



BLUE RIBBON FOR BLUEBIRDS

Mondovi, Wisconsin based Marten Transport's operating revenue was \$8.8 million in 1981. It's on pace for more than \$400 million in 2005. The company has nearly 400 employees working at its corporate office, supporting the efforts of its 2,200 drivers and nearly 500 contractors

An Agreeable Employer

Marten Transport wins "Best Places to Work" competition

By Liam Marlaire

CVB2B Editor

MONDOVI, Wis. --- Greg Van Pelt has worked at Marten Transport for nearly 24 years. He was the second dispatcher hired at the company and was one of only seven people in the office when he first started.

"It's gone from a little building to another building to another building," said Van Pelt, now director of special operations for Marten. "It was just so family oriented when I started. They weren't concerned just about you but about how your family was also. They treated me probably better than I deserved."

Now Van Pelt's daily chores include fuel-related issues such as setting up fueling sites for drivers and establishing and maintaining fuel networks. Marten's responsibilities have expanded over the years as well, with a

roster of around 2,400 drivers and more than 400 employees in the company's Mondovi headquarters.

Roger Marten founded the company in 1946. His son, Randy, runs the business today as president and chairman of the board. The company has evolved into one of the nation's leading transporters of temperature-sensitive materials. In 2004 an 11,000 square-foot expansion was added to the Mondovi facility and a new terminal was opened in Indianapolis. Marten also has terminals in Georgia, California and Oregon. Last year also saw the beginnings of a plan to add more than 160 jobs over the next three years.



Van Pelt

Such a storied tradition was one reason Marten Transport has earned top honor in Chippewa Valley B2B's second annual "Best Places to Work" feature. Other factors that resonated loudly

in nominations trumpeting the company included flexible scheduling and compensation for continuing education. Employees submitted more than 40 nominations via e-mail and regular mail.

Tari Peetz is a senior billing clerk at Marten who's worked for the company since 1993.

"For me the thing that makes it unique is the flexibility there is in the hours you work," she said. "I can work four 10-hour days or work on Saturday."

"As my parents started to age, they had medical issues. If I need to be in Madison during the week, I can work the weekends if I need to. For me, that's been invaluable."

Originally from Madison, Peetz moved to the Chippewa Valley when her husband bought a dairy farm in the area. She stayed home with her children when they were young before joining the Marten staff. Her son even worked for Marten at one time.

Employees find tradition, benefits and flexibility appealing

"I think the fact that they have such a really good company deal is important," she said. "I've just been very pleased with the situation as a whole, and I think I've been treated very fairly."

Randy Marten, was named president and CEO in 1993 and has retained those titles ever since. Bob Smith is chief operations officer. He has been with the company since 1989 and handles much of the day-to-day operations. Smith gives much of the credit for a company that's grown around 11 percent a year to the culture at Marten Transport.



Smith

Smith also said being named "Best Place to Work" was welcomed news.

"As senior management, we feel we have a great company and it's great to hear that other employees feel the same way," he said.

"Every one of us is backed up with a great person at the next level – from Randy Marten down to every level."

Many of Marten's employees have local ties and were recruited through local colleges and universities. The fact that a fair number have relatives also working at the company also adds to Marten's familial feel. Smith has a son who's worked there since his junior year in high school.

"I tell everybody the same thing," he said. "Come in, work hard, and be dependable and you'll be successful and have a lot of opportunities."

Sue Baier, vice president of information systems knows from experience that advancement opportunities abound at Marten. She started as a programmer at the company around 12 years ago and quickly



Baier

"I think discipline plays a big role," he said. "If we decide we're going to do something, we get it done. And the employees believe in us."



Fleet managers at the corporate office monitor weather developments on large video projection screens. They also stay in constant communication with drivers via on-board computers.

rose through the ranks. She now runs a department that, among other duties, writes about 90 percent of the company's software in-house.

Baier gave birth to two sets of twins following pregnancies marked by complications. Even before she earned her current title, Marten met her needs as she was able to get time off and do much of her work from home on a laptop.

"The company's been very good to me," Baier said. "I've had a lot of issues to deal with."

The Durand native also enjoys working for a company that's so critical to the Chippewa Valley economy.

"You have a sense of pride when you see the trucks," she said. "You know what piece of the puzzle you worked on."

"I also don't think I've had a boring day in my 12 years here."

Tuition reimbursement also was a recurring theme in submitted nominations. Many listed that benefit as a key to Marten's success. Education is vital in a field that's becoming more and more technically advanced.

"It's amazing how many non-driving jobs we have available," Smith said. "People don't realize how high-tech our industry is."

Baier said there is an underlying sense

of camaraderies as well.

"It's a big company, but they do have a family atmosphere," she said. "You might have an argument with someone, but 10 minutes later you're having lunch together."

Marten Transport prides itself on doing much of its work in house. It has its own insurance division and there is even a gift shop with a host of items graced with the company's familiar blue colors and avian-based logo.

And Marten continues to grow. Van Pelt grew up in nearby Eleva and his wife is from Eau Claire. He worked in a gas station but left when he first got married. He tried the grocery business for about six months before Marten with little experience in trucking. He will be celebrating 24 years of employment at Marten this December.

"It's a family-run business. You figured you would grow to some extent, but you never

would have predicted it would grow this much," he said. "The pay package is good and they still keep a family atmosphere."

"It's also good for the community. I think if we weren't here, some of the businesses in town either wouldn't be here or probably wouldn't be doing nearly as well as they are."

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– Greg Van Pelt

Marten Special Services Director