

New North: J. F. Ahern Co. receives 2022 New North Workplace Excellence Award

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NEW NORTH, June 9, 2022 – J. F. Ahern Co., a mechanical and fire protection contractor headquartered in Fond du Lac, has been named as the winner of the 2022 New North Workplace Excellence Award. Selected from nominated companies in the 18-county region through a multi-phase evaluation process, J. F. Ahern Co. representatives were presented the award at the New North Summit, held June 9 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay.

The award recognizes organizations within the New North region who are improving their competitive advantage through people practices that lead to successful business outcomes. Sponsored by Right Management, businesses are evaluated for the award based on employee engagement, business results and overall success.

“It is an honor to present J. F. Ahern Co. with the New North Workplace Excellence Award,” says Barb LaMue, president and CEO of New North Inc. “In reviewing the award submissions, their people-focused approach really stood out to us. Strong internal communications and effective employee onboarding are keys to success in today’s business climate, and J. F. Ahern Co. has developed new processes to master those universal challenges.”

Founded in 1880, J. F. Ahern Co. specializes in HVAC, Plumbing, Controls, Sprinkler, Extinguisher & Alarm, and Fabrication for construction and service projects. The family-owned company, which is the third-largest fire-protection contractor in the country, has more than 1,400 employees servicing commercial and industrial customers across the United States.

1. F. Ahern Co. centers its operations around one thing: people. Having a highly engaged and effective workforce is one of the company's four strategic objectives.

"Our company's 142-year history wouldn't be possible without our employees' innovative, cutting-edge ideas," says Tony Ahern, president & COO of J. F. Ahern Co. "Ongoing investment in innovative solutions, employee development, technology, facilities and equipment enable us to be positioned for adapting to the changing markets and evolving customer needs. We're grateful for this recognition and look forward to serving our customers for many years to come."

Faced with the issue of effectively communicating and creating a shared culture for its employees throughout hundreds of jobsite locations and 15 offices across the Midwest, J. F. Ahern Co. found itself with two outdated and inefficient systems for communication. Its desire was to make employees feel like they were part of the company, and that they could interact with both leadership and other employees.

Company leaders set about to identify and implement a more efficient tool for internal communications, along with meeting a related challenge around uniformity in training programs. A significant amount of time is required to effectively train its more than 65 fire-protection designers, and creating competent designers in the shortest possible time becomes a competitive advantage for J. F. Ahern Co.

A new internal communications platform – RedZone – was created and put into place. Each company department and team have a dedicated RedZone page to connect, house documents and share calendars. Employees designated as "Content Champions" ensure that their respective spaces are maintained and up to date. RedZone additionally has allowed J. F. Ahern Co. to focus on diversity, equity and inclusion within its workplace.

As part of the company's enhanced internal communications and spurred by creative problem solvers in its human resources department, J. F. Ahern Co. developed a pair of onboarding plans, the ConstructYOU and DETAILS programs.

ConstructYOU is an umbrella program that focuses on individual employee development, manager development, company culture and community involvement. J. F. Ahern Co. describes ConstructYOU as being more robust than other companies' training programs, largely because it focuses on every aspect of life at work.

The DETAILS program started when design managers and H.R. got together to create a more efficient training program for company fire-protection designers. Comprised of 34 total courses over 90 weeks, the program illustrates the full commitment of J. F. Ahern Co. to build and retain the best fire-protection designers in the industry.

Implementation of the entirely new communications system and training programs was a substantial accomplishment. Construction is known as an industry where established practices are difficult to move on from. But J. F. Ahern Co. leadership were able to successfully put these new systems into place.

Since the time these initiatives were implemented, the company's sustainable, profitable growth has grown more than \$40 million, with last year being one of the most profitable years in J. F. Ahern Co. history. Even better, the profits were shared with team members through the company's employee incentive fund.

Organizations located within the New North were qualified for the award. Companies did not need to be headquartered in New North for eligibility, but were required to have a division or location within the region.

Recent winners of the New North Workplace Excellence Award include Wipfli (2020-21); Integrity Insurance (2019); Schneider (2018); American Transmission Company, Expera Specialty Solutions and Werner Electric Supply (2017); Foth (2016); Oshkosh Corp. (2015); and U.S. Venture, Inc. (2014).

About New North, Inc.:

New North, Inc., is a 501(c)3 non-profit, regional economic development corporation fostering collaboration among private and public sector leaders throughout the 18 counties of Northeast Wisconsin, known as the New North region. The New North brand unites the region both internally and externally around talent development, brand promotion and business development, signifying the collective economic power behind the 18 counties. The counties include Outagamie, Winnebago, Calumet, Waupaca, Brown, Shawano, Oconto, Marinette, Door, Kewaunee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, Florence, Menominee and Waushara. www.thenewnorth.com

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About J. F. Ahern Co.:

1. F. Ahern Co. is a mechanical and fire protection contractor specializing in HVAC, Plumbing, Controls, Sprinkler, Extinguisher & Alarm, and Fabrication for construction and service projects. Founded in 1880, the company has over 1,400 employees servicing commercial and industrial customers across the United States. To keep up with the latest company news and events, visit www.jfahern.com.
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