



GREAT DEALERSHIPS

TO WORK FOR



**THE BOATING INDUSTRY'S LEADING
DEALERS IN EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION.**

**20 NORTH AMERICAN DEALERS
RECOGNIZED AS THE INDUSTRY'S BEST**





Across North America, boating is an integral part of a community's culture and heritage. Many of us spent the better part of our lives on, near and in the water. We know that boating is good for the spirit — and the economy.

In fact, according to the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis, outdoor recreation in the U.S. is a bigger industry than farming, mining and public utilities. And the single largest economic contributor to outdoor recreation is recreational boating. The BEA report found that outdoor recreation accounted for \$412 billion of the U.S. GDP, and recreational boating and fishing accounted for \$36.93 billion of that amount.

No matter how large the industry gets, however, its growth and prosperity is slowed by the workforce crisis that grips boating. Across North America, a workforce shortage equates to today's dealers and their employees working harder than ever before with fewer teammates than they need.

The situation demands that we create better working environments, that in order to succeed, our competitive advantage as dealers needs to be focused on attracting, developing and retaining great people. If we can create Great Dealerships to Work For by implementing tools, tips, strategies and best practices modeled by other businesses, we can create passionate, loyal employees that lead our businesses toward world-class customer experiences. It's the single most impactful recipe for success.

At the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas, we know that the future of recreational boating lies with you, the dealer. That's why we are so pleased to recognize those among you who have raised the bar on employee satisfaction — those who have created Great Dealerships to Work For. The 20 retail locations featured in this publication represent the top 10 percent of the dealers that participated in this recognition program — and they are the only storefronts that achieved a cumulative score of 90 percent or better. They are the leaders and the trendsetters. We hope they inspire you to new heights in Employee Satisfaction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Matt Gruhn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'M' and 'G'.

Matt Gruhn
MRAA President

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About the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas

At the Marine Retailers Association of Americas, we believe that if our industry is going to grow and find greater success, that growth and success must begin with our dealers. Those companies, the ones that represent boating on an everyday basis on the frontlines of our industry, control the quality of the customer experience and the boating lifestyle. If they find success, the industry finds success. If they grow, the industry grows.

The MRAA works to create a strong and healthy boating industry by providing those businesses with the tools, resources and educational programs that aid in their growth and success. MRAA provides them with opportunities for improvement through world-class educational programming such as Dealer Week, its annual conference; its in-depth Continuous Certification Curriculum; with its more than 100 courses in the online catalog found at MRAATraining.com, and all of the tools and resources that accompany these programs.

MRAA's Marine Industry Certified Dealership Program is the boating industry's only template or roadmap for building a world-class dealership. Created and managed by a committee of dealers and manufacturers, Dealership Certification; delivers a platform for continuous improvement at the retail level through a focus on efficient, effective operations, employee development, and customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The MRAA has been looking out for the best interests of marine retailers and the boating public since 1972.

Eligibility for Great Dealerships to Work For

The dealers honored as a part of MRAA's 2018 Great Dealerships to Work For Program have achieved Marine Industry Certified Dealership status, and they participated in MRAA's Employee Satisfaction Survey. The responses from this anonymously conducted survey are aggregated for a total cumulative score.

The requirement for the Certification credentials is not just the fulfillment of the survey, however. The dealer principal must host a company meeting to discuss the results with the team, address key takeaways and determine opportunities for improvement.

To be recognized as a Great Dealership to Work For, participating dealers must achieve an Employee Satisfaction score of 90% or higher. As of MRAA's publication deadline, there were 367 dealers participating in Dealership Certification Program. For the 2018 awards, 193 companies completed the requirement prior to the deadline to qualify to be eligible for recognition as a Great Dealership to Work For.

MRAA'S VALUES

ACCOUNTABILITY

We stand behind our commitment to create a vibrant and healthy organization with a strong foundation that supports the stellar execution of its mission of service to the marine industry now and into the foreseeable future.

AUTHENTICITY

We work to earn and maintain the trust of our team, members, partners and the entire boating industry by serving with genuine care, respect and integrity.

DRIVE

We strive to continuously improve our service to our team, our members, our partners and the entire boating industry.

LEADERSHIP

We serve and represent the dealer community, actively contributing to marine retail and marine industry improvement and growth.



Cabela's Boat Center, Louisville

Louisville, Kentucky
louisville.cabelasboatingcenter.com
 Number of Employees: 12

20

Kentucky is second only to Alaska for having more navigable miles of water in the country. Cabela's Louisville was opened in April 2013 to serve an avid population of outdoor and boating enthusiasts in the greater Louisville metro area.

"Our employees share that passion and strive to make the boat purchasing process as enjoyable as a day on the lake with friends and family," says Michael Brown, power sports manager for the location.

Management employs a "servant role" to the employees. "We provide the tools for success, the processes, the training and coaching, and the necessary support," Brown explains. "We provide the goals, so that everyone is working toward the same result. We provide an open door. Concerns are addressed promptly."

All employees go through general orientation training, followed by job-specific training in their areas of responsibility. The sales team participates in an extensive Sales Certification program and receives on-site training from factory representatives. Other off-site training events are held throughout the year.

"All employees are given the opportunity to excel and advance," says Brown. "First, as a manager, it is my primary responsibility, to ensure that they have the tools to be successful in their specific roles. Once accomplished in their area of responsibility, we take advantage of all opportunities to cross train within the department to build team unity so that customers get excellent service from whomever they may encounter while in our boat center.

"These simple strategies have proven successful at Cabela's Louisville, as we have had a salesman promoted to sales manager for another location, have had our sales administrators go out in the field to train or 'fix' other locations, and have served as a training location for new stores prior to their opening."

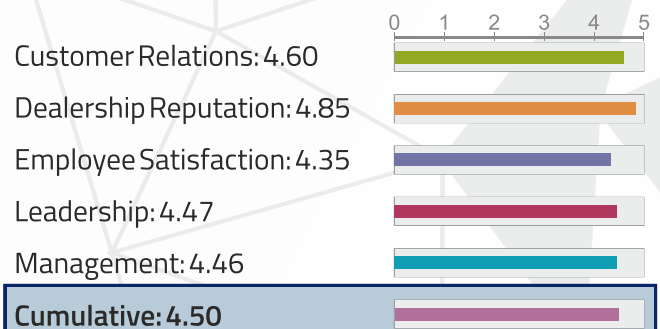
To recognize exceptional service, the store has a Star Program where outfitters who demonstrate excellent performance over the period of a month are rewarded with a recognition luncheon and gift card. Sales professionals also receive points throughout the year for their sales, which are converted to gift cards.

Brown says that their processes are designed to make each customer have the best purchase experience that can be offered, which was undoubtedly the case this past September when a boating novice purchased a Ranger Z521C Cup.

