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ARUP Laboratories



You know you've created a desirable workplace when 12,000 résumés pour in every year. Dr. Carl Kjeldsberg tells Andrea Gregory how it's done.

Flexible work shifts; free mental, legal, and financial counseling; an onsite fitness center, and even free lab testing for the family pet—the job perks at ARUP Laboratories make a nice package. CEO and chairman of the board Dr. Carl Kjeldsberg said having a strong reputation is not enough to attract the best in a highly competitive industry, but making the staff feel at home and promoting life outside the office adds another level of temptation for job seekers.

The proof lies in the stack of résumés: Kjeldsberg said nearly 12,000 applicants have applied for ARUP jobs in the last 12 months. Out of those job seekers, 350 were welcomed into the company. Knowing many people are attracted to ARUP does not make Kjeldsberg overconfident. He said he knows it's critical for any company to have the right skilled professionals. Getting the good ones and not letting them go is a priority at ARUP, he said.

Based in Salt Lake City, Utah, ARUP's nearly 1,800 employees help run the 24/7 business, performing over 2,000 different types of specialized tests for cancer, infectious disease, and other conditions. Kjeldsberg said over 25,000 specimens come into the lab for testing each day.

“This laboratory requires some very sophisticated training, and there's a lot of competition for people with these specialized skills. So, we create an environment that is attractive,” he said. Kjeldsberg said the company's low turnover has a lot to do with the number of employee benefits. For example, employees can work a variety of schedules, from a standard nine-to-five to a seven-day-on-seven-day-off arrangement.

Low-cost medical and dental insurance, profit sharing, tuition



reimbursement, educational opportunities, and a free onsite health clinic for employees and their families are just a few of the benefits in what Kjeldsberg calls a family-friendly environment.

ARUP has an Institute for Learning that's a lot like its own university, Kjeldsberg said. Focusing on employee education fosters highly skilled professionals and provides opportunities for advancement. For example, among the executives are people who at one time worked as bench technologists, he said.

"We promote a balance between work, wellness, and family. Since the testing we do is so important, it's important that the employees are happy and healthy. If they are, they are going to do better jobs," said Kjeldsberg.

Leader of the pack

According to Kjeldsberg, ARUP is among the largest reference laboratories in the country. Owned by the University of Utah, it strives to promote education in several different areas.

"Part of our mission is to educate others, so we send out medical directors and technologists to give lectures at the various hospitals around the country," he said. The lectures are videotaped and lent to clients to be used as educational tools. ARUP also provides assistance to smaller laboratories, helping them develop career and client services and business strategies. Kjeldsberg said ARUP focuses on servicing other laboratories that are not capable of doing certain tests in their own facilities.

Kjeldsberg said ARUP did not make it to the top overnight, but with time has become a leading example of a company that broke into the industry and commanded a strong name for itself. When ARUP opened in 1984, the leaders of the company knew they had a lot to prove.

"It's like most organizations. When you start up, it's tough," said Kjeldsberg, who has been with ARUP since its inception. "When we talked to people in New York City and suggested they send their tests to Utah, they thought we were crazy."

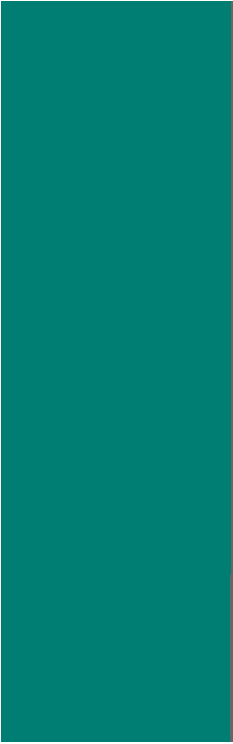
It's not such a crazy idea any more, said Kjeldsberg. More than 50% of US university hospitals currently use ARUP's services. In addition to its stable reputation, ARUP has been the recipient of many awards.

"We've gone from \$1 million to almost a quarter of a billion dollar company in 20 years," said Kjeldsberg. "Consistently, over the last decade we've had double-digit growth every year."

In 2003, ARUP revenues were \$190 million. The following year, revenues rose to \$215 million and are expected to increase to \$240 million in 2005. "Our goal is to continue the double-digit growth," he said. "That's the challenge I've put to our groups for at least the next five years. Right now, there is a tremendous need for a quality lab like ARUP."

The path to success

Every Thursday at noon, Kjeldsberg hikes around the beautiful



foothills and mountains surrounding the office with several of ARUP's employees. Depending on the weather, 10 to 40 ARUP employees accompany him on these 30-minute ventures. "It gives me an opportunity to meet different employees and it gives them a chance to get to know me a little better," he said.

ARUP believes in healthy lifestyles on many levels. The walks are sponsored by an in- company wellness program, run by two wellness coordinators. Although ARUP accepts the challenge of staying on the cutting edge and ahead of the competition in developing new diagnostic tests, it refuses to compromise its culture.

"I think that's one of the secrets to our success. We have a positive culture, one where patients come first, and we openly share our expertise with others," said Kjeldsberg. "We set high expectations for ourselves and others. I think it's a place where people show compassion, courtesy, and respect."
