

SACRAMENTO BUSINESS JOURNAL

EL DORADO PLACER SACRAMENTO YOLO

SMALL COMPANIES

Second place: Robert W. Baird & Co.

When local financial advisors at Robert W. Baird & Co. need help with an account, they can reach out to any of Baird's associates around the world.

They also know that if they have a concern, senior management at the financial services company is willing to listen, said Joseph Hoon, senior vice president in Baird's Roseville office.

STORY BY
ELAINE
GOODMAN

That caring starts with Paul Purcell — Baird's chairman, president and CEO — who sets an example for other managers in the company, Hoon said: "I can walk up to him at a meeting. He'll ask, 'How is Sharilyn doing?' " referring to Hoon's wife.

Hoon has worked for Baird since 2008 when the company opened its Roseville branch. It has since opened a Sacramento office; the offices combined employ 45.

Hoon previously worked with Montgomery Securities in San Francisco. But after a series of ownership changes, he said the company lost its focus. "It was all about protecting the firm," said Hoon, 50.

Unlike many other financial management companies that say their clients come first, Baird really means it, Hoon said, adding that "Baird really lives by that mantra."

Putting clients first and taking pride in its work is an attitude that stems partly from the fact that Baird is owned by its employees. For Hoon, being an employee-owner has made his work more meaningful.

Senior vice president Mike Ankrum, Sacramento branch manager, agreed. "Because of the owner equity that we have, everything that happens means a little bit more to us," Ankrum said.

Ankrum started his career with E.F.



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As an employee-owned company, Robert W. Baird & Co. inspires employees to take great pride in their work while creating a cohesive and supportive workplace.

Hutton 28 years ago and went through several mergers before joining Baird in 2009. "I'm the happiest I've ever been in the business," said Ankrum, 59.

Creating a cohesive, supportive workplace where everyone is part of the team also is a priority at Baird.

The company has a policy — affectionately dubbed the "no-jerk" policy, designed to keep unpleasant people out of its ranks. Before associates are hired, they must travel to corporate headquarters in Milwaukee for a screening. Even if they're a strong sales performer, they might not make the cut. Ankrum cited an example in which a candidate was ingratiating to senior management but condescending to other employees — and didn't get the job.

Baird also offers personal and professional development programs that include tuition reimbursement, leadership development courses, community service opportunities, and wellness initiatives that include financial incentives such as discounted health insurance premiums.

Baird was selected by Fortune magazine this year as one of the "100 Best Companies To Work For," its 10th consecutive year on the list. It ranked No. 14 this year, up from No. 21 the previous year.

The Essentials

Description: An employee-owned, international financial services company

Branch managers: Adam Persily, Roseville office; Mike Ankrum, Sacramento office

Local employees: 45 **Total employees:** 2,925

Headquarters: Milwaukee, Wis.

Define the perfect workplace: "We believe a perfect workplace starts with talented people who love what they do. At Baird, we aim to hire the very best people in the financial services industry. We then provide ongoing personal and professional development opportunities to help them be their very best." — Adam Persily, Roseville branch manager

Most important workplace dynamic: "To create a work environment where associates are encouraged to succeed and given the resources to do so. Baird offers many personal and professional development programs, including tuition reimbursement, leadership development courses, community service opportunities, and two paid days off each year for volunteer work. We also have a 'no-jerk' policy to ensure we hire quality people."

— Mike Ankrum, Sacramento branch manager

Biggest mistake an owner/manager can make: "Not listening to associates. As an employee-owned firm, every Baird associate is integral to the success of our firm. As such, we regularly survey associates to get their feedback on the workplace, key initiatives and to ensure they have the resources, tools and support they need to be successful."

— Adam Persily, Roseville branch manager