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Hometown culture makes all the difference for CPA

Megg Mueller, 7/26/2010

When you grow up in a small city such as Reno, attend college there, start your career and family in that town and then spend the next 26 years working in that same town, it's safe to say you know the culture of the town pretty well.

Culture is big with Michael Klaich. As one of the shareholders at Muckel Anderson CPAs, Klaich has been instrumental in creating a culture that's a little different than many accounting firms. It's a culture of fun and respect, one that looks toward the future but always with its eye on providing clients with the best experience. The firm has even come up with a motto that embodies that culture: "We love accounting so you don't have to."

Klaich grew up in Reno, one of four sons. His parents were from McGill, and Reno is deep with Klaich family cousins, aunts, uncles and more. The family roots run deep with Michael Klaich, as does his love for the area. An avid chukkar hunter, Klaich loves looking for rocks and arrowheads while walking the hills of Nevada.

"I'm always coming back with pockets full of rocks," he says, laughing. "I have a knack for finding stuff."

One of the things Klaich has been very successful at finding is the right recruits for Muckel Anderson. When he joined the firm 13 years ago, he was asked to share some of the methods that had been employed at his previous employer, which was a large firm centrally managed out of Chicago. Muckel Anderson was the creation of two small firms that merged, and the company didn't recruit or look much too much toward the future. Klaich helped change that thinking.

"We started recruiting younger people," he says. "We've made some recruiting mistakes; we've gone after the smartest person, and it doesn't work out. But sometimes, the person with the worst interview turned out to be the best."

Klaich says the firm looks first at recruits' interpersonal skills, and then their college grades. They have to fit in with the firm's culture, he says, and that includes being able to treat clients the right way. "Accounting is really a people business. And it's really about how you deliver the service," Klaich says of Muckel Anderson. "Our clients look at working with us as something fun. They enjoy us. We try to keep it light but always provide a quality service. It's what sets us apart."

Having happy, satisfied employees is important to Klaich. The company sponsors employee days where the office heads up to the beach, or goes to an Aces ballgame together. They also have perks and incentives for employees such as season tickets to the Aces, for which employees can sign up. (The partners don't partake; this is just for employees). There's also an idea program where employees can submit thoughts on ways to improve the firm or client services and ideas that get used result in recognition for that employee. And then there's the MOFIA, or "Masters of Fun in Accounting" group of employees that determines where the staff outings will be. All of these programs have remained during the down economy, plus staff still receives annual raises. Keeping the culture intact in the face of less business was an easy choice for Klaich.

"Things aren't great. Our clients are not doing as well," he says. "But we just made a decision as a partnership that it's just too hard to build a culture and then have it fall apart because of money."

But it's not just fun and games at Muckel Anderson, either, Klaich says. The company actively recruits from the University of Nevada, Reno, and it's always understood that the expectation is for new accountants to attain their CPA credentials. In fact, in a firm of 17 accountants, 10 of are CPAs. Training is encouraged for all employees, whether they're recognized as a QuickBooks ProAdvisor or a Certified Financial Planner.

UNR, Klaich's alma mater, plays a big role in his life outside the office. He's served as Alumni Association president, and still is active on many boards. Plus, his family buys season passes to all sporting events. Spending time with his wife Patrice, daughter Lauren and son Garrett top the list of all activities. Lauren will attend Reno High as a freshman this year, following in both her parent's footsteps. Klaich says entertaining and feeding his daughter's many friends is a new adventure, but it's just one more for the man who hopes one day to find a meteorite while out hiking the Nevada hills.

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BNI

8/4/2010
Mimi's Cafe'
5090 Kietzke Lane
Reno, NV

Sierra Reno BNI

8/4/2010
Meadow Wood Courtyard
Super 8
5851 South Virginia St.
Reno, NV

Workers'

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"I found a cannonball once, in Midas. That was pretty cool. But I've always wanted to find a meteorite. Not sure why. Well, I had a friend who found one and sold it for \$50,000 ... maybe that's why," he says with a grin.

Deep-rooted CPA


Who: Michael Klaich, Shareholder, CPA/PFS, CEBS, CFP at Muckel Anderson CPAs

Family: Wife Patrice; daughter Lauren; son Garrett. About being involved at UNR: "When I first got out of school, I didn't want anything to do with it. But the more I got involved, the more I wanted to be involved."

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