that means a few things. It’s not just

about measuring the level of engagement. Through the Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Cultures program we have a lot of data that we have used to identify 10 key drivers of high-performance cultures, such as people focus, work environment, growth and profitability, innovation. It’s also important to understand how your people describe the culture and their lived experience of the culture. Are they describing and experiencing it in alignment with how you want them to? Is there a disconnect? You need to hear from the people who are influencing the culture every day and living in it,” says Bendaly.

“Through a realistic, reliable holistic view of the current state you can understand where you are. You can do this through surveys, stay interviews (leaders having conversations with team members to understand what’s keeping them there, what they love about the organizations and, why might they leave), focus groups, culture chats.”

**2. Craft** Bring a cross-section of leaders and senior leadership teams into the process to intentionally craft the culture you want to create. This will be essential to achieving the organization’s strategies and growth. “Culture isn’t just about creating a great place to work. It’s about driving the business,” says Bendaly. “What are the behaviours, attitudes, values you need to see demonstrated every day to grow? What’s strong today that you need to honour as you grow, and what specific behaviours do you need to intentionally shift?”

**3. Plan** Once you’ve identified the desired culture, and what you need to shift to get you there in the next year, two years, three years, you can start to build your plan. “Through the planning, including how you communicate and bring front-line leaders in and support them, that’s how you begin to transform,” says Bendaly. “How are you enabling leaders to have everyday meaningful conversations about the culture? How are you supporting your leaders in making the behavioural shifts needed? What are the employees doing well? How are they contributing to mission and vision in alignment with the culture? Is there a clear purpose as to why this culture is so essential?”

**4. Transform** This is about

executing your plan and enabling the behavioural shifts needed across the organization. Throughout each stage of the process, measure. By going through the assessment and crafting stages you can identify what you are going to measure that will tell you culture is moving in the right direction and is impacting the

performance of the organization. For example, retention rates are increasing, you’re attracting the right talent and it’s not taking a long time. “We recommend pulsing the organization throughout the year to make sure the metrics you are measuring are moving in the right direction,” says Bendaly.

**5. Align** Behaviour change is supported by systems and processes. Are your human resources systems, decision-making processes, talent management processes aligned with the culture you want to create? For example, is the performance management process aligned with empowering your people? Is the way you support career development aligned with being truly people-focused?

Investing in culture will be critical to future-proof organizations for the next unprecedented change, the shift to a hybrid model of work, and the demographic transition happening in the workforce. By 2030, Currie notes, millennials will make up 75 per cent of the labour force.

“It will be even more essential that the executive team look at culture as one of their career success factors, as a strategic imperative to meet growth and revenue targets,” says Currie. “Organizations and leaders need to be intentional about creating and maintaining a culture that is inclusive and engaged, that has opportunities for people to create meaningful impact, and they need to be able to clearly articulate their unique employee value proposition.”

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# FINDING STRENGTH IN SPREADING JOY

HERSHEY CANADA INC.

DENISE DEVEAU  
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Creating a corporate culture around a legacy of bringing joy to people is a strong motivator in today's world. “The chocolate business is incredibly rewarding because we are putting smiles on people's faces every day, so it's not hard to bring the same love and passion to how we operate and communicate,” says Becki Halko, HR director for Hershey Canada Inc., winner in the Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures Enterprise category.

As Canada's leading confectionery brand, Hershey Canada Inc. has a longstanding legacy of togetherness, and corporate and social responsibility that dates back 125 years. That legacy was started by its founder, Milton Hershey, who stated at a young age, “One is only happy in proportion as he makes others feel happy.”

“That legacy is with our teams each and every day,” says Halko. “Our culture is really centered around our purpose of making more moments of goodness for consumers, communities and our colleagues.”

Hershey Canada Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Hershey Company. Major household brand names include Reese's, Oh Henry!, Hershey's and Hershey's Kisses, Brookside, Jolly Rancher Reese's, Twizzlers, Skor, Chipits and Icebreakers, among many others. Currently, it operates two manufacturing sites in Quebec, and a corporate office in Mississauga, Ont.

Its vision “to be an innovation snacking powerhouse” encourages employees to continually challenge the status quo by introducing new ideas and executing them with excellence. “That vision is the cornerstone for our four company values: togetherness, integrity, excellence and making a difference,” says Halko.

True to its roots, Hershey Canada has a wide range of social enterprise and CSR programs focused on social entrepreneurship, and supporting children in need and the communities they live in. These initiatives harken back to the school Milton Hershey established to provide education for under-privileged children. Key charity partners for Hershey Canada include Food Banks of Canada, Ronald



McDonald House Charities, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, Sick Kids Foundation, and the Canadian Cancer Society.

All activities are tied to the company's Shared Goodness Promise, a global strategy focused on nourishing children in need (shared futures), purpose-driven growth (shared business), reducing its environmental impact (shared planet), and improving the lives of the communities it serves (shared communities).

That commitment did not waver when COVID struck, says Sam Chehabeddine, vice-president and general manager. “Even during the pandemic, we have been continuing our financial giving to Food Banks of Canada and providing moments of goodness to front line workers through in-kind and product donations to hospitals across the country.”

A key strength for the company is a culture that is led by and for employees, says Halko. “Empowerment and flexibility are at the core of how we operate. If you look at all the work that goes in on the areas of diversity equity and inclusion, environmental leadership, the Women's Business Resource Group — these are all led by team members who have a passion for these areas.”

Employee development is a top priority at all stages of their time with Hershey Canada. Every member of the team has a career development plan to ensure they have the benefit of personal



Hershey Canada Inc. staff get into the seasonal fun for Halloween (top photo) and Easter (above).  
HERSHEY CANADA INC. PHOTOGRAPHS

and professional fulfillment, she adds. “Hershey is at its best when every member of our team believes they can help find new paths to growth and success. We put every effort into matching talent planning and role rotations with each person's career plan.”

To ensure the right fit when hiring, the company goes a step beyond interviewing to help candidates truly understand the nature of the role they are seeking. For example, for some field sales positions, it conducts a ‘day in life’ field day session to demonstrate first-hand the requirements for success.

New hires are immersed in a full-day learning session about the philanthropic heritage and legacy of the company, an understanding of Hershey's purpose, vision, mission, values and behaviours. They are also

introduced to senior leaders, followed by the ever-popular chocolate testing session.

