

# MAST AWARD

Category: Commercial Enterprise

MediDirect Inc.

## BUILDING A TEAM OF VISIONARIES

MediDirect employees and contractors are pulling each other forward to revolutionize the way benefits programs work

BY NICOLE DUNSDON

Walking into MediDirect Inc., the first notable thing is the crowd around the reception desk. President Murray Malley, account manager Deb Hastings and two others are staring intently at a computer screen. They are enjoying themselves much more than they should be. Don't they know they're at work?

When complimented on the large number of front-end staff, the group bursts into happy laughter as Malley heads into the staff room to make a fresh pot of coffee.

MediDirect consultant Joanne Knowles, an insurance specialist, later points out, "Everybody makes coffee, everybody unloads the dishwasher." And small things like that serve as good examples of what takes place at this company, and what really counts. Knowles says Malley wants to know what his staff members think will make the company better. "That's not very common," she says.

But Malley wouldn't have it any other way. "I never tell people how to do something or what to do," he says. "Then I've just got employ-

ees, not a team of visionaries."

Malley has spent 14 years turning companies around, without one failure. "I've always been able to increase revenues from two to four times within the first year, with profits increasing at a faster rate, because I look for the opportunities."

MediDirect is a dental and wellness benefits program provider. Instead of charging premiums, MediDirect is a "cost plus plan." Corporate clients choose the number of pre-tax dollars they put into each employee's health spending plan, and from there, the

employee chooses how the dollars are spent – preventative health and wellness initiatives included.

MediDirect staff administer the plan for a 10 per cent fee, offer individual health insurance plans, and discuss access to individualized and group life, disability, critical illness and travel insurance.

"Our focus is on the benefits plan and saving companies money," says Hastings. "We're not an insurance company – keeping 20 to 40 per cent of the premiums that employers pay. This is a different concept."



From left, Carmen Trofimenkoff, Joanne Knowles and Murray Malley of MediDirect Inc.

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*Murray Malley,  
president, MediDirect Inc.*

When he bought MediDirect a year-and-a-half ago, Malley says the company had 200 clients. Now, with almost 650, he is set to revolutionize the way benefits programs are run.

“Big things are coming,” says Carmen Trofimenkoff, an insurance specialist and consultant to MediDirect. “Murray is a big thinker and his vision of what MediDirect could be is huge.”

She says that as the company grows, Malley takes his employees’ and contractors’ input very seriously. “It’s really motivating,” says Trofimenkoff. “His collaborative approach puts everything on the table. We all know what is going on, we’re all part of the company, and there are no secrets.”

Malley, who says communication has to happen on a daily basis, doesn’t believe in performance appraisals. “It is the biggest waste of time to wait until once a year to tell people how they are doing.”

And the same works in reverse. “If someone doesn’t like what I’m doing, my door is open for them to come in and put me in my place,” Malley says. And has that happened? Malley nods a simple “yup.”

“A lot of people are prone to just being told what to do,” he says. “But I hire people who want to get their minds going. That way, they pull you – instead of you pushing them.” ■

## THE MAST AWARD

MediDirect® Inc. was recently awarded one of several MAST Awards for 2005. MAST is an acronym for management and staff transformation, with the MAST Award using the same acronym for Management And Staff Team Award. More than that, it names a bold initiative aimed at establishing Calgary as an international model for generating business success through synergism. The MAST philosophy begins with the premise that the best companies are those able to articulate the vision of the CEO across the counter at the employee to customer level. Staff enthusiasm is the strongest lever to corporate success. This is the core of the MAST philosophy.

The carrying forward of a powerful vision is more dependent on gaining support within the organization than on clever advertising. The opportunity is within: a part of the passion of every employee for the company he or she represents. The creation of an exciting and empowering corporate culture is not only the surest but also the most cost efficient avenue to commercial success.

The evaluation of nominees for the award was based on the following criteria:

1. Measure of customer satisfaction.
2. Measure of employee satisfaction.
3. Use of written job descriptions.
4. Use of written standards of performance.
5. Evidence of management accountability to employees.
6. Use of a published mission/vision to guide employees on how to drive value for customers.
7. Use of an established process for team measurement and recognition or reward when the team wins.
8. Use of personal team development programs available to everybody, which are tied to individual, team, customer satisfaction and business performance.
9. Evidence of employee empowerment - team and management.
10. Development of employee empowerment as part of the fabric of the organizational culture.
11. Use of performance descriptions - profit, market share, achievement of goals.
12. A demonstrated link between the above items and positive performance.

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