“People here know my kids; they see them grow up; they see them at the office with me or participating in company events. I would 100 percent encourage my kids to come into this company.” These are the words of Juan Garcia, the Chief Estimator in PCL Construction’s Orlando office. As an employee-owner for 15 years, this department head thinks PCL has the “special sauce” that makes for a great work environment.

But don’t just take his word for it. Consider that since 2005, PCL has been consistently named to Fortune magazine’s prestigious “100 Best Companies to Work For” list and has been named one of the “100 Best Workplaces for Millennials.” Locally, it has been named to the “Top 100 Companies” by the Orlando Sentinel and to the “Best Places to Work” list created by the Orlando Business Journal.

As the largest contracting organization in Canada and the eighth largest in the United States, the company attributes much of its success to the fact that it is 100 percent employee-owned. “This is my company,” says Garcia. “Employee ownership is huge. It’s important to us all and makes for a dynamic culture. Employees take pride in their work and want to do their best to represent PCL well.”
Sharon Puchein, Human Resources and Professional Development Manager for the Orlando office, agrees. “Employee ownership drives our culture,” says Puchein. “Teamwork is not just a word. We have a stake in our success so we work very hard and we see good returns on hard work.”

Doug Baggett, PCL’s Orlando division Manager for Special Projects, sees the company from a different perspective. He previously ran his own general contracting firm, so he understands firsthand the challenges of running a business. “We operate in an industry of unknowns,” he says. “PCL is the best ever in taking a volatile marketplace and creating predictable results. Our management team’s leaders are absolute experts at planning ahead to create a good, stable environment. I’ve seen the wild swings in the marketplace and in economic conditions. With PCL, it feels like you’re on a big steady ship.”

**HUMANITY AT ITS BEST**

While many companies talk about creating a family atmosphere in the workplace, PCL strives to walk the talk. “Everybody cares,” says Garcia. “If someone here gets hurt, it’s my family that got hurt.”

He recalls once, when an employee’s child had leukemia, the employees created a GoFundMe campaign to help the family financially, and participated in the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society’s Light the Night Walk, which raises money to ensure access to the best treatments for blood cancer patients.

Puchein recounts another experience when an employee gave birth to a child just 24 weeks into the pregnancy. The PCL employees immediately took action, consistently and compassionately spending time with the family, both in the hospital and at home, and proactively seeking out ways to support them.

“You can’t talk about PCL without using the word ‘family,’” concurs Puchein. “All your closest friends are here. Everyone hangs out together after work.”

**NO ‘SUBCONTRACTORS’ HERE**

PCL staff members take the family concept so seriously that they extend it to their teaming partners. “We don’t call them ‘subcontractors,’” says Garcia, alluding to the idea that the word can potentially denote subservience.
"We call them sub-trade partners. We honestly appreciate them and understand that they are extremely important to our success." The PCL team goes out of its way to build relationships within its network, which includes thousands of local sub-trade partners, and to acknowledge the value the subs bring to the greater team. The Orlando division pulls out all the stops once each year with a huge appreciation event that includes golf, gifts, raffles and much more. "We know it’s important to invest in the people who work with us," he adds.

This same folksy “flippin’ burgers in the back yard” mentality extends to clients as well. PCL’s Orlando division serves many large development clients, including every entertainment mega-firm in Central Florida. Much of the theme park work is confidential, but, according to Garcia, it is extremely “challenging and fun.”

Many clients, such as these entertainment firms, have depended on PCL for repeat projects over the past 25 years. This longevity is fostered through a relationship task force model in which engineers, estimators and employees throughout the company partner to foster meaningful, lasting client connections. This approach has helped lead to significant work for the Orlando division up and down the entire U.S. east coast.

PCL has also differentiated itself through its Special Projects division, a concept the firm has invested in since 1985. "We don’t hunt for whales," explains Baggett. "It’s a stand-alone business unit that chases work in the $10 to $12 million and under range. We combine the small local business concept with the expertise and financial stability of a large company. It allows us to stay in front of clients and not turn away their small jobs. It also allows us to consider new clients; to dip our toes in and see if a client is a good match.”

REACHING IN TO REACH OUT
PCL’s Orlando team is incredibly active in the local community, often performing philanthropic activities both on and off company time. PCL’ers volunteer over 3,500 hours to local charities annually, in addition to over $300,000 in...
Cash and in-kind donations gifted by the company and employees. Garcia said he couldn't list all the organizations because there are just too many, yet he quickly recited an impressive list: United Way, Habitat for Humanity's Home Builders Blitz and Women Build events, Homes for Heroes, Junior Achievement, and March of Dimes. Puchein adds to the list with her own favorites: Edgewood Children’s Ranch and Second Harvest Food Bank. She explains that each PCL office has autonomy to serve their communities as they see fit. “We try to focus on causes that are important to our employees and clients,” she adds.

TRUST & RESPECT: THE SPICE IN THE SECRET SAUCE

To understand the bottom line of the PCL culture, Puchein explains it well: “Communication is honest, forthright, and consistent. Our employees know what’s going on. Every week we see all the bids we’re working on. Twice a year, PCL’s senior executives visit each district and everyone comes and learns and asks questions. These sessions are very transparent; we’re upfront and very open.”

Such trust extends to every individual. For example, there is no sick time policy. “If you’re ill, you’re ill,” Puchein says. “Just go get better.” And if an employee is having a hard time, she says PCL’s response is, “Take care of what you need to take care of; do what you need to do without worrying about job or pay loss.”

Puchein says she can’t imagine a better place to work. She ended her comments emphatically with, “I pinch myself some days.”

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