Employee referrals and internal job postings are integral to its recruitment efforts. Another important recruitment strategy is a strong internship program that allows students to truly experience the culture, while giving managers the ability to observe their talent and potential.

To ensure 100 per cent diversity in hiring, all hiring managers are required to complete unconscious bias training and all interviewer panels are gender diverse. In addition, its ongoing executive talent planning processes strive to achieve “ready now” and “ready soon” candidates for every leadership position.

Another important initiative is Hershey's “Smiles” program. This points-based

recognition program provides a way for employees to recognize one another for above-and-beyond contributions to the business. In 2020, the 850 employees of Hershey Canada gave out almost 12,000 “Smiles” to one another for directly driving contributions to the business.

A signature element of the Hershey culture is togetherness — a quality that took centre stage during COVID, says Chehabeddine. “COVID has taught us the importance of caring and compassion, which has always been at the root of our culture. We are going back to core fundamental values of togetherness and delivering outstanding business results, while taking care of each other. In fact, during COVID, we continued to grow market share, and experienced the highest gross sales

growth rate in recent history. At the same time, our organizational engagement scores hit an all-time high of 91.5 per cent in 2020.”

Halko notes that the transition for many of its workers was relatively easy as the company had introduced a hybrid work model six years ago. “That speaks to the trust and empowerment we have within our culture.”

To help maintain connections in a virtual world, management increased its communication efforts through team huddles, weekly townhall updates and ‘coffee chats’, where employees are encouraged to ask questions and submit ideas and requests. “These helped to rally and unite the teams,” says Halko. “We also made significant enhancements in our employee assistance program benefits.”

Despite the challenges, the company encouraged brainstorming with employees for new ideas to support its customers and help the company grow. For example, it further cemented Chipits as the brand that stands for love by helping Canadian bakers and families by hiring local bakers who were out of work to teach classes online across Canada. “As a result, Chipits remains one of our strongest performing brands,” says Chehabeddine.

Moving forward, Hershey Canada leadership is inspiring the organization through the development of a bold five-year objective called “Moonshot” that is rallying the team behind stretching goals to accelerate growth. “We can only grow by continuously challenging ourselves through change,” says Chehabeddine. “We can either wait for some trigger to force that change to happen or we can decide to change in a state of inspiration.”

Other important initiatives are also taking shape this year. Hershey Canada's first fully owned distribution centre in Brantford, Ont., is scheduled to open in May. Halko says she has also been looking forward to the official reopening of the corporate offices, which was scheduled for March 28. “It's not a mandated place to go, but it will provide us with the opportunity to build upon our value of togetherness and give us important moments of connection.”

Ultimately, Hershey Canada is a family, she says. “We have a strong sense of caring, compassion and empathy for each other. We have always believed that it is just as important how we do things as what we achieve.”

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MOST  
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2021

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to all Hershey employees for creating one of Canada's most admired corporate cultures by making more moments of goodness!





“ WE DID NOT INITIALLY REALIZE HOW REMOTE WORKING AND SHARING THE SAME EXPERIENCES AROUND THE GLOBE WOULD BRING US TOGETHER SO PROFOUNDLY ... THE PANDEMIC HAS HAD A DRASTIC IMPACT ON SOCIETY, YET IT HAS ALSO PROPELLED THE MANULIFE CULTURE AND OUR VALUES FORWARD FASTER THAN WE COULD EVER HAVE IMAGINED. – KATHRYN KITCHEN, MANULIFE, CANADA

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# GLOBAL UNITY MAKES LIVES BETTER

MANULIFE

KATHRYN BOOTHBY  
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‘Decisions made easier. Lives made better.’ It is Manulife’s mission and its north star. No matter where an individual is located around the world, or the area of business they work, it is the great unifier. Each member of the Manulife team is empowered to envision how their individual contributions can make decisions easier and lives better, for colleagues, customers and for communities.

Reinforced by its values to obsess about customers, do the right thing, think big, get it done together, own it, and share your humanity, Manulife’s culture exemplifies an inclusive, collaborative, innovative and fun environment. It is a culture built on being there for one another, as well as for customers and the communities in which individuals live and work. It is also a culture that has earned Manulife multiple awards, including admittance into Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Cultures Hall of Fame and a place on this year’s list of Corporate Culture Award winners in the Enterprise category.

Active leadership is key to ensure a constant challenging of the status quo, necessary to establish change and transformation, and maintain the culture that continues to define the organization. “It gives us the ability to have a winning team. It allows us to connect, energize and excel every day. It is part of our DNA and an intentional part of who we are as an organization,” says Kathryn Kitchen, head of human resources, Manulife, Canada.

Manulife’s journey begins with an ambition to become the most digital, customer-centric global company in the industry. Learning and personal development are critical components in achieving that ambition. To that end, the organization has made significant investments in these areas and created a culture where people at all levels are encouraged to continuously learn, take risks and embrace big ideas. It is a place where everyone is purposefully given ample room for independent growth in, and to hone, their craft.

“By investing in the development of our colleagues we can all be our best and bring that to the conversations we have with customers every day,” Kitchen says.



Manulife’s culture exemplifies an inclusive, collaborative, innovative and fun environment. MANULIFE PHOTOGRAPH

Learning begins at the top, with support for the development of leaders across the global organization. How that learning is manifested is inherently within the purview of each leader and the needs of their team. From a strong foundation of individuality, the intention is for each leader to morph and evolve based on how the business, their teams, the external environment and they themselves grow.

In 2021, the company launched Pursuit, an online portal where individuals across the organization can explore digitally curated learning content at any time, and from anywhere. It has become a one-stop-shop learning destination for a specific role or for extended career development. The platform brings together all available resources onto a single-use site where colleagues can access LinkedIn Learning courses by internationally renowned experts.

“Since the introduction of Pursuit, independent learning time has increased from 12 hours to 19.8 hours per person per year. This is great news in terms of the personal and career growth of our team members,” notes Kitchen.

In concert with Pursuit,

a dedicated afternoon each month has been set aside for focused learning. Dubbed Fuel Up Fridays, it allows colleagues to invest additional time in independent knowledge advancement. Five additional personal days are also available during the year for team members to rest and recharge, which is essential as the company looks to accelerate growth on its strategic priorities.

