

Making Edges Sharp



Photo by David Gibb | www.dgibbphoto.com

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Unhappiness living and doing business in Chicago was the impetus for a nationwide search for a place that had four seasons, a university and was not located too close to a major city. Fourth generation family owner and president, Matthew Bernard recounts how his great grandfather, grandfather, father and their wives made the move and started Darex in 1973.

"We have a lot of smart people in our company—200 in total—and they all are here because they love to live in Southern Oregon," Matthew explains. "And by making this a great place to work, we have been able to innovate and feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day."

by Chris Cook

Matthew Bernard, President
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Matthew says he looks for two things when recruiting a new employee—technical skills and people skills. He says that Darex is a down-to-Earth company and finds that most of the people who live in Southern Oregon also are down-to-earth so it's a good fit. They recruit locally and from nearby institutions Oregon State University, Oregon Tech and Rogue Community College.

"We have very low turnover," Matthew recounts. "That supports what we are trying to do—to create a sort of dynasty of very solid players."

Darex uses its mission and vision to create a solid team. Their team members are reminded of the company vision every time they glance at the sign on the shop floor:

LIVE OUR VALUES
LOVE AND RESPECT
HONESTY AND INTEGRITY
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
SIMPLIFICATION
ENJOY WHAT WE DO

Following that vision, Darex has grown to become the makers of the world's best-selling industrial drill sharpeners as well as full range of commercial and consumer sharpening products.

Darex® brands include Darex® industrial sharpeners, Drill Doctor® professionals, home shop drill bit and spade bit sharpeners, and Work Sharp® tool sharpeners.

Darex products are made with components from all over the world. "We buy product from Europe, China, Japan, Canada, Mexico and all over the US. We build it into our product and turn around and ship it back to the same areas," Matthew says. "Being here in Ashland has not been hard for us at all—in fact, it's helpful to be centrally located to Asia, Europe and major shipping ports in Oakland, Calif., and Portland, Ore. Plus we're right on the I-5 corridor and have an airport 20 minutes away."

The company headquarters also is centrally located to the activities beloved by its employees—skiing, mountain lakes, camping, backpacking, hunting, fishing. "I can go hiking right out my back door," Matthew exclaims. "And I can be at our family cabin on Lake of the Woods in less than an hour."

And don't forget the cultural attractions like the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Britt (music) Festivals. Great restaurants, galleries and shops support the tourism that the festivals bring to the area, and local residents are the beneficiaries.

"The world is small," Matthew says. "In this day and age, we can live where we want and do business on a global scale."



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Darex has been helping industry, professionals, and do-it-yourselfers stay sharp for almost 40 years.

THE SOUTHERN OREGON
EDGE

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