



4. Concert Properties Ltd.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 117

HEAD OFFICE: Vancouver

QUOTE: "Concert has built a team out of trust, hard work and co-operation"

IF MY COMPANY WERE A CELEBRITY, IT WOULD BE:

BONO "Because of his dedication to doing what is right for the larger community"



When the depth of the recession engulfing North America began to hit the B.C. economy, real estate developer Concert Properties Ltd. gave serious thought to how it would manage its workforce. Rather than lay off staff, it opted to give them opportunities to work in areas of the company that were busier than theirs, with a view to building their skills.

Christine Wu, a project accountant, was able to work on converting Concert's existing accounting software to a much more powerful system, and she reports that the experience will give her an edge in understanding how it improves Concert's overall business processes.

Similarly, development manager Jennifer Mitchell has been able to work on seniors housing, a type of project she wouldn't have had the chance to tackle during busier times. She also credits diversification by Concert for its ability to give staff a wide range of experience. Rather than sticking to one kind of development, the company positioned itself for the downturn in such a way that employees were able to continue working. "It was nice to see, over the past couple of years, the corporate strategy pay off," says Mitchell. "We were able to mobilize in a down period."

Mitchell's colleague Curtis Neeser agrees, saying that not having to worry about your job boosts morale and also gives confidence in the overall leadership of the company. "You can come in [to work] and concentrate," he says.

Other aspects of company life include an open-door policy among managers that encourages employees to share ideas, which are rarely rejected outright. "Good ideas are accepted," acquisitions manager Darren Mewha says. The result is a culture where employees are capable of effecting change. The company's employee-run Green Team, for example, has introduced a number of innovations, from a worm composting station on the rooftop patio to efforts at vegetable gardening.

The company also supports personal growth, funding a variety of benefits including physiotherapy and continuing education. For example, Concert is accommodating communications co-ordinator Jonathan Austin's design studies at Emily Carr University, while Jennifer Mitchell was supported in her bid for a designation as a sustainable-building professional.

For Chuck Davies, one of Concert's longest-serving employees, the openness staff have with each other, and the commitment this engenders, help make Concert, in his words, a "highly ethical" company. It's not the structures that make it that way, he says; it's the people. — Peter Mitham