While an environment of continuous learning is a critical element of Manulife’s culture, it is also important that colleagues, customers and stakeholders feel respected, connected to the mission and treated with equity and dignity. As such, Manulife is focused on expanding its diversity of talent and building an inclusive culture that will not only help foster more robust connections but enable greater innovation and growth and, ultimately, lead to a stronger company and culture.

Part of the evolution is Inclusive Talent Management, which brings together leadership accountability programs, inclusive talent processes for both recruitment and advancement, and accelerated talent development for under-represented groups.

In 2020 the organization made a two-year commitment of over \$3.5 million to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace and in the communities it serves. The overall goals are to increase the representation of diverse talent at all levels in the organization; create greater inclusion across the company through enhanced training; and to support organizations helping Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities.

The initiative is already proving highly successful with targets for a BIPOC new graduate hiring program. In the first year, it reached 52 per cent in 2020 (including 57 per cent women), far exceeding the original goal of 25 per cent.

Now more than ever, promoting and supporting mental and physical well-being plays a key role in the success of an organization, its team, their families, and communities around the world. Manulife has been doubling down on benefits to support colleagues and now offers custom coverage with many leading-edge and innovative options. One such option is a core mental health benefit, which provides 100 per cent of thera-

peutic services up to \$10,000 at no cost to colleagues. It is one of the first of its kind in Canada.

In addition, a virtual mental health service provides professional support, anonymously and free of charge, for colleagues or family members who need someone to listen. A guest speaker series brings forward high-profile individuals, such as Malala Yousafzai, Pakistani activist for female education and a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, to share unique insights on how to stay balanced, happy and mentally well during challenging times. The recently introduced Elevate program offers a series of activities and celebrations to promote healthy living.

Giving back not only contributes greatly to the winning culture at Manulife, it helps build communities and advance causes at both the corporate and individual level.

For the past two years, Manulife has provided each member of its 38,000-strong team the equivalent of \$50 CAD in local currency to create an act of kindness in their community. The #ManulifeActofKindness program enables colleagues around the world to pay it

forward. “We are incredibly proud of this program and believe that if we can demonstrate caring and kindness at so many touch-points, it can help make lives better for people around the world,” notes Kitchen.

Manulife also partners with like-minded organizations to drive meaningful change. Support takes many forms, including direct funding, colleague donations and fundraising matches. In 2020, total direct corporate donations reached \$21 million; colleague donations totalled \$4.2 million; and funds raised from external sources were \$14.5 million.

Despite the many challenges of COVID-19, it emphasized the value of sharing one’s humanity, notes Kitchen. “We did not initially realize how remote working and sharing the same experiences around the globe would bring us together so profoundly. We were exposed to each other in a different way, as virtual forums offered a window into the homes, families and living environments of our colleagues. The pandemic has had a drastic impact on society, yet it has also propelled the Manulife culture and our values forward faster than we could ever have imagined.”

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# PUTTING A SUSTAINABLE SPIN ON ASSET-BASED LENDING

MITSUBISHI HC CAPITAL CANADA INC.

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At the beginning of every year, the president of Mitsubishi HC Capital Canada Inc., François Nantel, hosts a town hall with every employee. There, he shares the company’s upcoming goals and vision, mission, strategy and action. It’s just one of many ways that Mitsubishi HC Capital Canada Inc. reinforces its commitment to the three cultural pillars that have led to its success in the marketplace: operational excellence, employee engagement and commercial excellence.

A winner in the Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Cultures Growth category, Mitsubishi HC Capital Canada Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Mitsubishi HC Capital Inc. Formed in 2021 through the merger of publicly listed Mitsubishi UFJ Lease & Finance and Hitachi Capital, the company’s Canadian operations are headquartered in Trois-Rivières, Que., with additional offices in Calgary, Burlington, Ont., Laval, Que., Quebec City and Montreal.

Mitsubishi HC Capital Canada’s history dates back over 40 years, when a dozen entrepreneurs in Trois-Rivières faced challenges getting financing and saw an opportunity to help other small to medium-sized businesses by developing innovative customized financing solutions. Over time its model took hold, and the company went through tremendous growth, expanding into Ontario before being acquired by Hitachi Capital America.

Over the past two years the company has seen significant growth, achieving 130 per cent of its fiscal goals in 2021 — its best year to date. During that time, it expanded support to a broader range of customers and industries and significantly grew its employee base.

Developing talent is a very big element for the overall vision and mission of the company, says Stéphane Arsenault, senior vice-president, commercial finance and sustainable development. “We want to be a great company to work for, that works great, and that customers want to work with. We try to live and breathe that at all levels of the company.”

He stresses that throughout its continued growth, one thing has not changed since the company was started — keeping the organizational structure relatively flat. “We don’t have layers upon layers of management. Everyone is accessible.”



Mitsubishi Capital Canada Inc.’s successful corporate culture is built on companywide teamwork and collaboration from the highest offices out through the entire organization. MITSUBISHI HC CAPITAL CANADA INC. PHOTOGRAPH

Keeping in close touch and fostering communications became increasingly critical over the last two years, says Arsenault. “It has always been very important to be close to employees, even more so when COVID hit. Before, we had a lot of committees and communications, and team-building activities. Extending that virtually was a top priority. We made a point of talking to people, checking in on how they were doing. A lot were working in very difficult conditions, so we made sure everybody knew what is happening.”

As they begin their transition to a hybrid work model, Arsenault says they must rethink how business is done. “The traditional way was thinking you had to be in the office to work. Now it’s completely different. People are empowered and trustworthy. They would rather be doing their work at a desk at home than lose an hour driving to the office. We want them to have that choice and flexibility.”

Arsenault reports that as they return to the office environment, overall communications between team members have increased from their experiences working through the pandemic. “People are more aware and inclusive in everything they do. Everyone is trying to

watch out for everyone else. There has been a lot of interaction that is now ingrained in our culture.”

That accessibility also extends to customers now that online meetings have become acceptable in business circles, he adds. “It levels the playing field for everyone and makes doing business easier and more productive.”

Forging and maintaining strong connections are equally important when it comes to onboarding new staff, he adds. “For many, it’s their first work experience. We spend a lot of time making sure [virtual] onboarding and training is really, really stacked to make sure that every new person’s start was good,” says Arsenault. “The president also takes the time to welcome each new hire personally.”