"This is his first boat and he did not have any prior



boating experience/knowledge," Brown says. "Not only did we do the typical on-site delivery with the customer, going over all aspects of the boat here at the dealership, but one of my sales consultants has taken him out in the boat on three different occasions teaching him everything from A to Z on trailering and basic operational skills. I believe they even had time to board the first bass."





M & P Mercury Sales Ltd.

Burnaby, British Columbia
 mpmercury.com
 Number of employees: 44

19

Located in the coastal town of Burnaby, British Columbia, M&P Mercury began as a family business in 1957, showcasing handcrafted boats and Mercury Outboard motors. More than 60 years later, it's still family-owned and operated, guided by its core values: integrity, honesty and genuine concern for its clients.

Since its founding, it has expanded its operations, opening its Yacht Centre in Coal Harbour Marina, followed by the addition of a boat showroom in Nanaimo.

"We continue to pursue new expansion opportunities, always keeping an eye to our core values and mission: To make the boating lifestyle the most rewarding, fulfilling and memorable experience possible," says marketing manager Esther Reich.

In 2017, the company brought in a world-class human resources firm to further enhance its employee experience. Its comprehensive benefits program includes dental, extended health, short-term counseling services, life insurance and short- and long-term disability. Fifty percent of the premiums are employer-paid and the remaining portion is non-taxable. Extended health care includes vision care, prescriptions, medical supplies and services provided by licensed practitioners, such as chiropractors, massage therapists, naturopaths, speech therapists and psychologists. Additional benefits include online self-help courses, sick days for salaried employees, cell phone allowance, a work boat for personal employee use, parking passes, bonuses and an employee discount purchasing program.

To increase employees' capabilities across all departments, M&P provides a number of learning opportunities, including external, in-house and manufacturer-supported trainings. Technician training is paid for by M&P, and tuition reimbursement is available for many other career-advancing courses.

M&P not only invests in its employees but in the community-at-large. It hosts boat shows, demo days, fishing derbies, barbeques, and customer appreciation days, and contributes to various local charities. It also offers resources such as its "Affordable Boating" initiative, which helps new boaters understand all costs associated with boat ownership so they can make informed decisions.

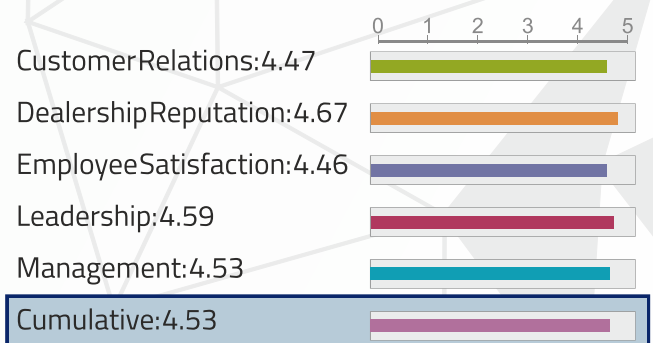
With a dynamic, diverse workforce (the average age is 40 years old and more than 50 percent of employees are women), the company places a strong emphasis on inclusivity, both at work and in the boating community. It hosts a Chinese Yacht Club and has a multilingual staff.

"We have staff who speak English, French, Spanish, Russian, German, Mandarin, Cantonese and Japanese," Reich explains. "M&P is unique: We are forward-thinking and highly adaptable to our multicultural customer base because we are a reflection of that base, and we continue to make improvements across all areas of the business because we want our communities to embrace the accessibility, connection and fun that the boating lifestyle can bring."

In the end, M&P believes that its business is about people.



"M&P is a great place to work," Reich says. "Why? We sell fun. Our team supports each other. Managers genuinely care about the people reporting to them. Departments are not separate entities — we all want to work together to provide our customers with the best boating experience out there. Period. We care."





Russell Marine, Real Island

Alexander City, Alabama

RussellMarine.net

Number of employees:

Russell Marine (102) Russell Marine Real Island (18)

18

Located on Lake Martin, Russell Marine Real Island and its parent company, Russell Lands On Lake Martin, have a real passion for its lake community. It boasts the largest inventory of marine parts and recreational boats in Alabama and has developed an all-encompassing approach to serving boaters on and around Lake Martin.

"We take pride in knowing that a boat purchase is the start of a lifetime of memories," says president Dave Commander.

A comprehensive benefit package is offered to each employee, and includes maternity leave, premium health coverage, dental, life insurance, vision and short- and long-term disability. In addition to a generous vacation policy, all hourly employees have four paid sick days per year (employees are also compensated for any unused sick days). Other benefits include a 401(k) profit sharing plan, concert tickets, service awards and team incentive programs, an awards luncheon and Christmas party, discounts on rental operations and biannual golf tournaments.



Sales staff take part in manufacturer trainings, and all technicians are required to attend at least one technical training course every two years and online courses every year. Russell Marine covers all costs to attend technical schools and provides technicians with a \$0.50 per hour raise upon completion of each certification.

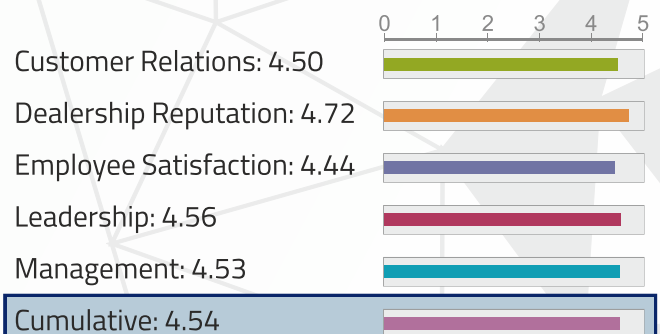
Russell recognizes exceptional customer service through its "WOW Program." "Each 'wow' is worth \$5 in ship store merchandise," explains Commander, "and the employee that receives the most 'wows' at the end of the year receives a plaque and \$200."

Additional employee benefits include a wellness program, holiday and overtime pay, and catered lunches.

"This past January, Russell Lands owner Ben Russell, recognized the benefit the company would receive from the tax cut and gave all employees \$500," Commander says. "Our company supports giving back to the community, and we support our employees by sponsoring their children's teams and clubs. We also support the local chapter of United Way, and every employee that gives his or her 'Fair Share' to United Way receives an extra day of vacation."

The company's investment in its employees is evidenced by how they treat their customers.

"One of our lifelong customers was planning an important party for his son which required the use of their boat," Commander explains. "Unfortunately, the boat broke down on the day of the big occasion. In a predicament, the customer called us to see what we could do to help. At the time, we did not have any boats in inventory to loan the customer, and all our rental boats were spoken for. One of our employees saw and felt the desperation of this customer and offered to lend their very own personal boat to the customer. The customer's son had the party of a lifetime, and to this day, that customer has always been loyal to Russell Marine Real Island."





