

Seeing Better Solutions



Photo by David Gibb | www.dgibbphoto.com

Norm Kester, President of Quantum Innovations, finds inspiration fishing the Rogue River near his office in Central Point, Oregon.

CENTRAL POINT, OR - After moving from Ohio to the Rogue Valley, Norm Kester started a company in his garage. That was 12 years ago. Now the veteran-owned ophthalmic coatings company has its corporate headquarters in Central Point, Oregon, and sells globally.

In 2013, Quantum Innovations was named one of the “100 Best Companies to Work for in Oregon” by Oregon Business Magazine. Their visionary corporate structure has at its heart a mission to serve others. By implementing that vision, Quantum is growing rapidly. And while Norm is running his business, he is often featured at Southern Oregon professional organizations where he is a leader inspiring the next generation of employees and business owners.

by Chris Cook

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“100 Best Companies
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- Oregon Business Magazine, 2013

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Quantum Innovations was named one of the "100 Best Companies to Work for in Oregon" in 2013 by Oregon Business Magazine. At Quantum, employees are treated like customers and given the freedom and knowledge to work effectively.

At Quantum the culture is defined by two principles—"Attitude of Servitude" and "Virtuous Cycles." These principles have promoted speedy growth. "The next three years will see us double in size. Our people and our culture make this possible," said Norm, Quantum's president.

Norm's understanding of coating theory, design and application—combined with his passion for helping people—has created a thriving company.

Quantum specializes in coating equipment and lab supplies for ophthalmic clients who produce AR (antireflective) and UV (ultraviolet) coatings for eye glasses. These coatings address high energy visible light and the effects of digital eye strain—something everyone can relate to. "Everything we do is made in America and most of it we try to do local, so we design all of our own parts. If we can't do it ourselves, we do our best to have it sourced locally."

According to Norm, the thing that makes Quantum Innovations so successful is the business culture he has created. "Our employees are empowered by our corporate structure. In a lattice structure, individual authority and credibility are based upon proven skill or a history of contribution rather than an assigned title. Leadership evolves based on knowledge, skill, experience or capability. Each person in the lattice interacts directly with every other person; teams, departments and groups formulate their own plans of action rather than having them dictated to them. Each employee self-commits to projects or responsibilities and sets their daily priorities according to the overall priorities of the company. Additionally, our departments regularly engage one another through the use of 360 degree peer reviews. What we do is a lean process; lean manufacturing, and linear manufacturing."

Norm believes that Quantum's success is centered around two driving principles. Norm explains the first principle at Quantum: "An 'Attitude of Servitude' is the idea of putting others first and looking first to serve them. It's not getting hung up on titles or positions. It's asking: is this serving the customer or am I serving the guy/gal next to me? It's doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do."

The second principle, "Virtuous Cycles," is taking the "Attitude of Servitude" and applying it to the business model. Norm takes "Virtuous Cycles" seriously and puts it into action as a member of regional business groups. There, he works to advance local economic opportunities and provide students with skill development. He recently represented the manufacturing sector with a presentation at the 11th annual Southern Oregon Business Conference sponsored by Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development, Inc. (SOREDI). Additionally, Norm is serving as the chair of the Southern Oregon High Performance Enterprise Consortium (SOHPEC). He's giving back to the business community of Southern Oregon knowing that here in Southern Oregon, it does come back to him through fostering the next generation of employees, and building the business community that helps Quantum Innovations overcome hurdles.



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