“We want them to feel as comfortable as possible from the moment they open their computer on day one,” says Maude Trudel, manager, human resources.

Mitsubishi HC Capital Canada has also developed relationships with universities across Canada, offering paid internships for students interested in learning more about the industry. Typically, they hire 10 to 15 per semester. “It’s important for us to invest in the emerging work force by offering internships in positions that

reflect full-time employment,” says Trudel.

Training offerings include the sales development program and the leadership program for high-achieving and motivated employees to complete a range of roles across various departments to learn more about the business and move into management roles. “We encourage employees to find career opportunities across the company,” says Trudel.

The company’s career management program is specifically designed for employees to plan career steps and address development targets to achieve their career goals. “We also have many examples of people stepping up to their next role by relocating across Canada, including junior employees,” she explains.

Employees are also encouraged to lead initiatives that will benefit the company and their communities. While there are multiple options for employees to grow professionally, they are also encouraged to use their skills for leading new projects and committees where they can manage a team, event, and/or budget.

The Shark Tank project, for example, is an employee-led effort in which teams of junior sales staff prepare a pitch to senior executives related to an opportunity

they have discovered in the market that could benefit the company’s growth. And the smart transformation project allows employees to share any ideas on what would improve processes and/or have an impact on financial outcomes.

Volunteer-led initiatives also include the green committee focusing on environmental commitments and sustainable development goals, and the community action committee that supports volunteering fundraising and charitable donations to address issues such as food security, low-income resources and programming for the elderly and children.

One of the newest additions is the women in finance committee, which supports employee development diversity and equity. Part of its intent is to spearhead mentee programs to encourage women to consider career opportunities in finance. “This initiative has tremendous female leadership that wanted to get involved and start something,” says Arsenault. “They are bringing all sorts of great ideas to the table. We would love to put them all in place.”

The women in finance committee is a project that is very near and dear to Trudel’s heart, as she was involved in the initial hiring of many of the partici-

pants. “When we hired these people, I was so impressed with their backgrounds. It’s exciting to recruit that young talent and see them evolve to leading a program like that.”

Internal surveys have shown that engagement is extremely high, with the latest employee appreciation survey scoring a 95 per cent for employee engagement. Arsenault attributes much of that success to what the company stands for and its role in supporting the Canadian economy.

“Our employees understand that what we do really help small to medium-sized business that are essential to the Canadian economy in areas such as transportation, building infrastructure, reducing global warming and food security. We are really pushing to follow the sustainability goals established by the UN and helping entrepreneurs and innovators in areas such as clean tech and green energy that traditional lenders may not support.”

While equipment financing has been part of Mitsubishi HC Capital’s DNA for decades, Arsenault says they are diversifying more to address important challenges that are meaningful to society, employees and customers. “We are always figuring out new ways of doing things to help Canadian innovation prosper.”

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“ THROUGH [COVID] WE DIDN'T MISS A BEAT. DESPITE THE UNCERTAINTY AROUND US, OUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE REMAINED STELLAR AND WE ACHIEVED OUR HIGHEST ENGAGEMENT SCORES EVER. THE CULTURE WE BUILT REALLY PAID OFF, AND WE ARE EXTREMELY PROUD OF OUR COLLECTIVE ACHIEVEMENTS. — MARK RAZZOLINI, VICE-PRESIDENT, PEOPLE, WELLNESS AND INNOVATION, ALBERTA BLUE CROSS

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# A CULTURE BUILT ON COMPASSION

ALBERTA BLUE CROSS

KATHRYN BOOTHBY  
Postmedia Content Works

Corporate culture is a living, breathing organism that permeates every aspect of Alberta Blue Cross. It reflects the organization's personality and is embedded in every decision made and action taken. At Alberta Blue Cross, people deliver on the Blue For Life vision that is strongly supported by the shared values of: integrity and trust; wellness and flexibility; commitment to customers; and empowering potential.

Alberta Blue Cross currently serves more than 1.8 million Albertans, making it the largest health benefits provider in the province. This is the third time that the not-for-profit organization has been recognized as a corporate culture leader in Canada. It has also attained Caring Company certification for 2022 through Imagine Canada, as well as a top 75 Alberta employer ranking for the 14th consecutive year.

“Excellence doesn't simply happen with words, but with the actions with which we treat each other, our employees and our customers,” says Mark Razzolini, vice-president, people, wellness and innovation.

That visible and transformative leadership — driven by an overwhelming commitment to protect the health and safety of team members, while providing a high-level of support for customers — was never more necessary than during the past couple of years.

“While the pandemic presented challenges, it also provided an opportunity to connect with our team, customers and communities at a level of humanity and compassion like never before,” says Mark Komlenic, president and chief executive officer.

During the initial stage of COVID-19, some 98 per cent of the company's employees moved to at-home work. Alberta Blue Cross was there, ensuring everyone had the right tools for their job, including equipment, ergonomic chairs and supports to help make it easier to adapt to a new working environment.

With a situation that changed daily, and no playbook for what everyone was experiencing, being highly transparent ensured everyone understood what was



Alberta Blue Cross team members (including Big Blue) and members of the local Indigenous community supporting the 2021 World Triathlon Championship Finals that were held in Edmonton. VIVID RIBBON INC. PHOTOGRAPH

happening while feeling supported. Through bi-weekly town halls, virtual social events and weekly wellness walks, team members found creative ways to stay engaged and connected, which helped maintain and strengthen the culture.

The changing situation inspired Alberta Blue Cross to accelerate its workplace transformation to support the future of work. This meant shifting to a more mobile workforce and encouraging broader collaboration and connection. The enhanced focus on flexibility helped to enrich the culture, and it has inspired employees to achieve new levels of growth while supporting individual work-life commitments.

Knowing everyone was working together allowed Alberta Blue Cross to pivot quickly. “Through it all, we didn't miss a beat. Despite the uncertainty around us, our customer experience remained stellar and we achieved our highest engagement scores ever. The culture we built really paid off, and we are extremely proud of our collective achievements,” Razzolini says.

Compassion played a key role as the organization took steps to ensure team members remained connected in the new hybrid work reality. This included providing

leaders with the tools and supports needed to guide teams through the transformation. The commitment to diversity and inclusion was also strengthened through implementation of a new learning program.