Marina Fortin Ile Aux Noix, Quebec marinafortin.com Number of employees: 24

17

Family-owned and operated, Marina Fortin was established by Gerard Fortin in 1955.

"At the time, people were telling him that digging into farmland to bring water to his home was absolutely crazy," explains current owner Pierre Fortin, "and that is when the first canal was dug. Today, there are five canals which are home to a marina of 256 slips, and many other boats attached to their docks at their residences."

Reviews are conducted annually. "It gives us the opportunity to evaluate where our employees are at that point in their lives and see what is the next step ... We also have a few different events that we do per year that gets everybody together to celebrate," says Fortin.

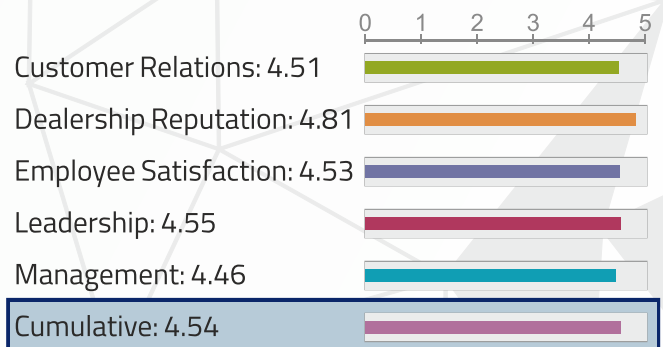
He notes that his grandfather could not have foreseen what "digging the first few canals," would have produced. "He told his two sons that they



Customers and employees are considered part of the Fortin family, and some associates have been with the company for as long as 30 years.

"We care! As a family-owned business, our motto is you have one mouth and two ears, meaning that you should listen twice as much as you talk," says Fortin. "We feel that listening is key. Our door is always open and employees know that their suggestions are listened to and discussed. We also listen to their needs as personal issues occur and make sure we are there for them."

would never be able to live just by selling and maintaining boats. I guess that after three generations, this is one thing he was wrong about."





Bass Pro & Tracker Boat Center, East Peoria East Peoria, Illinois eastpeoria.trackerboatcenter.com Number of employees: 12

16

Central Illinois is a popular destination for avid hunters, fishers and boaters, and the local Tracker Marine Boat Center — which opened in 2011 — has proved to be a valuable resource for these outdoor enthusiasts. Ron Pettit says one of the reasons boaters have come to rely on the dealer in the past seven years is because his team loves what they do.

“We hire passionate people; we engage the employees in the business so they take ownership,” he says. “We let them voice their ideas and concerns and involve them as a team to resolve any issues.”

The company offers state-of-the-art training

“We have a star luncheon for associates who have been recognized by customers for their outstanding customer service,” he explains. “During morning huddles, we will call out associates for their great work.”

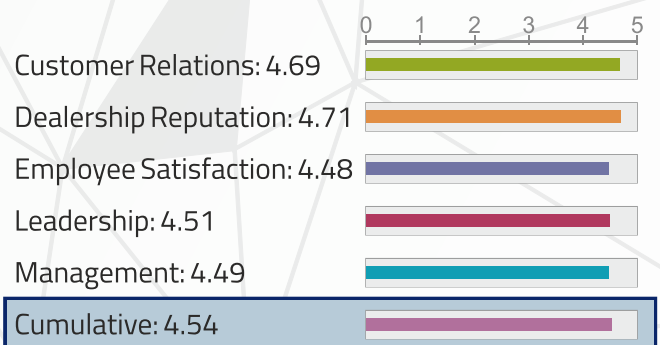
And individual achievement is well rewarded, as well. “We have a young man who started out in the position as a boat detailer. He showed great effort in his job, which resulted in management noticing and then promoting him to a rigging technician. With the mentoring of the service techs, he has been guided through the professional way of rigging. Due to the team's work he is now taking on the challenge of getting Mercury certified and hoping to be promoted to a service tech.”



through its Bass Pro Shops and White River Marine Group parent company, as well as its engine partner, Mercury Marine, through which they are offered elite online and on-site training annually.

“The team will select boats on the showroom floor and go over features and benefits offered for the customer to ensure that we are putting them in the proper boat,” says Pettit.

Teamwork, says Pettit, is the foundation of his store's success, with management working side-by-side with associates. Employees of the month are even chosen by their peers.





Deep Creek Marina LLC

McHenry, Maryland

deepcreekmarina.com

Number of employees: 24 full-time,
peak at about 75 during the summer season

15

Deep Creek Marina LLC was established in 2004, when Adrian Spiker acquired the assets of a long-running, but run-down, marina on Deep Creek Lake. Competitive by nature with an affinity for the outdoors, Spiker has always had a particular love for anything with a motor, and is an avid water-skier and motocross racer. Since his purchase of the marina, all but one of the property's buildings has been renovated or replaced, new boat brands have come to the forefront, and the current philosophy is not just to grow the marina business, but to grow and expand it into a "have fun year-round" company.

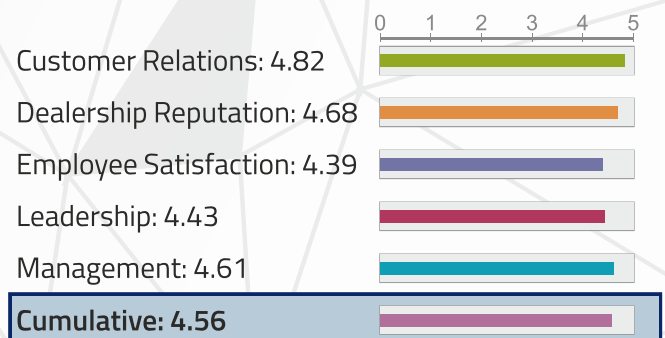
Spiker believes in investing in employees' futures, as well. "We want all of our employees to excel, so we conduct in-house training with industry experts at least two to three times per year," he explains. "In addition, we bring from six–10 employees to the industry's annual conference in Orlando, Florida, so that they can learn from other industry professionals around the country. We belong to Sam's Dock — online training for all departments. Techs go to school once a year for additional hands-on training."

He also places employee development at the top of his priority list: "We try to hire seasonally while the employees are still in high school or college, and then welcome them back each season, with an offer of full-time employment and advancement upon their graduation."

Employees are evaluated at least once a year for bonuses or raises. Additional employee benefits are the use of rental boats and end-of-season celebrations for employees and their families.

"We support employees by treating them like family," says Spiker "They are part of our team for parties and special functions, and we grant liberal leave when they need time off for family issues."

