



2015 National Capital Business Ethics Awards
Judge's Comments
Medium Company Category
Recipient: United Air Temp

First, I need to acknowledge the two other semi-finalists in this category – Jackson and Tull and Enlightened. My fellow judge and I thought very highly of the integrity that shines through each of your organizations and the commitment to excellence that was obvious in the way you run your businesses. You deserve to be recognized and I encourage you to continue in your pursuit of the highest standards of ethical business practices.

But this year is United Air Temp's year to be honored. They are an organization whose Mission is To Create an environment where talented people with like-minded goals can grow and achieve great things. Does this sound like any plumbing and heating company you know? It didn't to me, so I was intrigued.

And you may not know this, but United Air Temp has applied to this award program over a period of more than 7 years. They have been acknowledged before but in the judges eyes, were never quite ready for the #1 slot. But rather than give up, the Leadership team at United Air Temp stepped aside for a few years and rethought their approach to building ethics into their business. During those years, they incorporated a number of changes in their approach to ethics that helped the company's values come to life.

And let me tell you - that's not easy in the industry in which United Air temp operates. The plumbing, heating and air conditioning systems business is one that as a whole, struggles to command respect, not unlike car dealers. They face challenges of hiring workers with the proper immigration status and with English language skills that allow them to be effective. They are a business whose employees enter private homes and businesses every day in delivery of a service that most layman don't understand. It is an industry that is not without major challenges. However, United Air Temp has handled them all head on and from our estimation, have done so as successfully as any business could.

When you walk into their headquarters, you'll travel through hallways lined with personal letters from satisfied clients. You'll see friendly faces and speak with employees who volunteer unsolicited, how proud they are to work there. We learned that longevity is extremely high – far exceeding industry standards and that's because United Air Temp actively looks to promote from within whenever possible. They have defined career paths for the staff and in some cases internal promotion is the only way certain jobs are filled. They believe in recognizing their own.

Mike Giordano, the CEO has been with the company since 1993, having joined right out of college. He was afforded the opportunity to learn and grow and is a strong believer in that fact that everyone deserves the same opportunity. Mike values his employees while at the same time holds them to a high standard of integrity and professional service. He travels to one of

the many offices in the Metro area, once every week and shows up unannounced for a local office staff meeting. He wants to ensure that his managers are getting the message of ethical business behavior across to all the employees in the right way. Mike also communicates to all staff about the importance of ethics and the Company's Code of Conduct in his regular column in the company's newsletter.

A few excerpts from their Code of Conduct are: We will stand behind our craftsmanship, We will serve our customers with integrity, competence and objectivity; We will not provide services to a customer under terms or conditions that might damage or compromise the integrity of our trade or profession. There are a number of other tenants posted proudly on their website and embraced by all of the 20 or so employees that we met.

UAT is active in their community through in-kind services to organizations like Habitat for Humanity and Rebuild Together Alexandria and has an atmosphere that exudes a positive, can-do attitude, a commitment to good business practices and a belief that the golden rule should be alive and well – even in the plumbing, heating and air conditioning business.

Is United Air Temp perfect??? And does every one of their hundreds of employees succeed in living up to all the standards of the Mission and the Code of Conduct. They wish I would say yes – but we all know that's just not possible. But what is possible and what happens every day at UAT is that an environment of service, support, integrity and growth exists and by believing in their people, they continuously improve and in doing so – according to their guiding principles - they strive to change the industry in which they belong.