That deep level of compassion extends beyond the workplace to Alberta Blue Cross customers. With some benefits unavailable due to COVID restrictions, premiums were reduced to reflect the evolving situation with no increases during 2020. “How we react during the tough times speaks volumes about a business,” says Razzolini. “The pandemic has been difficult for us all, with fears of job loss, a changing provincial economy, and an increase in vulnerable people. We want to do our part to ensure customers feel safe, secure and supported.”

In 2020, the organization launched a social purpose strategy under the Blue For Life vision. The purpose is to empower people to live their best life. This new corporate social responsibility strategy helps guide the selection of partnerships, programs and people that align with Alberta Blue Cross culture, thereby strengthening the reach and value of giving back.

In 2021 alone, Alberta Blue Cross maintained

more than 50 sponsorships and partnerships to deepen engagement and facilitate interaction with individuals and communities across Alberta.

During COVID an additional \$500,000 commitment to communities, through the Alberta Blue Cross community foundation, helped address the needs of the most vulnerable through food security, mental health resources, senior care and the support of grassroots initiatives in isolated and rural communities. The Text4Hope program, in particular, provided mental health support through text outreach and positive push messaging.

A continued commitment to the health and wellness of Albertans saw the addition of two new learning initiatives through Balance, an interactive online program for customers: Taking care of your mental health; and managing financial health in challenging times.

Despite a year of financial and personal uncertainty, the Alberta Blue Cross team contributed the largest donation in its history during the United Way campaign. And, through the employee-led Hearts of Blue charity, more than \$40,000 was contributed to charities across the province along with

hundreds of volunteer hours by employees. Alberta Blue Cross team members also support Canadian Blood Services through the Partners For Life program as well as support multiple charities through employee-led cycling and rowing teams.

Without a caring, committed and connected team, none of this would have been possible, notes Razzolini.

Attracting this level of talent requires a strong reputation. In addition to the aforementioned accolades, Blue Cross has been named nationally as the most trusted brand in health insurance in Canada, and one of the top 100 brands in the country. Razzolini believes this is directly attributable to a strong set of values, increased connection with employees, transparent communication and the ability to learn and adapt during both the good and the tough times.

Along with reputation, a meaningful approach to fit is key at the outset, along with reasons for people to stay.

Talent management is supported by a vision for empowering the potential of each person that becomes part of the Alberta Blue Cross family. Every employee has access to programs designed to help them grow, and a new succession management program helps

to identify strengths and opportunities. From this, employees are encouraged to develop personal success plans, which help to direct coaching and mentoring programs.

While it is can be challenging to recruit for roles that require specific skill sets, a comprehensive hiring process paired with the transition to a hybrid working environment is helping to address the issue. A pilot project is bringing new team members on board virtually if necessary — from outside of the province for hard-to-recruit skill sets. This level of flexibility and determination demonstrates a commitment to bring forward the best possible talent to serve the people of Alberta.

Its unique culture, focused talent management practices, and a strong response to the pandemic have supported Alberta Blue Cross in achieving high customer and employee satisfaction, as well as extremely low turnover. “We are a growing company with a great reputation and a lot to offer individuals in their professional and personal lives. The pandemic has further highlighted the value of our organization and why building a career here is such a good choice,” notes Razzolini.

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“OUR GOAL IS FOR PEOPLE TO CHOOSE TO WORK WITH MEDAVIE AND WANT TO STAY BECAUSE WE OFFER A CAREER WITH A MEANINGFUL PURPOSE IN AN EXEMPLARY, FLEXIBLE ENVIRONMENT. THIS KIND OF RELATIONSHIP ALSO BRINGS A BETTER OUTCOME FOR THE PEOPLE WE SERVE. SIMPLY PUT, A BETTER EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE PROVIDES A BETTER CUSTOMER OR PATIENT EXPERIENCE. – BERNARD LORD, CEO, MEDAVIE

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# A CULTURE OF CARING

MEDAVIE

**KATHRYN BOOTHBY**  
Postmedia Content Works

Medavie has heart. A whole lot of it. For more than 75 years, the Medavie team of over 7,200 professionals across nine provinces has been united by a mission to improve the wellbeing of Canadians. More than simply a poster on the wall, that mission represents the purpose of the organization.

Thousands of workers begin each day with the goal of making a difference in the lives of Canadians and their communities, guided by shared values of being caring, accountable, responsive, innovative and community-minded. It is this fuel that drives the Medavie culture, which has never been more powerful than it is today. It has also earned Medavie honours in the 2021 Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures Broader Public Sector category.

A talented and engaged workforce is a cornerstone of Medavie's success. With the challenges presented by the pandemic, the organization revisited ways to ensure employees across the country stayed connected, engaged and protected — whether they be paramedics, nurses and other health professionals on the front lines or disability case managers, data analysts, customer service representatives and dispatchers who care for Canadians and their communities in other ways.

Early on, Medavie invested in additional mental health resources to support employees through this difficult time. The organization also offered employee webinars on mental health, resilience and techniques to move through uncertainty and burnout, and increased access to Medavie's Employee and Family Assistance Program.

“Since the onset of the pandemic, we established core principles to guide our actions and decisions,” says CEO Bernard Lord. “These included keeping everyone safe by ensuring the mental and physical wellbeing of our employees, patients and plan members, providing services to fulfill our mission, avoiding layoffs of permanent staff, supporting our communities, and preparing for the recovery phase.”

Medavie's level of increased support went beyond the pandemic — appreciating that it can improve the overall employee experience, help retain talent, provide additional incentives for others to join the organization, and strengthen culture.

“Our goal is for people to



choose to work with Medavie and want to stay because we offer a career with a meaningful purpose in an exemplary, flexible environment. This kind of relationship also brings a better outcome for the people we serve. Simply put, a better employee experience provides a better customer or patient experience,” says Lord.

To that end, in 2021, Medavie launched an inclusive wellbeing and recognition program named Inspire, which is built on four pillars: mental, social, financial and physical wellbeing.

Inspire enables employees to experience the benefits of better health and unite with their fellow employees in a virtual format similar to social networking platforms. In doing so, Inspire helps to build relationships between colleagues and leaders, which are foundational to Medavie's success.

