

The leadership team at Baywest Management Corp. (left to right): Katie Khoo, VP operations; Cindy Street, VP business development; Carin van den Berg, VP human resources; Bruce Friesen, president and CEO; Nelson Chung, chief financial officer; Greg Hamm, chief information officer



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THE NEW YEAR FINDS BAYWEST MANAGEMENT CORP. in an enviable position. The company grew by 21 per cent in 2009 despite the tumultuous economy, and with half its business coming from developer clients, it will be able to take full advantage of the anticipated boom in strata development.

Such prowess is entirely in keeping with Baywest's reputation as B.C.'s leader in residential property management. But how does it sustain this reputation in a highly competitive market?

Many reasons are offered by its executives, ranging from a focus on

IT (considered to be the spine of the company) to the standardization of work practices. But the core reason is professionals who enjoy working with each other and exchanging ideas. "We share the philosophy of Baywest president and CEO Bruce Friesen, who values personal integrity and well-being above and beyond any business deal," says Cindy Street, Baywest's vice-president of business development. "Talent is nurtured, autonomy is granted and we seriously enjoy each others' company. So although we've implemented brilliant systems to improve how we operate, these systems work because of the dedication of our people."

Innovative thinking is evident throughout Baywest's organization, which is composed of offices in



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“Talent is nurtured, autonomy is granted and we seriously enjoy each others' company.”

Vancouver, Surrey, Abbotsford and Kelowna. For example, who would have imagined that a process designed to improve the manufacturing industry could be applied to a property management firm? That's exactly what happened when Friesen recently decided to adopt “Lean Sensei,” a management approach originally used by heavy industry to reduce redundancy and optimize production flow.

Lean philosophy can be as simple as breaking down an office duty such as invoicing or payroll into a series of steps in order to identify wasteful or repetitive actions. It's also called process mapping and at Baywest this frequently translates into executives and line staff studying Post-It Notes arranged in sequence on the boardroom wall. “I learned about Lean philosophy through a mentor who was involved in the process, and it has proven to be an ideal solution to the office environment where tweaking operations is a perpetual challenge,” says Friesen. He credits the program with having saved “significant resources while acting as a natural team builder.”

Actively engaging in the philosophy of continuous improvement has radically improved many office functions, from the preparation of monthly financial statements for clients to the way incoming mail is dispatched to departments. “It's become invaluable to our goal of carefully controlled

So although we've implemented brilliant systems to improve how we operate, these systems work because of the dedication of our people.

— Cindy Street,
VP business development



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growth,” says Greg Hamm, Baywest’s chief information officer. “In some areas it’s reduced expenses by 40 per cent, and in others it has freed staff’s time so that they can focus on other tasks. It has also facilitated our objective of standardizing operations across four offices.”

Katie Khoo, vice-president of operations, adds, “As we increase our client base and staff and expand services to our clients, we must ensure that everything we undertake is done efficiently.”

Baywest’s pursuit of self-improvement includes developing a performance management component that human resources vice-president Carin van den Berg describes as “a system to help individuals understand exactly what’s expected of them and gauge how they’re doing according to these expectations.”

Van den Berg points out that performance management has been in the works for the past year and will receive special attention in 2010. “It’s a fair and negotiated process that will be used in all levels of our organization,” she says. “It will empower the individual by fostering his or her professional and

“Our potential for future growth is substantial. We cannot afford to lose sight of our goal of continuous improvement.”

– Bruce Friesen, president and CEO

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— Katie Khoo, VP operations

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personal development.”

Baywest’s tireless efforts to improve every aspect of its operations is understandable when one considers that with 125-plus employees welcoming 60 new clients every year, the company is the largest strata property management firm in Western Canada. “We’re mid-sized in terms of what constitutes a corporate entity, but we think and do big company things,” says Street.

Indeed, clients join Baywest to protect the value of one of their most significant investments. The company manages all sizes of strata corporations, has a superb accounting department headed by chief financial officer Nelson Chung and his team of CGAs, and is untouchable in the industry when it comes to technology. The company recently centralized its accounting staff to one location, a strategic move that fit with the company’s vision. It also has a very successful rental and co-op division under the leadership of Rod Hurry, vice-president revenue property.

The Baywest advantage is summarized by a catchphrase directed at clients: “So you can live your life.” Street explains, “About 50 per cent of our new clients come to us from our competitors often because they want to get their

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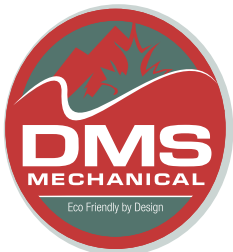
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The Baywest advantage takes many forms, one of the most recent being mybaywest, an online system that enables owners to manage their accounts online 24/7. With password security and built-in websites for strata corporations, owners may read minutes, view financial statements, check bylaws and update contact information at their leisure. “We have many enhancements to mybaywest to unveil in 2010,” says Street. “Some of our competitors have a tool that looks similar but really can’t touch what we have here.”

Friesen launched Baywest in 1988 with principles that remain as unwavering today as they were 22 years ago. “We all act out of our world view, and if I have an absolute in life it is to never compromise the higher values of telling the truth and caring for the people around me,” he says.

Without exception, Baywest staff credit Friesen with fostering a harmonious office environment and steady growth, but Friesen is adamant that his teams take equal credit for Baywest’s success. “I’ve learned over the years to listen to my people, and when you do that it’s amazing the good things that occur,” he says.

“For example, five years ago we hired Greg Hamm and the ideas he brought to the company about IT were well beyond ours. He assembled a fantastic team of seven experts who provide us with everything from staff training to product development to system maintenance. In fact, we’ve developed a tremendous momentum in all of our departments.”

Not surprisingly, many Baywest staff

members have been with the company over 10 years, and their skills – like those of newer staff members – are constantly refreshed and updated via comprehensive training programs.

Baywest has maintained its growth through the recession partly because, according to Street, “We always have about 60 projects under construction within the Greater Vancouver area as a result of our relationships with some of the best developers in the province. So although construction certainly had a slow period in 2009, we still had a steady stream of new buildings to manage.”

For his part, Friesen dispels any notion that Baywest has already cornered the strata market. “We do feel that we’re at the top of our game, but the fact is we manage only five per cent of the existing market, so our potential for further growth is substantial. We cannot afford to lose sight of our goal of continuous improvement.”

Friesen has come a long way since 1988, but he is just as excited today as he was then about building long-term relationships with clients and staff and inviting them to join the adventure that is Baywest. “We did a lot of foundation building in 2009,” he says. “That on top of many years of development and growth makes me very bullish about 2010 and beyond.” ■

This promotional feature was prepared for Baywest Management Corp. by BCBusiness magazine’s Special Advertising Features Dept. Writer: Corey Van’t Haaff. For information contact BCBusiness VP of corporate features John Cochrane at 604-299-7311. Email: jcochrane@canadawide.com



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