Spiker notes that Deep Creek's team spirit drives the business's success. "We have a friendly atmosphere, both between employees and with our customers," he explains. "We try to compensate financially at the upper end of the local wage or salary rates, and we offer bonuses for performance. We are not afraid to offer more training and incentive programs for our employees. We offer parties and activities involving our employees' families to have their families feel more connected with the dealership."





Bass Pro & Tracker Boat Center, Palm Bay

Palm Bay, Florida
basspro.com
Number of employees: 14

14

"In 1978, our founder changed the boating world when he put together the boat package of a boat, motor and trailer all ready to go for the customer," explains Drew Kaminski, boat sales manager of the Tracker Marine Boat Center in Palm Bay, Florida. "Our job is to keep the passion going and get everyone who wants to get into boating, out on the water."

Kaminski says his store practices a no-pressure sales approach in a family-focused environment. Moreover, the leadership team asks for — and then listens to — employee feedback.

"We let the team know that we work for them," he says. "We ask regularly what we can do to make their job better or help them give great customer service."

He says that his team is continually raising their own bar on service and a large part of that is making sure the employee experience is elevated.

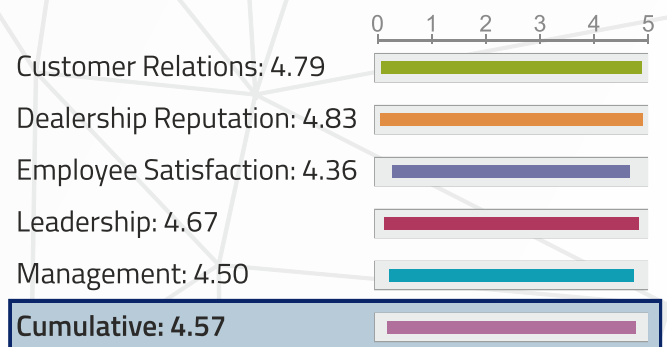


"We are constantly training to be better in sales and service, but most importantly the customer experience," says Kaminski. "If your employees are happy, they give the best customer service!"

For career development, the leadership team asks each employee what his or her goals are and then determines a development trajectory toward those goals. Associates are recognized for excellent customer service through the Star card program, as well as formal and informal meals.

"When the group hits our CSI score goals, we cook out as a team," says Kaminski.

And thanks to their sales philosophy, hitting those goals isn't difficult. "When some customers come in, they want all these options because they feel they should get them," he explains. "However, after qualifying them, we realize we can down-sell them into what they need and save them money to use on other products. We get calls all the time from customers who want to thank us for doing the right thing, not just trying to get more money out of the customer. It makes you realize you work for a special company."





Tracker Marine Boat Center, Pearl Pearl, Mississippi Basspro.com Number of employees: 17

13

Before Jeff Howerton went to work with Tracker Marine Boat Center, his life revolved around boating and fishing — in fact, one of his goals was to fish professionally.

"Fate brought me to Bass Pro Shops, and I haven't regretted a day since I started working here," says Howerton, marine manager of the Pearl store.

Howerton says his company's culture allows them to "do the right thing" without analyzing how it affects a balance sheet.

"Without question, the one thing that makes us a great dealership to work for is the culture in which Johnny Morris has instilled in his family of companies. It isn't a culture of 'Do as I say and not as I do.' The exact opposite is true," Howerton says. "He talks the talk and walks the walk. This company allows its associates to flourish by not hovering over our shoulders to make sure we are compliant to some policy. Rather we are given the freedom to take the ball and run with it. We are held to a standard, and that standard is verified but not in a smothering fashion. We are a family of free-thinking associates that are allowed to create rather than color within the lines."

Annual training is provided for sales staff, as is yearly supplemental training for technicians, and high-performing employees are recognized through Star cards and luncheons. And career advancement is encouraged.

"Essentially, I don't get in their way," Howerton explains. "I tell each associate that I will support them if they want to advance or seek employment elsewhere. Obviously, I don't want them to leave, but I will never stand in their way of whatever they want to do. We use annual reviews to let our associates know how they are doing, and we are constantly thanking them for their hard work and service."

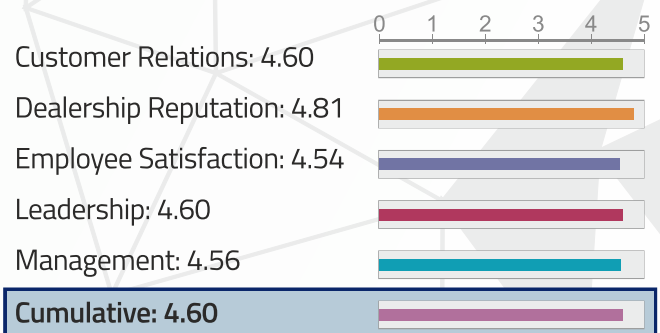
They also make sure employees are treated with respect and empathy. "We take the time to listen when our employees need it," says Howerton. "We support each other's family in times of need, like sending flowers when someone loses a family member. We allow our associates as much time as they require in times of need, whether it is a loss or a crisis at home or the family."

That consideration extends to the community as well.

"I have created two different community events that raise money for some very good causes," Howerton explains. "Our associates love the events and comment to me all the time how cool it is to work for a company that allows us to do them. In the spring we have 'BBQ & BOATS,' where we hold a barbecue



contest that allows our customers to vote for their favorite team. We sell barbecue plates to our customers and raise money for The Catch-A-Dream foundation. The whole store looks forward to it. And we just finished our Fall Fest event where we hold a carnival out front and sell food for donations to our local first responders. These events connect us to our community, our customers and to each other. A lot of blood, sweat and tears are poured into the events, and we are rewarded with a sense of community and being a part of something that is larger than ourselves."





Baert Marine Inc Middleton, Massachusetts baertmarine.com

Number of employees: 19 full and part time

12

Baert Marine celebrated its 45th anniversary this year. Located north of Boston and founded by Bill Baert and Warren Kelly, since 1973, Baert Marine has prided itself in its ability to provide award-winning customer service. The dealer ranks among the oldest Grady-White Boats dealerships worldwide, is one of the nation's best service facilities, and has been selected as a Top 100 boat dealer seven years in a row.

"Our philosophy may not be unique but we believe our employees are the company's greatest asset," says general manager James Milne, who has been with Baert Marine for 38 years. "There is a direct relationship between happy and satisfied employees and happy and satisfied customers. Our employees are always a main focus."

The company pays 100 percent of required job training.

"We also encourage and pay 100 percent of non-required training that relates to the employee's position within the company," notes Milne, adding that they give employees "the training and tools to make them as effective as possible in their positions, effective in contributing to their department and to the company as a whole."