Medavie also provides comprehensive benefits that focus on health prevention and are largely employer paid. Coverage includes reimbursement for digital and mental health services, as well as individual health spending and personal wellness accounts to give employees more choice and control over how they contribute to their own health.

To help employees advance in their careers, Medavie has a wide range of initiatives to support professional and personal development, including leadership and mentorship programs.

In addition, as part of a strong commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), both inside and



Medavie CEO Bernard Lord in top photo with employees (taken pre-pandemic), and Island EMS (Prince Edward Island's Emergency Medical Service) above photo. MEDAVIE PHOTOGRAPHS

outside of the organization, Medavie recently added inclusive benefits. Hormone replacement therapy and gender affirmation coverage are now available to support members in their gender transition.

“Diversity, equity and inclusion is about ensuring we have an inclusive culture that celebrates, respects and reflects the diversity of the people we employ and serve. We recognize that varied perspectives fuel the collaboration, innovation and excellence that is central to our mission,” says Lord. “Our DEI program is multi-faceted with practical actions and measures established to ensure our employees and broader communities feel welcomed and valued at all times.”

The pandemic emphasized the need for increased communication and, with it, came new tools to do so broadly, openly and effectively in all areas of the business. Whether through webinars, town halls, pulse surveys or the introduction of a new and improved intranet portal, employees and leadership have the tools they need to engage, improve knowledge and productivity, and share Medavie culture and values.

The past two years have helped raise the bar even further in terms of continuously improving the corporate culture at Medavie, says Lord. “It has accelerated our thinking and opened our eyes to new dimensions. We are now looking at many different parts of the organization to

determine not only where but when people work, how much they work, and how we can be more flexible. Engaging employees and asking what they envision is one of the best ways to do just that.”

Additional steps such as increased flexibility around alternative working arrangements — including various remote work options — are performing well for both employees and Medavie.

The pandemic also underscored the need to help the most vulnerable and at-risk communities. In addition to the many organizations supported each year through charitable giving, Medavie committed \$5 million toward community COVID-19 relief and recovery efforts, with a specific focus on food

insecurity and youth mental health.

The world is changing quickly and talented individuals have choices, Lord acknowledges. “Our people will not stay with us if we don't make it worth their time. We must continue to listen and adapt to people's interests and needs. The future means more improvement, more action, more recognition, and a continuation along the path of excellence.”

Medavie is a national health solutions partner that integrates benefits management, health management, and health care delivery. As a not-for-profit organization, Medavie oversees Medavie Blue Cross and Medavie Health Services. Medavie Blue Cross is an all-in-one provider of health, dental, travel, life and disability benefits. The organization also administers federal and provincial government-sponsored health programs. Medavie Health Services provides primary health care solutions and is Canada's largest contracted provider of emergency management services.

Medavie proudly invests in communities to help address some of Canada's most pressing health care challenges.

Its outstanding culture has earned Medavie and its divisions multiple awards, including Canada's Most Admired Corporate Culture Awards and a lasting place in the Award's Hall of Fame. It is also one of Canada's Top 100 Employers; an Imagine Canada Caring Company; and Canada's Life & Health Insurer of the Year for 2021.

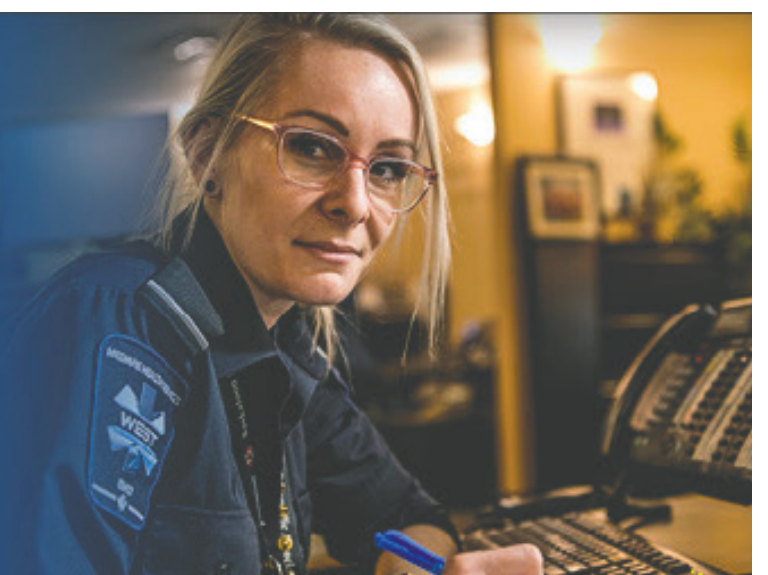
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“ WITHIN THE LAST TWO YEARS WE HAVE BEEN ENGAGING THE TEAM IN CREATIVE WAYS VIRTUALLY, WE’VE EXPANDED OUR TALENT POOL ACROSS CANADA, AND WE CONTINUED TO PUT EMPLOYEES’ HEALTH AND WELLNESS AT THE FOREFRONT OF ALL DECISIONS WE MAKE.

– PETROULA TSIRIBIS, VP, PEOPLE SUCCESS, FINANCEIT

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# ADAPTING TO A CHANGING WORLD, ONE EMPLOYEE AT A TIME

FINANCEIT

DENISE DEVEAU  
Postmedia Content Works

When CEO Michael Garrity founded Financeit in 2010, corporate culture wasn’t something he had to think about for the first few years. “In the beginning, maintaining the culture was easy. We were 12 people working in a single-room office where we had a shared purpose. We all knew what had to get done and the path we were following. You only had to look around the room to see the passion and energy of the people there.”

Today Financeit, a winner in the Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Cultures Growth category, is a rapidly growing fintech and enterprise services company with 250 employees and counting. Its point-of-sale financing platform helps businesses of any size close more sales by offering customers affordable monthly payment options for their next big home improvement, vehicle or retail purchase. Customers include some of the largest home improvement and retail organizations in the United States and Canada. For larger enterprise businesses, Financeit also delivers an integrated suite of home improvement solutions known as Centah.

Throughout its growth, Financeit has worked to instill a corporate culture that is diverse, dynamic, open and collaborative. “Our environment is small enough that our employees feel that they can make an impact within the company, and large enough to make an impact in the market,” says Garrity.

