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Best Places to Work in the Bay Area

NO. 3 — MEDIUM-SIZED COMPANIES

Heffernan: Friendliness promoted at every level

BY NIK BONOVICH

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Heffernan Insurance Brokers is all about having a good time.

“Our mission statement is, ‘Answer the phone and have fun,’” said Dana Schiller, account manager. “(CEO) Mike Heffernan honestly believes that. He doesn’t care what you wear to work. If you want to wear sweats and be productive, that’s great; if you want to wear a suit and be productive, that’s great, too.”

A visit to company headquarters in Walnut Creek makes it obvious employees don’t wear sweats. The staff dresses casually but presentably; ready to greet visitors with a smile. Employees are encouraged to bring family members and pets to the office. And it’s not uncommon for family members to work alongside each other.

HEFFERNAN INSURANCE BROKERS

CEO: Mike Heffernan.

HQ: Walnut Creek.

Bay Area

employees: 232.

Score: 93.75.

“My sister loves working here, my dad loves working here. I could tell from temping here it was a very good office,” said Mahoney, now a full-time employee.

It’s this casual, open atmosphere coupled with flexible schedules and other perks that makes Heffernan a productive, nurturing workplace.

Take Jen Mahoney, for example.

“My sister loves working here, my dad loves working here. I could tell from temping here it was a very good office,” said Mahoney, now a full-time employee.



STEPHANIE SECREST

“I couldn’t enjoy working if the people working for me didn’t,” says Heffernan (center), with Robin Newman (left), COO, and Maria Warlich, human resources.

Employees at Heffernan are encouraged to be social and to make friends in order to create a happy and positive work environment — one where employees want to spend their time and be productive.

“I’m at work more than I am at home and I am certainly here more in my waking hours,” said LuAnn Watkins, account manager. “I need to be happy.”

Besides being a fun place to work, Heffernan offers its employees a flexible work schedule with every other Friday off and on-site yoga. It matches employees’ donations to their charities of choice, gives time off for volunteer work and organizes

shopping trips in which employees are given a \$100 dollar gift certificate and then lunch to show off their purchases.

New employees are quickly brought into the Heffernan family.

“People could have been quiet when they started here, but they feel accepted here, they become social,” Schiller said. “It definitely brings out the good in people.”

To allow for a more social work environment Heffernan has an open-door policy, low cubicle walls and plenty of social events for each department, the branch and the entire company. This year all the employees are being flown to a resort in Arizona for a weekend.

The physical work environment is valued, too. Mike Heffernan, president and CEO, said employees often requested a training and development center. In response,

the company created Heffernan Group University when it remodeled the headquarters in Walnut Creek last year.

As Heffernan grows, new ideas are being discussed. Stephanie Worden, commercial lines manager, said it would be nice to have a gym, and Heffernan hopes his company will become a certified green business.

But at the end of the day, he is focused on one thing.

“I want to enjoy work,” Heffernan said. “I couldn’t enjoy working if the people working for me didn’t.”

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