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## Great Places To Work



A positive work environment keeps B&D Manufacturing employees dedicated to their jobs and the team.

Photo supplied.

# 1 B & D Manufacturing hails people power

By NICK STEWART  
*Northern Ontario Business*

As a company grows, it can become increasingly difficult to remain in tune with one's employees, which is why B & D Manufacturing maintains an ongoing effort to stay connected with its people.

"We do whatever we can to acknowledge the employees," says Andre Ruest, general manager. "I've always stressed that if it wasn't for the people that we have, we wouldn't be where we are today."

Founded in 1980 with just three people, the custom manufacturing industrial supply company now has 85 employees scattered across its three sites throughout the Sudbury region and additional research and design facilities in Powassan; more expansions are scheduled for the new year. As a result, Ruest has helped to institute a number of initiatives to remind the workers of their importance within the big picture.

One such effort includes the creation of an internal wellness committee to put in motion a variety of events and functions for the staff.

"We have monthly barbecues, which are very popular," he said. "We've had summer events, like a fishing tournament combined with a family weekend which has been going on for a number of years, and we have a number of extra functions where we include the employees' families, like Christmas parties and seasonal outings."

The employees have developed a closeness and some take it upon themselves to periodically organize fishing derbies, which B & D Manufacturing sponsors. This makes for a stronger and much more positive company, says Ruest. "It's just to create a close, family environment and to keep the workers' morale up and to have them creating this common bond," he says. "It's very important."

While this company-wide acknowledgment definitely helps to cement ties between workers, recognition can also come at an individual level. Shop supervisors keep an eye out for employees who have been putting forth a particularly strong effort, and try to see to it that they are rewarded accordingly.

"If they notice that some of the guys have been working a lot of hours, we'll give them a gift certificate and encourage them to take their wife out to dinner," says Ruest. "If they want to take a few hours or a day off, they can make up the time on other occasions. We're pretty flexible with that."

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- Andre Ruest, General Manager

Staff suggestions help to drive the company's various internal policies, which Ruest says helps in obtaining employee buy-in.

"Most of our decisions are made from listening to everyone on the floor, from our shop supervisors to other employees all the way up the line," he says.

Personal development is another strong element within B & D Manufacturing, which has a policy to provide its people with the training they require to achieve greater efficiency on the job. In-house apprenticeships are encouraged, and tuition will be covered should college education be required. This policy is applicable to nearly anyone, from long-time employees who are looking to upgrade their skills to newly-hired shipping and receiving clerks who might become interested in machinist training.

By expanding their knowledge base, employees not only benefit the company, but boost their potential for eventually moving

up the ladder, should they so choose. Many of the current managers and higher-level staff have come up through the organization from the ground level, says Ruest, who uses himself as an example. As an apprentice hired to operate the align-boring equipment, which launched the company, Ruest was one of the original three employees. Throughout the years, he moved up through various positions, including machinist, floor supervisor and production manager, to his current position of general manager, which he has held for 10 years.

"There's room for growth right through the organization," Ruest says.

This dedication to viewing workers as people and not a resource has earned the company a loyal employee base, with numerous individuals having been onboard for ten years or more. Turnover rates have been next to none, a fact, Ruest attributes to the company's positive work environment.

"As you get bigger, there are policies that have to be created because you're not as intimate with everything that's going on as when there were 10 to 30 employees."

"Overall, though, we are adamant about treating everyone as we were treated when we were only three people."

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**QUICK FACTS**  
B&D Manufacturing  
City: Greater Sudbury  
Founded: 1980  
General Manager: Andre Ruest  
No. of Employees: 85  
www.bdmfg.com