He says the original tight-knit group began to look at formalizing the culture in its third year of business. “By then we were lucky enough to attract new people and new investors. The company was scaling every month, which translated into a bigger office. That’s when we were introduced to walls for the first time. At that point we knew we had to evolve our culture to reflect our growth.”

That was a significant turning point for Financeit’s approach to culture, he says. “The question was, how do you syndicate and memorialize what your culture actually is when we now have people coming in who are not reporting directly to me,” says Garrity. “How do they know who we are and what we stand for? How do we know we are getting the right people on staff? We knew we had to write it down. We had to define the mission we had, a vision of



Creating and maintaining a dynamic, collaborative corporate culture has helped Financeit continue its impressive growth pattern. FINANCEIT PHOTOGRAPH

where we wanted to go, and the values by which we are going to make decisions and hold ourselves accountable.”

A key to achieving that clarity was drawing on the input from its employees. With the help of a consultant, they put a construct in place and asked every person on staff their thoughts on what the company was, where it was going, and what values it represented. “The framework we developed came from the bottom up,” he says. “It was really encouraging to see there was a lot of alignment.”

The mission established by their input is ‘to simplify complex sales transactions for businesses and their customers’; the vision statement, ‘better commerce for better living’; and the core values excellence, drive, fairness, trust, personality and service.

The next step was entrenching that cultural DNA in its recruitment efforts. “We hire people based on those values. If they don’t buy into our culture, they’re not buying into the company,” says Garrity.

Employee input has not stopped there. They have also played a significant role in championing different corporate culture efforts, such as forming the diversity, inclusion and belonging

committee that came out of the early days of the Black Lives Matter movement. “We make sure that all our committees are run by the front-line folks who love what they do,” says Garrity. “Those committees help us do better at living our values.”

The pandemic has put the culture to the test as the company continued to grow, says Petroula Tsiribis, VP, people success. “Within the last two years we have been engaging the team in creative ways virtually, we’ve expanded our talent pool across Canada, and we continued to put employees’ health and wellness at the forefront of all decisions we made.”

They were fortunate to have done two years of business continuity planning prior to the pandemic, she adds. “We were prepared to go remote when we had to. It was a quick transition to set up everyone for success to be able to work from home — our IT and people success teams were instrumental to this.”

Since the pandemic Financeit has hired over 140 new employees. “With a virtual workforce, we were able to change the way we hired around mid-2020,” Tsiribis says. “We had the opportunity to tap into a widened talent pool and hire great staff

out West and in Eastern Canada.” As part of all the hiring, the team had to evolve their onboarding program, she adds. “We made sure to continue to deliver a strong onboarding experience, making time to ensure new employees meet other staff, and hosting fireside chats with founding members.”

Maintaining their familiar office culture in the virtual world has been a top priority, she notes. “We worked on introducing new approaches to engage team members. Everybody was exhausted from being stuck at home for month after month, but we continued to find ways to engage the team virtually.”

Among the many initiatives they introduced, Financeit improved their employee and family assistance program, adding benefits such as virtual counselling and virtual access to medical professionals. They also provided a work-from-home allowance to support employees in working productively at home.

Employees were invited to join virtual workouts, yoga and meditation sessions, trivia and theme nights, team lunches, family virtual events, and a virtual kitchen where they can log in any time to have a casual visit with their peers and meet new staff in breakout rooms.

In 2021 Financeit introduced a Wellness Day, where every employee could take a day off of their choosing and then share what they did. “It was great to see what everyone across the company was able to do with their day, whether it was sharing activities like mountain climbing, hiking, biking, yoga, cooking, or even a family day in the park. It was nice to see them so engaged and cheering on their colleagues for sharing their experiences,” says Tsiribis.

All these measures and initiatives have had positive results in terms of employee satisfaction. “We saw an increase in our employee engagement scores from 84 per cent to 87 per cent between 2020 and 2021 despite having faced all sorts of uncertainty in the midst of the pandemic,” says Tsiribis. “We have all faced challenges, but we managed to maintain a great work environment while being forced by circumstances into a transition towards remote work.”

In 2022, the company is meeting the evolving needs of its employees with the opening of its new offices at the Well in Toronto’s King West area.

“We are designing our office space keeping our culture in mind and ensuring we bring elements of our

first home office over,” says Garrity.

Like many organizations, Financeit is adapting to a hybrid model to be flexible with their employees, says Tsiribis. “We are ensuring the right technology is in place in the new office to make meetings as efficient and inclusive as possible, no matter where you’re located. We are in the midst of planning our hybrid policies and procedures, and we plan to set up a hybrid task force committee to help us make sure it’s a success.”

As the company continues to expand at a rate of 40 per cent a year, Garrity says they revisit their mission, vision and values proposition every year to see if any adjustments are needed. “That kind of expansion means your framework really needs to be working well and owned by every hire across the organization. Everyone needs to feel committed to ensure we stay consistent with who we are and what we want to be. As executives, we are not the owners but the custodians who are accountable for making sure it’s operating as it should.”

“Corporate culture is still something we are figuring out daily,” he adds. “It’s evolution for us and we believe that’s the way it’s supposed to be.”

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# SERVING UP A WINNING CULTURE

## COMPASS GROUP CANADA

**KATHRYN BOOTHBY**  
Postmedia Content Works

People, performance and purpose. These are the pillars on which Compass Group Canada has built a winning culture and successful business.

Compass Group Canada is a leading food services and support provider. Its more than 14,000 dedicated associates support hospitals and long-term care facilities, retirement homes, schools, colleges and universities, sports and leisure centres, corrections facilities, offshore oil rigs and remote mining camps.

The organization also works with brand-name franchises within those facilities, including Tim Hortons, Starbucks, Subway and Pizza Pizza. It is a winner in the Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures Enterprise category.

“We are in every part of Canadian society, from coast to coast to coast,” says Saajid Khan, CEO of Compass Group Canada and ESS North America. “You will likely have met a member of our team somewhere in your travels and had a Compass meal without even realizing it.”

The secret sauce for success across such broad-ranging sectors and institutions lies in bringing the Compass team culture together with that of the client, and finding enough commonalities to create a strong, coalescing environment, notes Khan.

That strength and cohesion was never more vital than over the past two years, with a significant number of Compass associates playing a critical role on the front lines, against a backdrop of field kitchens and temporary field hospitals.

