

“MERCEDES-BENZ CONSIDERS THIS TO BE ONE OF THE NICEST DEALERSHIPS IN THEIR GLOBAL NETWORK. WE ARE THE ONLY DEALERSHIP THAT HAS SUCCESSFULLY DEVELOPED A LIFESTYLE FACILITY THAT REDEFINES THE CONCEPT OF MODERN LUXURY. NOW WE HAVE BECOME A BENCHMARK FOR OTHER LUXURY BRAND DEALERSHIPS AROUND THE WORLD; MANY COME TO US TO LEARN HOW WE ARE DELIVERING THE LIFESTYLE EXPERIENCES CONSISTENTLY EVERY DAY — KEN SZEKELY



Mercedes-Benz Burlington owner Ken Szekely's dedication to providing a comfortable home for staff includes installation of an on-site spa, a movie theatre and a driving range.

Corporate culture driving force behind success

MERCEDES-BENZ BURLINGTON

There aren't many workplaces that have an award-winning on-site spa, a movie theatre, a driving range and a full-service café complete with freshly cooked meals prepared onsite daily. But that's just part of the corporate milieu that Ken Szekely has created for his Mercedes-Benz Burlington (MBB) operation in Burlington, Ont. He purchased the dealership eight years ago as part of the Quantum Automotive Group Inc., a winner in the 10 Best Corporate Culture's Growth and Small Cap division. A trendsetting award winning entrepreneur in other sectors, he says that while he didn't have extensive experience in retail he has always led with the principle that having a strong culture is the critical foundation for establishing and maintaining an industry-leading business. Four years after the purchase, he redefined what state-of-the-art facilities look like and won a gold award in Retail Store Design by International Council of Shopping Centers. "To this day Mercedes-Benz considers this to be one of the nicest dealerships in their

global network," he says. "We are the only dealership that has successfully developed a lifestyle facility that redefines the concept of modern luxury. Now we have become a benchmark for other luxury brand dealerships around the world; many come to us to learn how we are delivering the lifestyle experience consistently every day." When the facility was built the scale of operations changed, as did the management-rebuilding program. "We developed a new, fresh team with the same set of values to drive our new culture," Szekely explains. A central tenet of the Mercedes-Benz Burlington mandate is that all staff, regardless of their title or level, contribute to the standard of excellence without compromise; and that successes and achievements are shared and celebrated. "Employees are our single most valuable asset," Szekely says. "They are the ones who will contribute to our long-term sustainable growth." Everyone plays a role, whether they are in the car-wash area, detailing, service, sales or customer service, he adds. "We go out of our way to support the many different people who come through the organiza-

tion, whatever their jobs. Some of our staff who started in an entry-level role, for example, have since become managers and are playing a strategic role in our operations." MBB management is always open to allowing individuals in various departments to launch new initiatives and share ideas. "We make a point of letting individuals get involved in growing the business so they can really feel part of our success story," Szekely says. He firmly believes that it is the collective wisdom of many voices that breeds loyalty and success. "Our people are on the floor, where the action happens. They notice issues and can make suggestions that help us improve our service standards." Daily communication is encouraged, from informal daily huddles to scheduled department meetings. "We don't wait for formal reviews to address issues or concerns. Rather, we

and engage with each other," Szekely explains. In order to build and retain a strong talent pool, MBB invests and develops employees for future success through cross-training and career advancement. When recruiting, it looks for employees who share a passion for quality, dynamism and high performance. "Our recruiters understand the importance we place on corporate culture and focus on attracting individuals that are the right fit," Szekely says. All potential hires are pre-screened and go through a series of character trait assessments. Those who qualify then take part in multiple interviews with department leaders, who explain in detail the requirements and responsibilities of the position of interest. Where there is alignment, a potential employee is introduced to the general manager and CEO. "Hiring decisions at MBB are always collaborative," Szekely

the form of workshops, conferences, outside training and academic studies. Given that a good number of young millennials comprise the MBB workforce, Szekely says providing opportunities to advance their careers resonates very strongly with them. "They see value in a business that really values its employees and provide opportunities for on-going development. That sets a tone for how we run our business. It's really about coaching, mentoring and empowering them. Leadership, enthusiasm and motivation always come from within." Giving back to the community is an integral part of the MBB culture. When employees ask to sponsor various causes through sponsorships or to take part in active volunteerism, "We're always excited to give back to the community where we can," Szekely says. Philanthropy goes beyond just writing cheques at MBB, he adds. "We believe the community is part of who we are as a culture. We encourage our staff to actively take part in the corporate philanthropy initiatives, from annual golf tournaments to engaging corporate partners. It is an extremely powerful form of motivation for them to know they are able to leverage Mercedes-Benz Burlington as the platform in giving back to the community every day" Being the best — whether it's in service, parts, sales or customer satisfaction — is an essential part of the company's DNA, Szekely believes. And everyone who works there carries the same belief system. "It's not acceptable to be mediocre. We're not intimidated by the status quo. Our vision is for something bigger than the market and be leaders in our community; to be aspirational rather than just to be

there. Everyone here, from our spa and customer service staff to our mechanics and sales-people are committed to that." MBB has plans underway which include more than tripling the size of the facility as well as opening additional dealerships in the region. Szekely believes having the right people in the right place make the perfect recipe for future expansion. "We have a very young and dynamic management team that comes with great balance of industry experience and accomplished academic credentials. They're all keen on building their careers within our organization. I want them to see us as a platform for their professional growth. After all, it's really their business, not mine. Everyone has a stake in it. Everybody is creating their own future." With exciting growth on the horizon, MBB is working more than ever on retention moving forward. Since the move to the new facility, MBB has significantly reduced turnover rate to below industry average. "People seldom leave because it's really their business, not mine. In fact, we are constantly receiving applications and attracting top talents." However, the quest to keep employees motivated never stops, Szekely adds. "People need to grow and feel challenged to remain content. By investing in our employees' education and personal/professional development, we are empowering them to grow as people, as well as in their position with us. Fostering and harnessing human potential is well worth the investment. This is why we are proud to say we are more than just a dealership; we are a growing automotive group creating an enduring legacy of success."

EMPLOYEES ARE OUR SINGLE MOST VALUABLE ASSET

Mercedes-Benz Burlington delivers more than our signature Modern Luxury experience, we deliver an award winning culture.

