

# Culture of mutual support powers Messaging Architects

During a routine meeting with the CEO of Messaging Architects, Debbie Howlett mentioned in passing that her older son was being bullied at school. The next day, a book about the challenges of raising a teenager appeared on her desk.

On another occasion, she received a bouquet of flowers from a colleague thanking her for her help with a project.

Such gestures are not out of the ordinary at this 100 per cent employee-owned company, located in a former steel mill turned trendy loft in the heart of Griffintown. In fact, it's part of the workplace culture for staff members to go out of the way for each other – and they do, on a regular basis.

"I love working with the people here," says Howlett, director of product marketing at the e-mail risk-management firm. "Even though we're a technology company, we are an eclectic bunch — among us you'll find musicians, artists, two Ironmen and a volunteer curling coach.

"What makes this a great place to work is the CEO of our company — which here actually stands for 'chief energizing officer.' I find him inspiring to work for, and he challenges us to be the best we can be."

Because Messaging Architects is employee-owned and doesn't rely on outside investment, the staff has a direct stake in its outcomes. A non-hierarchical, horizontal business structure recognizes employees as business equals, while an open-book management policy helps them make the right financial decisions.

Chief Operations Officer Frédéric Bourget likens it to being part of a large family.



Employees at Messaging Architects have common goals, because they own the company.

"Because we're all shareholders, we share the same goal. Everybody knows everything. If anyone has questions about the finances, or why we're making these decisions, it's all discussed in the open," Bourget says.

"That's what makes success – instead of two or three people managing a bunch of others who do the work, we have a group doing what's in everyone's best interest.

"This is built around a culture of trust, and gives people a lot of leeway and flexibility in terms of what they can achieve."

The organization has a strong learning culture, providing subsidies toward

tuition and professional development, and encourages staffers to attend conferences in their area of interest.

For Howlett, who has travelled to Orlando for training and to trade shows in Boston and San Francisco, the opportunity to attend a conference on the arts and sciences in Florence, Italy, was a major career highlight.

She's also finishing a class with the Canadian Marketing Association in the evenings and takes advantage of flexible working hours to make time for her children.

"How well we take care of our people translates into how we work together,"

## Messaging Architects

- **YEARS IN BUSINESS:** 10
- **NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 81
- **HEAD OFFICE:** Montreal
- **LOCATIONS:** Provo, Utah; France (EMEA)
- **POSITIONS EMPLOYED:** Account executives and managers, lead generation, software developers, quality assurance and technical support engineers, technical consultants.
- **HIRING INCENTIVES:** Shares issued on first anniversary of employment; "open book" management style; subsidized bus passes, parking and gym memberships; onsite shower facilities; onsite flu vaccinations and smoking cessation programs; subsidized tuition; pension program; in-house French classes; flexible work hours; profit sharing.
- **APPLICATION PROCESS:** Visit [www.messagingarchitects.com/about-us/careers.html](http://www.messagingarchitects.com/about-us/careers.html)

Bourget says. "We just finished a year of tremendous growth, considering the state of the economy, and we are slated for another good year. It's an exciting time to be able to do profit sharing for the employees, and we're well-positioned in the market for continued success."

## 100% EMPLOYEE OWNED

Say what you mean - No bullsh@t.  
Do what you say - Deliver.  
Don't pass the buck - Be the solution.  
Trust, period.  
Play, as a team.  
Be bold, be remarkable.

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