

# Investment in Leadership Pays Off: JNE Welding

If you ask JNE Welding's President Jim Nowakowski what makes his company successful, the answer isn't surprising. It's in the tagline attached to everything they do.

"The combined strength of our people, our products and our partners is our company's motto," noted Nowakowski. "Our business is an alliance between ourselves, our suppliers, other service providers, and financial institutions. We aren't truly successful until we have a win-win for all the participants."

JNE's desire to engage its partners and employees was recently recognized

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by the North Saskatoon Business Association (NSBA) when the company won the Leadership Award at the annual Business Builders Awards Banquet.

JNE has made developing a culture where leadership is supported and promoted a key aim of the organization. Nowakowski believes this emphasis on leadership and the company's commitment to building strong business relationships has been the key to his business' success.

"At this time we have committed to train approximately 70 members of our JNE team with the 8 day leadership program. This is a huge investment in our people; however, it's one I believe will pay dividends for a lifetime," elaborated Nowakowski.

"I don't want people to have to work with us; I want our partners and employees to be excited to work with us."

While, Nowakowski credits this distinction with some of his company's continued success, JNE Welding has been a leader in Saskatchewan in a lot of other ways. JNE was one of the first Saskatchewan steel fabricators to

achieve ISO 9001:2000 certification. In addition, the company proudly supports continuous improvement and recognition by offering in-house awards for safety and community involvement.

"JNE is not unique in its industry or in the community, but we are authentic," noted Nowakowski. "JNE continues to learn, to borrow from the ideas and practices of others, to incorporate best practices and wisdom in our business; however, we are not imitators. It is the chemistry within our organization that sets us apart from others."

Established in 1980, JNE Welding is one of Saskatchewan's largest full-service steel fabricators, serving the mining, environmental, construction, oil sand, and power-generating sectors of Canada and the U.S.A.

JNE operates two locations in Saskatoon. The investment JNE made in their second location won them the 2007 ABEX Award for Investment.

"We had originally planned to move to the second location," noted Nowakowski. "However, once the second facility was established we realized we could fill both. JNE grew

from 75 to 150 people in only a couple of years."

"I was initially worried about the logistics of operating two locations, but I have been extremely impressed with our staff and with the corporate culture that has developed at both locations," elaborated Nowakowski. "I believe it's a testament to our leadership environment in which our people develop processes and procedures while encouraging improvement."

Started in 1980, JNE Welding is obviously a Saskatchewan success story. However, like many local businesses, the company has suffered set backs.

"We lost a significant amount of work in November/ December last year," noted Nowakowski. "But we got through it, and we did it without laying-off any staff. We are still anticipating that, despite the downturn, our staffing will grow overall in 2009."

Looking ahead, Nowakowski sees great things for JNE Welding and Saskatchewan.

### Where will JNE Welding be in 5 years?

Based on what I see happening in the province now, and what I see happening at JNE with the capable core staff we have been able to build up, I predict we will become a significantly larger player.

We have always maintained a healthy growth rate and five years from now, I won't be surprised to have grown by 50% or more.

Although it is difficult to predict the future, in five years JNE could employ more than 200 people. This additional staff, coupled with increased automation, could mean we are doing about \$45-50 million dollars annually.



### Where do you see Saskatchewan in 5 Years?

Right now there is potentially more opportunity available to provincial businesses and entrepreneurs than ever before. We are fortunate here in Saskatchewan; the economic downturn has not been as severe as it has been in other places.

Our Province needs to use this slowdown to re-evaluate what is important. We have been operating all-out for awhile now and we need to start paying better attention to how we are operating. A reality check right now is incredibly important.

Saskatchewan has the opportunity to learn from other jurisdictions and avoid their mistakes. If we do this successfully, we can earn sustainable growth over the long term. We can be a serious player on the world stage.

I envision strong sustainable growth for Saskatchewan over the next 5 years. We

no longer have to be a have not. We can do things better here than they have done in other jurisdictions. Our 'reality check' probably could not have come at a better time and we will come out of it in much better shape.

I have a lot of faith in our Saskatchewan companies.

As a resident and business operator in this province, I want to offer a huge thank you to the Saskatchewan businesses and communities who have had the vision and commitment to make our businesses more than a place to work, and who have made our communities more than a place to live.

We are not all there yet but we need to be. I truly applaud all the businesses that 'get it'. It's not good enough just to be in it for the money, we need to build our province and community. In part it has been the efforts of these businesses that helped elevate our province into such a strong position.



Jim Nowakowski, President, JNE Welding (left)