

mini-case 1-428-579
April 2009

Plante & Moran: All You Really Need to Know

Introduction

A popular book in the 1990s, titled *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, presented what seemed like a straightforward philosophy, emphasizing the basics of caring and sharing. Although the book was quite popular, the adoption of its simple message within the circles of corporate America has probably been limited. However, in Southeastern Michigan you do not have to look very far to find an example of a company that has fully embraced this approach. That organization is Plante & Moran (P&M), whose top three values are:

- We care
- We are guided by the golden rule: do unto others as you would like them to do unto you
- We strive to be fair

Chuckle if you like at the seemingly simple ideas, but 2007 marked the ninth straight year that Plante & Moran was named to *Fortune* magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For" list. P&M has been the top-ranked accounting and business advisory firm for the past seven years. Maybe we could all dust off our copies of the kindergarten principles as a first step toward reaching this level of organizational success.

Background

Plante & Moran's headquarters are in Southfield, Michigan, and its two largest U.S. branches are located in Auburn Hills and Grand Rapids, Michigan. Founded 1924, P&M is the nation's eleventh largest certified public accounting and business advisory firm, providing clients with financial, human capital, operations, strategy, technology, and family wealth management services. In the midst of cutbacks by The Big Three, the auto companies that drive much of the economic activity in Southeastern Michigan, P&M has held on. In 2005 it topped \$239 million in revenue.

Many attribute P&M's success to its uniquely caring culture. Managing Partner Bill Hermann said, "We are exceedingly pleased with our staff and their commitment to the golden rule which is the foundation for our winning culture."¹ The company emphasizes its commitment to the golden rule by giving each employee a golden ruler to keep on his or her desk, as pictured in **Exhibit 2**.

Research Associate Grace Augustine developed this mini-case under the supervision of Professor Lynn P. Wooten of the Michigan Ross School of Business Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship. ©2009 The William Davidson Institute