“With so many pandemic protocols in place and changes happening daily, our people really stepped up to the task to ensure meals were put in front of those in need and to ensure proper cleaning and sanitation at all times,” notes Khan. “To add to the challenge, our teams were often affected by events outside the pandemic, such as forest fires across Canada and flooding in British Columbia. Without hesitation our teams were jumping in to support their communities as much as possible through food donations and support of camp establishment, for example.”

During good times and those of crisis, dedication and compassion are always overlaid with an absolute obsession with safety and recognition.

“Recognition doesn't simply mean an email or cash



Compass Group Canada associates performing a variety of roles across the company. COMPASS GROUP CANADA IMAGES

token. It means highlighting the actions of individuals or teams that have benefitted the consumer and the company — those who are setting the example of how a people-first company should operate,” Khan says.

In terms of associate safety, Compass upped the ante with extensive vaccination education, expert videos from medical professionals, and by initiating paid national pandemic sick days. Safety materials were translated into six additional languages to ensure they were available in a form that was comfortable to the maximum number of associates. A COVID critical incident team of senior managers was developed to meet daily to address new protocols, provide updated information, and develop go-forward strategies.

The associate-centric approach at Compass has been a journey that began in 2018 with the development of four

leadership commitments: We Care. We Share. We Dream. We Deliver. Whether leadership is defined by job title or exemplified in leading by example, these commitments are the key ingredients that have shaped a culture of caring, compassion and resilience at the company.

“These commitments are a promise of how we define ourselves as ambassadors for the organization from leadership to frontline associate,” explains Khan. “It cascades into examples of what we will and will not accept in terms of behaviour, culture and values. Every conversation is an opportunity to insert a culture-related message. This constant drive to take our values and make them real, with empirical evidence of why they are important, is why we have achieved such success.”

The launch of Compass FIRST has made a significant

contribution to the enrichment of the organization's culture. The initiative, launched during COVID, focuses on bringing associates back to work through redeployment into new facilities or open salaried positions. To date, the Compass FIRST program has returned hundreds of former associates to active roles within the company.

“Like many, we had to make some very painful decisions during the pandemic as we watched customers close down and roles for our associates disappear. We made an ironclad commitment at that time to look at every future vacancy within the organization and first try to fill it with someone who had lost their position in the company as a result of COVID. We also committed to supporting them and training them should their new role require it,” explains Khan.

“We want to bring val-

ued employees back into the fold. Whether a person had formerly worked in one of our factories or behind the scenes, we know they already have what it takes to be a part of our winning formula — wherever they are redeployed.”

Additional commitments have helped realize benefits for Compass team members and surrounding communities, including:

- Company-wide, there is tremendous support for associate mental health, including their mental health and wellness site, along with a mental wellness bonus program and health benefits expansion, helping associates to focus on their personal wellness.

- Recognition programs that celebrate great associates, along with in-the-moment bonuses and social channel recognition to celebrate frontline heroes throughout the pandemic.
- Community and environ-

ment support through initiatives such as the Toronto Police Services Engage416 program and a partnership with the Jamaal Magloire Foundation to donate iPads and school supplies to help students prepare to return to school.

When it comes to equity, diversity, & inclusion (EDI), Compass continues to press forward. It begins with a promise to listen, learn and act. This promise is delivered in association with the company's diversity and inclusion action councils, responsible for supporting the diversity team with planning associate initiatives, such as the Black History Month leadership panel, fireside chats with Indigenous leaders and a celebration of diversity on social channels.

“Given our size as a company, and the broad audiences we serve, equity, diversity and inclusion are vital,” says Khan. “We work hard to ensure it is embedded into every aspect of our organization and build programs and structures that reinforce our commitment.”

The ecosystem of culture-building tools that are brought to bear at Compass speak to a strong will and desire for associates to be engaged, happy and willing to step up for customers. “Our top-tier recognition programs are a big part of that. It is important that everyone knows they have the opportunity to grow here, both in terms of their job and as a person,” Khan notes.

As for the future, Khan admits to being in uncharted waters as a slow re-awakening occurs post-pandemic and in how food, beverage and safety will evolve for the longer-term. “There is still a great deal of uncertainty, so rather than trying to address all eventualities we are working hard to future-proof our culture. We want to provide reassurances to those who may have left the hospitality industry and encourage them to return to the pool. We must acknowledge what they have gone through and offer an aspirational view of how they can be part of our ongoing success. That begins and ends with a great culture.”

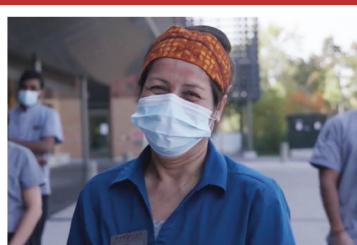
For Compass to have been named one of Canada's leaders in corporate culture is an honour of which Khan is incredibly proud. “This recognition is a testament to our associates, who embody our values and vision. We know that culture isn't just a program or department. It is something we see our associates bring with them to work each day — with their passion for food and service and genuine enthusiasm to share great experiences with our guests — and I have an immense amount of gratitude to work alongside such special people.”

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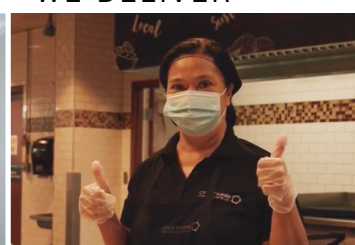
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We work with leaders from entrepreneurial-minded, high-growth organizations who see culture as their single greatest asset.

- Our best-in-class **executive search practice** focuses on transformational recruiting – recruiting for fit with a focus on sustainable organizational and cultural growth, ensuring you have the right leaders in place to help take your organization and your culture to the next level.
- The **Waterstone Culture Institute** enables CEOs to drive performance through culture transformation, using programs and tools (including the *Building High Performance Teams and Cultures* leadership and development program, the Waterstone ENGAGE culture measurement and engagement advisory program, and Waterstone's Culturepreneur Operating System, a simple, proven, and measurable approach to driving performance through culture transformation) that focus on the behaviours and practices proven to make the biggest difference to leadership, team, and organizational success.

Let Waterstone Human Capital help you put culture at the centre of strategy and drive high performance within your organization. Email [info@waterstonehc.com](mailto:info@waterstonehc.com) to find out more.

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