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Leadership longevity

In this day and age, how many businesses can celebrate a multi-decade anniversary with a leadership team that has been at the helm – together – for over 20 years? Still going strong, privately owned Polytron, Inc. enters its thirtieth year of operation in Gwinnett and company founder Charlie Jager credits a culture of excellence.

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Primerica's new international HQ comes to life



A soaring open atrium provides a welcome greeting for Primerica employees and visitors alike.

Primerica's newly built 365,000-square-foot headquarters, located in the hub of Gwinnett County's business, sports and entertainment community, is more than just an office space. It's a Primerica experience.

"We wanted to make this a showcase – the tour is like our 'World of Coke,' and our store is similar to Disneyland or Walt Disney World," explains Mark Supic, executive vice president of corporate communications at Primerica. "But this is also the largest office space in Gwinnett County. It's a better work place and work environment for our employees and reps."

This Duluth complex has been thoughtfully designed as a centerpiece for the company's 1,600 area employees and more than 90,000 representatives across North America. An in-house theater seats 500 and allows Primerica to conduct live broadcasts with its employees and clients anywhere in the world. The facility boasts an onsite cafeteria, 58 conference rooms, a Primerica Learning Center and enough office workspace to accommodate up to 1,800 associates. There is even a Primerica gift shop, to upgrade gear or purchase company-branded items.

Guests may participate in the walk-through Imagine Tour to see images and highlights from the company's history, and use large interactive touch screens to view stories shared

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Collaborative environment for area entrepreneurs

Now open in downtown Lawrenceville, Cornerstone at Novologic is a co-working space that provides an alternative to teleworking or leasing an office.

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Engineering excellence connects process, people and performance



Polytron, Inc. executives L-R: Ron Rich, vice president, Business Management; Charlie Jager, president; Brent Stromwall, vice president, Business Development; Damian Stahl, vice president, Operations.

Continued from cover

Ask Polytron President Charlie Jager about his business and he'll tell you, "Thirty years ago seems like yesterday."

Jager founded Polytron, Inc. just in time to position his company for the wild ride that has shaped business and industry the past thirty years. "The nature of our business is technology and solving problems," he says and is proud that his firm has, in essence, been at the forefront of an ever-changing industrial landscape. He attributes the company's growth and success to the skills of his team and their abilities to rapidly convert controls and instrumentation design as new technologies emerge.

In the early years, Polytron leveraged PLC technology to provide more flexible and consistent control systems to the manufacturing industry segment and soon became the trusted expert in manufacturing automation, information and power. Many of the company's original global Fortune 500 clients continue to use Polytron's services today.

The company quickly evolved to be a leading engineering consulting and systems integration firm creating success and a continuity of performance for its clients that span the U.S. and 15 other countries.

With a core business expertise in electrical engineering, this 80-person company specializes in automation and computer-based information systems that encompass the point of delivery of raw materials through to the shipping of finished goods. However, Polytron stands apart from its competition due to its people-readiness factor – both in how the company cultivates its employees and how this firm closes the loop with their customers.

"We're not just about the engineered technology solution," explains Brent Stromwall, Polytron Business

Development vice president. "We connect the people with the equipment, making sure personnel are well-equipped on any system to handle the changes in their operations." For each project, the Polytron technology transfer and training division focuses solely on developing and deploying training materials and documentation to prepare the client's operations and maintenance staff through customized training.



Polytron engineer

"Most manufacturing companies don't recognize the importance of training and wait until late in the process," says Stromwall. In his experience, customers tend to focus solely on the technical aspects of the project – specs, vendor bids, purchasing and installation. "When it's time to use the equipment, they bring new people on board. They are overwhelmed by the time they get on the plant floor."


Polytron expertly manages and coordinates entire projects, from engineered solutions, training customer teams and ramp up of the automation process. "When engaged with a client to deliver a system, we work with their stakeholders to understand and agree to what the goal is – what suc-

cess means for their business," Stromwall says.

The multi-disciplinary team that starts the project stays with it, taking ownership and responsibility through to delivery. The project manager essentially becomes an extension of the client's staff for the project duration. Depending upon its complexity, a project can take six months or more than 18 months and require a degree of travel.

"This is a very hard business, both physically draining and mentally challenging," says Jager. Knowing just how arduous a project can be, Jager has always been very careful in choosing who he hires. Not only do candidates need to demonstrate electrical engineering prowess, Jager delves deeper to gain insight into their character and work ethic. Spend time with Jager and he will tell you just what led him to hire three men, more than 20 years ago, that now make up his leadership team. Hint: they each passed his test.

As for Polytron's connection to the Gwinnett business community, Jager says, "Being here a long time, when you've seen rapid change, you lose sight of the different types of challenges that come with a mature county." Jager recently made the decision to keep operations here in Gwinnett after meeting with the Gwinnett Chamber and the Gwinnett Place CID, learning of progress being made to retain and attract businesses to the area.

As such, Polytron is adding a more local and regional strategic focus to its sales cycle. "We can help Gwinnett and Georgia, through different economic development groups, make the appeal that here in the state is a solid engineering consulting firm that helps with manufacturing systems," says Stromwall. 

Learn more at www.polytron.com.

Did You Know?

Telltale detrimental leader behaviors

What can Gwinnett business leaders learn from watching the earnings of publicly traded companies?

"Plenty," says Kathleen Brush, Ph. D., a 25-year veteran of international business and author of *The Power of One: You're the Boss* (www.kathleenbrush.com). "When looking at the corporations reporting lower-than-expected earnings, read between the lines. They are not going to admit that the reason is a failure of leadership, but 99 times out of 100 that's what it is."

In her work for companies around the country, from restructuring operations to improving profitability, Brush sees an epidemic of bad leader behaviors. "As a manager, you wield a tremendous amount of power," she says. "You can be an incredibly negative power or a positive one."

Brush recommends, "If you're a boss examining your own lower-than-expected performance, instead of wasting time searching for scapegoats, look in the mirror. Most bosses unwittingly exhibit bad leader behaviors daily that cause their businesses to suffer." To rebound, "bosses have to purge the bad behaviors."

Here are four increasingly prevalent and damaging behaviors leaders exhibit in today's workplace.

1 An **unethical boss** is a powerful de-motivator and causes employees to lose respect. Breaking or fudging the rules, cheating, lying or indulging in behaviors that reveal a lack of moral principles also 'give' employees permission to do the same.

2 An **unfair boss** often makes decisions based on current societal efforts to treat people equally versus promoting fairness in the workplace. If an equality mentality prevails, the best employees' productivity may decline to that of average workers.

3 A **buddy boss** neutralizes authority and power. Friendships also cloud a leader's objectivity and hinder the ability to correct behaviors, to delegate and to hold employees accountable. When output is compromised, it's the boss who will be accountable.

4 A **disorganized boss** perpetuates a confused workplace by failing to deliver and manage plans and strategies to guide the team. Employees who lack direction cannot maximize productivity or work toward superior innovation.