

Top Notch Character

While other companies notice the politeness and professionalism of the work force, the teamwork at Meridian Center Electric springs from each team member's dedication to consistent integrity.

Located in Puyallup, Washington, Meridian Center Electric employs about 170 people and provides electric contracting services to residential and business customers throughout the Puget Sound area.

Gerry Zacher and his partner, Greg Dillard, initially used Character First! as a management training tool, but they came to believe it could benefit their entire staff because, as Zacher said, it causes "people to stop and think about why we do the things we do." Accordingly, they did an introduction with all their managers and owners. When this group proved receptive, they extended the program to the field personnel.



Zacher gives these managers much of the credit for the success of the character emphasis because they owned and defended the idea. "Meridian Center Electric has always had strong moral leaders and we will continue to emphasize that," said Brian Adkins, vice president of sales.

Consultant Steve Walsh of Market Counsel helped the company develop their character emphasis and observed the commitment of Meridian Center Electric's leadership. In particular, Zacher, Dillard, and one of the vice presidents take turns personally presenting the monthly character quality at employee meetings. **"Unless the top buys in personally, it won't work," Walsh said.**

"The program makes us all think about and question ourselves," Adkins said, observing how some have even taken the lessons home to their families. Network administrator Danene Honemann said, "The focus on one character trait per month allows us to work on that character trait in different situations at work and at home."

"I see this as an ongoing, daily process of making awareness of good character a part of life," Zacher said. "It's a long-term investment in every person here."