

Highlights

Rapid Financial Results; Lasting Cultural Change

“Playing the Great Game of Business has changed the culture of this business,” says founder Mike Keesee. “No longer does management have to run around the office to see if we have scope-creep, or hunting for jobs to be invoiced. The employees have that ‘ownership’ mindset in the day-to-day operation, which has freed me up to do what I do best, which is help sell for this company.”

And it’s the employees who are also reaping the rewards of running the business better. For example, prior to playing the Great Game of Business, the company paid out a bonus pool of \$16,000. In 2015, thanks to the lessons they learned from opening the books, Keesee’s associates earned \$125,000 in bonuses. Then last year, the team maxed out their bonus again – which led Keesee to add another layer to the bonus program – which they also hit. The result was that the entire company, including spouses and partners, went on a three-day cruise to the Bahamas together.



Organizational Background

Keesee Associates is an architectural firm that was founded in 1992. The company has since also opened its own engineering company as a way to serve their clients, who include many of the major home building companies in the U.S.

“People genuinely care about what is going on in the company. It creates awareness for everyone who does work here, of the direct impact we as individuals have on the company, which in turn affects all of us. It makes the atmosphere here friendly and it brings us all closer as a work family.”

~ Jamie Linn Muroski,
Project Manager

Playing the Game Together

Business literacy training has been the key to getting everyone to buy into the Great Game of Business, says Keesee. And the associates have taken to it like a duck to water.

“My CFO told me that this is the only company he’s ever worked in where the employees know as much as the bank, the CFO, or even the owner knows,” says Keesee. “And that’s awesome.”

Case in point: before playing the Great Game of Business, members of a project team would send all of their invoices to a single project manager to process – who would normally sit on them for one to two months before those invoices were sent out. Once team members understood the value of prompt invoicing, they began sending out invoices within just a few days of completing the work. “Before open book we didn’t realize how important it was to get this out right away,” says Chris Warfel, one of the company’s project managers. As a result of building that awareness, the company has vastly improved its cash flow, nearly cutting its wait times to be paid in half.

Keesee associates point to the team’s consistent huddling rhythm as an effective and fun way to share the latest news on new projects, or to hand out some appreciation for the hard work of a peer. Just as importantly, associates get updates on the company’s financials and the opportunity to ask questions about anything they don’t understand. “I think knowing what the financials mean and how the work load affects it helps people understand how they impact every part of the equation,” says Jamie Linn Muroski, one of Keesee’s project managers.

“The Great Game of Business has brought the team closer as we all seem to have the same goal, versus other companies where the employee’s only goal is to collect a paycheck.”

~ Alan Quinonez, Production Manager

What’s Next?

One of the challenges in running an architectural design and engineering firm is trying to accurately forecast where the next job is going to come from, or perhaps more importantly, the next downturn in the economy. As a company, Keesee was hit extremely hard by the Great Recession of 2009 that decimated the housing industry, and the team would like to improve on its forecasting ability to see trouble before it hits.

One of the ways the company wants to continue to improve its forecasts is by putting its project managers more directly in touch with clients, to give them the opportunity to ask clients what work they might need coming up in the near future. Not only has that given the team more information to use in forecasts, it’s also helped build better relationships with their customers, says Keesee, because they are spending more time with them.

“Before the Great Game of Business, it was me calling the clients,” he says. “Now it’s the project managers having those conversations. And that’s where we want this to go, so that we can eventually turn this into an employee-owned business.”

~Mike Keesee, Owner