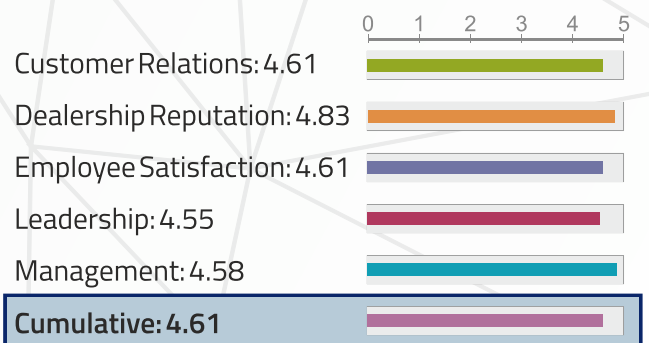
Each month, an associate is recognized as an "employee of the month," and career advancement is a key component of employee satisfaction.

"Being a smaller company with limited turnover, help can pose a challenge. When an opportunity does arise, we always seek to promote within," says Milne.

Management encourages its team to voice concerns and feedback, and allows them to take ownership of their individual positions by giving them the latitude to make decisions to help provide superior customer service.

Milne says they offer a positive work environment, where employees enjoy working with each other and can grow and learn professionally.

"We purchased a company gas grill, and we provide a weekly allowance for food," he says. "Once a week we hold a company cookout for lunch and provide everything. It's a real morale builder."



10 Boulder Boats, California Visalia, California

Kristina and Stuart Litjens founded Boulder Boats, taking their passion for boating and water sports and combining it with their vision to create an exciting, family-friendly environment to better serve the boating and watersports community. Beginning in Boulder City, Nevada, with a team of four, Boulder Boats has grown to three locations in Nevada, Arizona and California and employs nearly 100 team members. Focusing on family and kids, the company's main tagline is "You only get 18 summers."

"Kristina and Stuart Litjens live this every day, cherishing and appreciating every memory made out on the water with their family and friends," says Tyson Townsend, director of human resources.

Townsend attributes Boulder Boats' success to its foundation of team, culture, customer service, attitude and a strong community presence.

"One of the most powerful and impactful lessons we have experienced in business is the power of a group of people coming together to help others, and the success we have had has allowed Boulder Boats the financial freedom to sponsor, participate and host countless community service opportunities in each of their markets," Townsend says. "We were the very first boat dealer to sign on as a state coordinator for Wake the World NV. We have since partnered with Wake the World AZ and look forward to our seventh year of advocating for the amazing Wake the World organization."

The dealership also stepped up in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, hand delivering school and home supplies to impacted students.

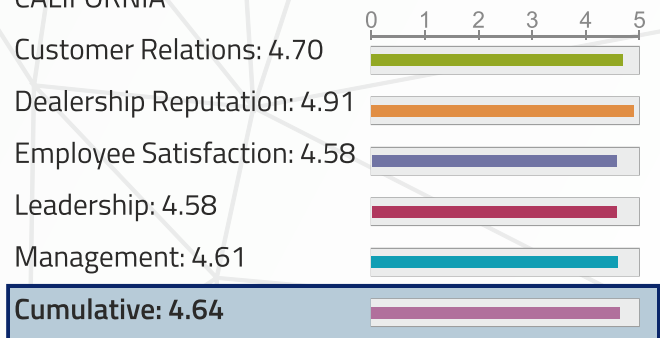
Employees receive a comprehensive benefits package, including personal time off, medical, dental, vision, an employee assistance program, 401(k) program with employer match, and team member boat purchase and pro shop retail discount programs. Continual investment is made on training — for everything from OSHA safety and harassment/discrimination training to marketing and employment law.

Boulder Boats, Nevada Henderson, Nevada

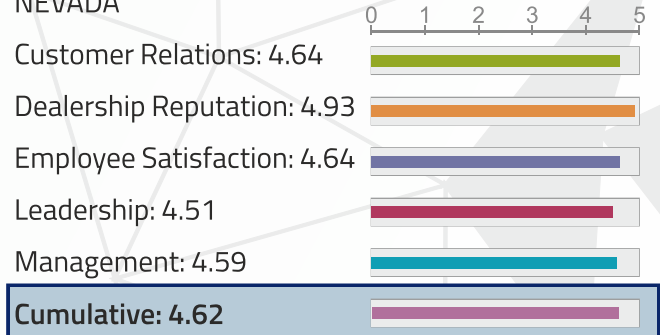
"Our culture is really about loving the boating lifestyle and watersports," Townsend says. "There's a ton of hard work from our team that's required to make Boulder Boats the success it is today, but we are all a team of people who at the end of any hard day realize we help people create memories."

Townsend recounts the story of a sales associate who had just joined their team: "One of the first closings she did for Boulder Boats was a young family that had to sell their boat fast, as the mother was diagnosed with late-stage cancer. About a year later she was moved to tears when the dad and two kids were back in the office sharing a story of how the mom had left a letter stating she really cherished how many good memories their family had together at the lake on their boat. And she had left specific instructions that a portion of her life insurance be used to purchase a boat for their family... she knew this would help the healing process her children and husband would need. It is still one of our most moving and touching stories, a great reminder of why we do what we do."

CALIFORNIA



NEVADA





Blue Springs Marine

Blue Springs, Missouri
bluespringsmarine.com
 Number of employees: 15

9

Paul and Fleta Rand first opened Blue Springs Marine's doors for business in the 1960s. By the late '80s, Paul and Fleta were ready for retirement and passed the business down to their son, Jim. And now, as Jim and his wife Nancy move toward retirement, the next generation — their daughter Carrie and her husband Jeff Siems — is preparing to take over the company helm.

"We have a family-first atmosphere; our staff is like family to us," Siems explains. "But when it comes to work, our staff pulls together to have each other's back because we pride ourselves in caring and accommodating our customers."



Training is tailored to the individual and the position: Technicians get certification training and enjoy distance learning and manufacturer training. Front staff participate in MRAA's Certification Curriculum and Spader training. Salesmen get factory sales training and one-on-one manufacturer rep training. Blue Springs Marine also trains in-house through webinars.

"Once a year we do a full staff training day where we also look at where we've been and where we're headed, team-building and customer-service training," says Siems.

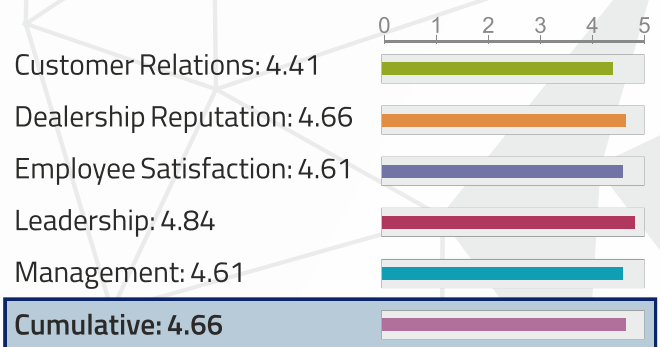
The company also offers an apprenticeship program for certified technicians. And when filling an open position, they consider the individual's strengths, explains Siems.

