



Grand Award – Large Company Brakebush Brothers, Inc.

Back in 1925, brothers Bill and Otto Brakebush got an idea for starting a business. They bought a truck and began hauling cows and pigs to processing plants in Madison. They also bought eggs from local stores and resold them in areas like Milwaukee, where eggs were less plentiful. Eventually, they built an egg packing plant on the family farm and then a poultry dressing facility. Later came freezers and modern automated equipment. From that modest beginning followed generations of family members, expanding, diversifying and refining the business. Today, Brakebush Brothers, Inc., employs over 1,700 people at three locations and produces more than 275 *million* pounds of product annually.

Brakebush doesn't raise or slaughter chickens, but it does create about 150 different products, from whole chickens and marinated chicken breasts, to nuggets and tenders. The research and development team is always looking for something new. Seventy-five percent of the company's business comes from the food service industry, such as restaurants, hospitals and schools. Processing chicken requires very high sanitation standards, and Brakebush has installed an ultra-modern system to handle that.

Otto's son Carl is still the principal owner and chairman of the board. But 12 family members are currently employed by the company, and half of the third generation hold management positions. A mentoring program is in place for fourth generation family members. A "Family Council" ensures that future generations have the proper education, training and passion to build on the success of their predecessors.

The company also invests in its employees. The Brakebush Brothers mission statement says that they will treat all customers, suppliers, employees and people associated with the company as they themselves wish to be treated.

As evidence of this, Brakebush provides above-average compensation, contributes to employees' 401(k) investments, pays for continuing education and funds a scholarship program for children of employees to go to college or trade school. Fully 15 percent of Brakebush's employees at the Westfield facility have been with the company for more than 20 years.

Brakebush prides itself in being a good neighbor. The company provides local employment and also supports volunteerism in the Westfield community. And fully **10 percent** of the company's net income goes to charity via a family charitable trust.

Judges took special note of Brakebush's strong family values, its innovations within the industry, continued strong sales growth, dedication to philanthropy, and an ongoing succession planning committee.

The Grand Award in the Large Company category goes to Brakebush Brothers, Inc., of Westfield.

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