



PHOTOGRAPHER / SCOTT PAULUS

Quest Continuing Education Services (Quest CE) 10850 W. Park Place, Milwaukee

Alan Krenke (third from left), with wife, Linda, and sons Adam (left) and Alex (right) . . . "We brought the company tremendous value by bringing in really bright people; people who are really motivated."

Quest Continuing Education Services (Quest CE)

Conjuring up a picture of the financial industry often evokes the feelings of a film noir. But at Quest CE, employees are never left in the dark.

When Linda and Alan Krenke purchased the company, formerly Newport Financial Consultants, in 2005, they made a conscious decision to run the business transparently and to treat their employees with respect.

A pledge of respect meant giving employees a degree of autonomy and the opportunity to foster one's professional growth. At Quest, starting out small doesn't always mean staying that way.

That goes for the company, too. When the Krenkes took over Newport Financial five years ago, the firm had an annual revenue of about \$500,000. This year, the company expects to reach more than \$3 million in revenue. Quest CE provides compliance education training to financial services firms, including insurance agents and certified public accountants.

The firm's success stems directly from its employees, said CEO Alan Krenke.

A sign of its success, Quest CE recently added six employees. In addition to Alan and Linda, Quest CE is operated by their two sons, Adam and Alex. Adam



profile

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Alan Krenke, chief executive officer

serves as executive director and Alex as marketing communications manager.

Alex said Quest recruits local talent and ambitious college grads. Career-oriented employees are encouraged to take advantage of the company's mentoring and employee training programs, which help upper management recognize talent.

For example, Alex said a former receptionist who expressed an interest in marketing began training and partaking in small projects and is now a part of the firm's marketing team.

"You really got to see her shine," Alex said. "It's really inspiring."

While the company's benefits plan assures employees a sense of stability, other perks ensure their commitment to the firm, thus securing Quest's long-term success, said Alan.

"We brought the company tremendous value by bringing in really bright people; people who are really motivated," Alan said. "That's why we have been so successful. We don't want them to leave."

The company retains a casual atmosphere, albeit a few days when clients are in-house and employees are asked to suit-up. Outside of client visits, employees are allowed to wear jeans and sneakers.

Employees also enjoy annual company outings, a fully-equipped gym and a corporate pass to the Milwaukee County Zoo.

"Our goal was to bring big business benefits to a small company," said Linda, chief operating officer.

But nothing, Alan said, is more popular than Quest CE's continuum of food. Monthly luncheons, a "free" vending machine and a fully-stocked kitchenette keeps employees' bellies full and their spirits high.

"For Linda and I, it was important for us to provide an environment where people feel appreciated," Alan said. "It's a little thing, but a big thing."

— Stephanie Beecher



Website:
www.questce.com

Type of business: Provider of continuing education to the financial services industry

Year founded: 1986

Employees: 28

Chief executive: Alan Krenke, chief executive officer

Score: 95.05