"Whenever we have a vacancy or an employee appears to be struggling in their current role," he explains, "we try very hard to consider all their strengths and weaknesses to maximize their talents and alleviate any stumbling blocks for that employee, even if that means a bookkeeper becomes a salesman or a technician becomes a service manager. Matching roles to employees utilizing Spader's DISC exercises has been key to having happy employees."

Siems also offers an open-door policy: "Personally, staff can come to me for any personal problems such as financial issues, and I will not only help them financially, but also counsel a plan to guide them to prevent future crises. In the shop, I won't hesitate to move boats to keep techs turning wrenches or crawl under a helm to help with wiring. I'm here to serve as sales backup, write service, look up parts, etc. In general, I'm not a good leader unless I'm willing to work the front lines with my staff. My management team has been trained to support their teammates in the same manner."

All of the employees at Blue Springs have become extended family of sorts, Siems says.

"We have created a culture that encourages our staff to be family oriented. My staff treats each other like they treat their own family. They choose to be friends outside of work ... I have lunches multiple times a week with staff members. The point is that friends work together and harder for another friend. This creates a culture that is loyal, close-knit and productive. When you assemble a team that can transfer this synergy to the customer experience you end up with an amazing workplace."





Tri-State Marine
Deale, Maryland
tristatemarine.com
Number of employees: 35

8

Boasting one of, if not the, largest indoor showroom in the country at 17,000 square feet, Tri-State Marine was established 53 years ago as a boat trailer dealer. The dealer's success in the industry can be linked, in part, to employee loyalty.

Byrnes says Tri-State's management team is open, fully involved in the everyday and focused on working with integrity. They've even considered changing the company's tagline to "We always do the right thing."

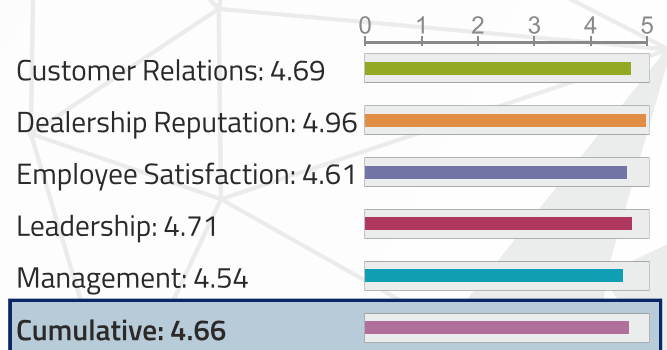


The average employee has been working at the company for 15 years, with many employed for more than 20 years. In fact, the 65-year-old general manager's first job was with the dealership, and two other employees have been employed with Tri-State for more than 40 years.

President John Byrnes says that the business's philosophy for employee retention is simple. "We're concerned about all within the workplace, as well as off-site," he says. "We realize that the employees come first. With that in place, all other activities within the dealership fall in place."

The company offers extensive hands-on training through mentorships, in addition to its Yamaha Factory Training, and boasts a master tech on-site. To further support its team, the company always tries to promote from within for open positions.

"I've never been good at talking about ourselves," Byrnes says. "I let the past customers and P&L do the talking." Tri-State's longevity and employee loyalty speaks volumes.





Bass Pro & Tracker Boat Center, Harlingen

Harlingen, Texas
harlingen.trackerboatcenter.com
 Number of employees: 15

7

Group sales manager Rolando J. Galvan says his management team at the Harlingen Tracker Marine Boat Center is "focused and committed to not only providing great customer service but creating and maintaining a great work environment for our associates. We treat each other with respect and professionalism at all times. We can always count on each other for support when needed."

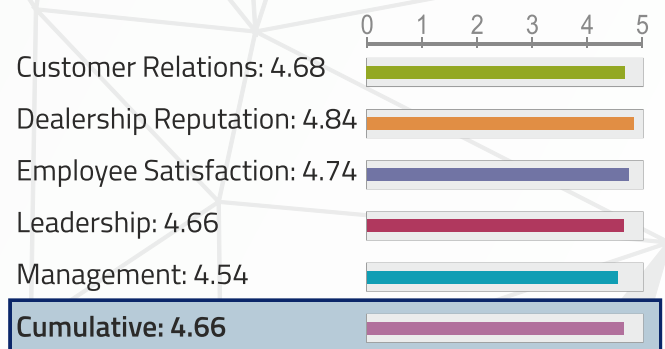
"We have unscheduled meals, such as pizza parties during peak business seasons and to recognize associates for a job well done," Galvan says. "We try to have fun while we work. It seems like we are always trying to figure out who ate the last donut, kolache, taco or pizza slice."



One way his leadership team promotes a positive workplace, he says, is by "never asking someone to do something we would not do ourselves. When there is work to be done, management steps up to help any way needed, whether it's an oil change or taking a trip to the landfill to throw away trash. Management is part of the team. In addition, we have an open-door policy, and we are always open for feedback from associates and help any way we can."

Career development is provided through coaching and training. Completed technical training is rewarded monetarily, and it's not unusual for associates to move from part-time to full-time management. In addition, the employee benefits package includes medical, dental and vision insurance, a 401(k) plan and sick time.

Formal recognition for excellent customer service is done at monthly lunches, but there's plenty of informal appreciation, as well.





Tracker Boat Center, Longview

Longview, Texas
longview.trackerboatingcenter.com

6

A short drive to some of the best fishing in East Texas Longview's Tracker Boating Center is located in Texas's Piney Woods region.

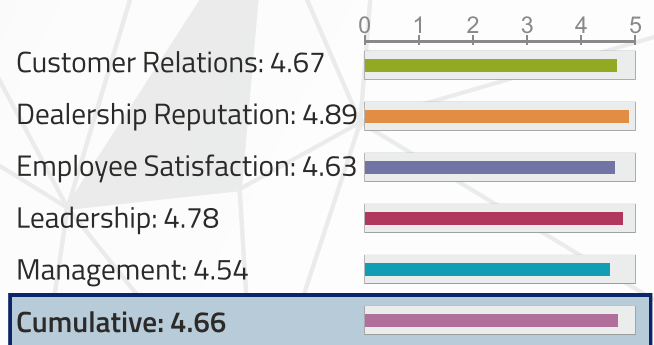
Established in 1999, the dealership was a pilot retail effort by Tracker Marine. The company, said representative Matt McKnight, wanted "to have a better understanding of the challenges that dealers faced during the day-to-day operations. While uncovering the challenges, Tracker wanted to offer solutions to help dealers have opportunities to be profitable."

