

Lifeworks Business Spotlight

Key Surgical



Walk into Key Surgical's headquarters in Eden Prairie, Minn., and it's clear the company thinks outside the box.

The walls are painted warm colors not usually seen in an industrial office complex. Artsy, poster-size photos of Key Surgical products — surgical tape, instrument cleaning brushes, instrument tip caps — hang throughout the space. Large picture windows separate the main office from the warehouse, providing warehouse workers with natural light and an opportunity to keep an eye on the weather (a popular pastime regardless of the season in Minnesota).

Then there's the company's mission statement, which includes this: "To be good citizens by providing a rewarding and fun place for employees to work and sharing the benefits of our growth with the community in which we operate."

One way Key Surgical is sharing those benefits with the community? By hiring Lifeworks clients to package and label shipments for distribution to its customers.

Hiring people with disabilities was long on the wish list of Brian O'Connell, Key Surgical's president and CEO.

"One of my older brothers has a disability," says O'Connell. "He lives in a group home in Connecticut, and has a job through an organization like Lifeworks. I've seen how much he gets out of his job, and always felt that if I ever had an opportunity to employ people like Kenny it would be a good thing to do."

When the company had packaging positions to fill, O'Connell and Scot Milchman, Key Surgical's COO, decided to explore the possibility of hiring workers with disabilities. O'Connell and Milchman agreed they would only hire people with disabilities if it made good business sense. They invited several employment solution providers to present their services and submit bids for a contract with Key.

"We were far and away most impressed by Lifeworks," says O'Connell. "They presented a formal proposal and were incredibly professional."

After running the numbers, it was clear that hiring Lifeworks clients would be a wise business decision. A year later, it's clear it was a good move for other reasons as well.

"It's fun having Lifeworks staff in our office," says O'Connell. "They

change the culture and tone of the office for the better."

They're also fully integrated into office life at Key Surgical.

"The Lifeworks staff are part of our team," says O'Connell, citing a few examples of camaraderie: "We recently had a chili cook-off, and Joe Inserra made chili. If you're buddies with Curt Moore, he'll give you gum."

As Key Surgical grows, O'Connell says he'll look for ways to grow the company's relationship with Lifeworks as well.

"There's really no reason for us not to expand our relationship with Lifeworks," he says. "And it feels good to pay it forward for all that my brother has received."



Above: Scot Milchman, right, and Brian O'Connell, left with Lifeworks client Misty Colby.

Below: (clockwise from top) Brian O'Connell, Curt Moore, Joe Inserra, Misty Colby, Lena Cordie, Becky Sticha, and Scot Milchman.