The company offers daily support to its associates through its corporate portal. "The portal offers recorded training sessions that encompass standard operating procedures. [It also] offers many 'how to' sessions as it pertains to daily operations," says McKnight. Tracker also offers a choice of webinar training sessions, and operations managers are available for managers to reach out to for assistance when needed. "We have weekly conference calls to touch on programs available to increase sales and to communicate direction on the execution of a plan of action as needed," he adds.

McKnight notes that the business's philosophy for team development is simple: Employee input.

"[It's] allowing [employees] to disagree with decisions I make in order to offer up different solutions to improve a situation," he says. "I also understand that it's my job to assist employees to perform their jobs. We have an open-door culture in order to be approachable when assistance [is needed] or changes need to be made. Each morning we have the 'daily huddle' to address the action needed for the business at hand."

Tracker Longview offers multiple opportunities for advancement and celebrates world-class service each time its employees go above and beyond to assist customers. And, coincidentally, associates have a voice in that, as well. "We have an employee of the quarter award that is voted on by the staff," says McKnight.





River City Boat Sales & Marine Services

Aurora, Oregon
rivercityboatsales.com
Number of employees: 13

5

Located on the Upper Willamette River, River City Boat Sales was founded in 2005 by two college fraternity brothers who had a poor customer service experience while buying a boat in the early 2000s. By emphasizing quality products, superior customer service, and always "doing the right thing," River City Boat Sales has grown from a 900-square-foot building selling consignment boats to being the premier sport boat and pontoon dealer in the area and the only Marine Industry Certified Dealership in Oregon.

"This extra attention to our individual products sets our staff apart from other dealers in the area and conveys the utmost in confidence and professionalism to our customer," says Coleman.

River City's management team members are provided with company vehicles, expense accounts and gas cards, and employees can use company boats on their days off.

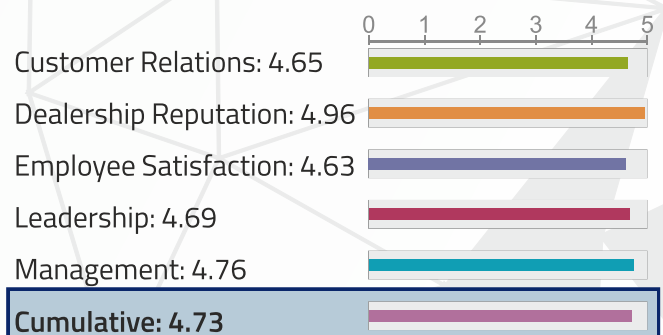
"Management employs an open-door policy," says Coleman. "Any issues, questions or grievances are



"Our try-anything-once attitude along with our ability to learn from our mistakes makes us stand out among the long-time established dealers in our area," says owner Tim Coleman. "We have forged this business out of sheer desire to be the best we can be and having a good time doing it. We are not third-generation dealership owners, we did not buy an established business, nor did we come from the marine industry. We simply wanted to change the landscape in the boating market here in Oregon and southwest Washington, and we have."

Every sales person at River City Boat Sales has a thorough working knowledge of each brand the dealership carries, and one sales person is assigned as an "expert" in each brand.

always welcome for dialogue. We empower our management team to make the right call and right decisions while keeping our customers in mind and the brand and culture we represent. It's all about helping our customers and their family and friends spend more quality time and have more fun on the water!"





Desmasdon's Boat Works

Pointe au Baril, Ontario
desmasdons.com
Number of employees: 55

4

Established in 1946 in Pointe au Baril on Georgian Bay, Ontario, Desmasdon's Boat Works is located in the heart of the 30,000 Islands — a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve and the world's largest freshwater archipelago. The area is known for its intoxicating beauty, sandy beaches, sheltered harbors and some of the world's best boating.

Desmasdon's Boat Works was founded by Albert Desmasdon and purchased by Andy and Tonia Blenkarn in 1998. Today, it is co-owned by the

The dealership also invests in both training and a strong benefits package. Its core group is trained in several departments so they can assist when needed and also get a feel for the position that is right for them. And each employee is offered the option of a year-round benefits package that includes prescription, dental and medical. In addition, cash incentives — including generous holiday bonuses — are distributed throughout the year, and staff lunches are held monthly.

"We have a great team culture," French explains. "Each and every person is integral. They know it, and we know it, and we celebrate it. We love making people feel special, and they love doing a good job as a result."

"We believe that winning an award like this isn't science. It boils down to wanting to come to work every day and enjoying it. As owners, if we want to come to work every day, so does the team. We set the tone and try to make every day better than the day before."

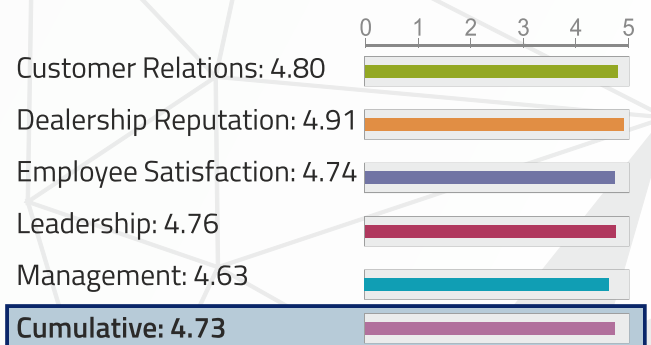


Blenkarns and Matt and Nicole French. Both couples live on Georgian Bay and share a passion for the area and the people who live there. In fact, the town of Pointe au Baril has a population of only 276 people, and Desmasdon's Boat Works employs 55 of them.

"Our team members are what make us great," says Matt French. "We do not think it is a coincidence that we win awards for both [employee satisfaction and customer service] — happy employees make happy customers, not the other way around."

Desmasdon's ownership team treats its team members less like employees and more like kin, cosigning loans, assisting with financial planning, and even financing the construction of a new home for one team member.

"Our team is our lifeblood, and we treat each and every one of them like family," notes French.





Tracker Boat Center, Columbia

Columbia, Missouri
columbia.trackerboatcenter.com
 Number of employees: 12

3

The management team of Tracker Boat Center in Columbia, Missouri, has one rule: Never ask an associate to do something that you wouldn't do yourself.

"We are a team and we are willing to assist from the initiation of the sale to the detailing of the customer's new boat to the customer taking delivery," explains Toby Clifton.



The 13-year-old dealership is located in the heart of Missouri's boating country, near Lake of the Ozarks, Mark Twain Lake, the Missouri River, and other small bodies of water. Its prime location helps the Tracker team promote boating to its customers — particularly when they aren't exactly sure what they're looking for in outdoor recreation.

"Last summer we had a customer that couldn't decide between an RV or a boat," recounts Clifton.

"We don't sell RVs, and he asked our thoughts on the matter. We told him he could sleep in his new boat, but was only going to get one chance to put an RV in the water. He bought the boat and has been a happy customer."

Clifton notes that his team's versatility sets Tracker Boat Center apart from other dealers: "Our team is focused on the customer and is capable of filling many roles within the business to meet the customer's needs. It is always about getting the customer on the water in the boat that best meets their budget and needs so everyone can experience the joy of fishing and boating."

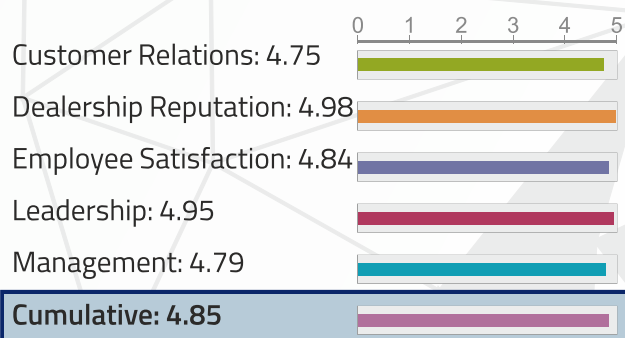
Tracker's associates enjoy a full benefits package, as well as a comprehensive corporate training and certification program.

"Our associates have the opportunity to train and advance at the dealership level, as well as the corporate level," says Clifton.

To recognize employees for stellar performance, the shop has a recognition board where management posts customer survey results. Star performance associates can earn gift cards and monthly lunches.

The secret to the success of Tracker Boat Center's Columbia location can be summed up in one word, says Clifton: Teamwork.

"The team," he explains, "is not only committed to the customer and providing great service, they are committed to one another and supporting the goals of the dealership."





Tracker Boat Center, Florence

Florence, Alabama
florence.trackerboatingcenter.com
Employees: 9

2

Tracker Boating Center in Florence, Alabama has long been a part of general manager Michael Russell's life. His grandfather started its precursor, Russell Minnow Sales, in 1952 in Decatur, Alabama. Three years later, his father, home from active duty, moved the business to Florence, renaming it Russell Sporting Center. There, the business flourished, as did Travis.

"I grew," he explains, "from taking naps on the floor of the motor room as a child, to putting together trailers, cleaning up boats (\$1 per, only after inspection), rigging, then to commission sales."



When his father passed away unexpectedly during Russell's senior year in college, he worked at the company alongside his mother.

"Business continued to be successful, and in 2002 Travis Boats approached us to purchase, and we decided to sell," recounts Russell. "I then went to work with Travis as a GM. In 2003, Tracker Marine purchased the Travis locations, and I'm currently employed as a GM at our location. I was baptized at birth in the marine industry and have truly been blessed with the opportunity to grow and nurture the many relationships/friendships I've been a part of through the years."

Russell says that what sets his Tracker Boating Center apart from other dealers is the staff's "servitude approach with each customer. The true desire to help each customer with their wants/needs is our main goal."

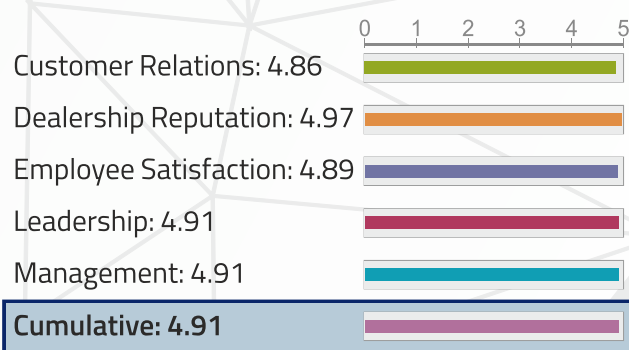
The company is committed to training and education. "With the innovations that occur in our industry," he notes, "we must be well-cultivated in sales and service to provide the best experience possible. We participate in all training opportunities

that our manufacturers and parent company offer."

Additionally, employees are cross-trained at all positions, allowing them to become familiar with other positions in the company they might be interested in. "One of the greatest advantages of working for a parent company like Bass Pro is that an individual may transfer for advancement," says Russell, "or in a case of relocation, they may assume employment at another location and maintain status."

Employees are recognized regularly and an "employee of the quarter" receives a gift card and an extra vacation day.

"We support our employees by working with them when they might need time off to attend children's games or functions, [or for] family issues, illness, etc.," he explains. "I believe that what makes this dealership one of the best dealers to work for is the sense of family and the sincere desire to provide our customers with the best possible experience. We are backed by our parent company that shares the same passion for the customer experience. When you can approach life [and] business with a sense of servitude, it's amazing what can be accomplished."





Breath's Boats & Motors

Bay St. Louis, Mississippi
 breathsboats.net
 Number of employees: 10

1

Breath's Boats & Motors has a strong legacy in the Gulf Coast region. Founded in 1925 in Old Town Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, it's one of the oldest continuously operating marine dealerships in the United States. Current owners John and Christine Ladner remember shopping for boats and accessories with their parents and grandparents.

"Having served this community for nearly 100 years, we have been privileged to be a part of multiple generations of boaters in our region," says Christine Ladner.

Any challenges Breath's faces it faces together — from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, which demolished the entire community along with the dealership, to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010, which directly affected the boating community.

"Our team is a family, supporting one another in areas relating to business and personal lives," Christine explains. "We enable individual training by covering work responsibilities for each other. We recently provided food for a team member's family whose father had died suddenly. One of our team members has permission to use our company truck for his personal use after an accident rendered his vehicle unusable. Other team members have needed assistance moving furniture, house sitting, pet sitting, etc. We support one another in every way possible."

The business uses cross-training to ensure its team members meet the needs of each of its customers, whether in sales or service. Technicians are Mercury certified, but also trained in sales operations and procedures. In addition, the owners and sales team are trained in Mercury counter skills and are certified sales consultants, so they can assist customers in any department.

Breath's has a commitment to promoting from within and supports its team members in advancing their education. Case in point, its current head technician began his tenure as a teenager, washing boats and performing yard maintenance. As he matured and showed interest, he began going to Mercury school to become a certified technician.

"We routinely accommodate Web-based training by providing time during the workday and access to laptops or desktop computers as needed," notes Christine. "We generously cover the cost of travel, class registration and salary during off-site training opportunities. We recognize the benefit of a well-trained team and their ability to interact with our customers in a confident, knowledgeable way."

The company also celebrates as a family — honoring individual and team successes. A year-end bonus is based on yearly revenue, while seasonal bonuses are based on sales and service target benchmarks. And each year, they hold a holiday dinner to toast to a successful season.

"We genuinely like and trust each other, complement each other's personalities, and operate very efficiently," says Christine.

