

McKenzie offers HR services for small to mid-sized companies



JAMES CRICHTON

Bob McKenzie, president of McKenzieHR, has been working in human resources for 35 years. He started his own company about 10 years ago.

When Bob McKenzie graduated from Rider University at age 22, there was a large unionizing event going on, and it was at that moment McKenzie knew he wanted to go into human resources.

"Not a lot of people were doing anything about it, and I saw how important employee relations are," he said. "I like the whole environment of being a liaison between the employees and the management. And I like looking out for the best interests for both and coming up with solutions."

Since that time, McKenzie's entire career has been devoted to HR. He started in New Jersey in 1977 and now McKenzie, 56, is the president of his own human resources company called McKenzieHR.

McKenzieHR works as a full-service human resources department for small- to mid-sized companies ranging from six to 500 employees to save those businesses from taking care of their HR requirements in-house.

"I started the business about 10 years ago because I saw this big need," McKenzie said. "A lot of small and medium-sized businesses couldn't afford someone on a full-time basis, so we go in

to handle all of their human resources needs. Those companies outsource everything to us."

In the past year, McKenzie has gone out of his way to help small businesses avoid huge fines from the federal and state regulations.

According to Andee Sparrow, who nominated McKenzie as one of the 2012 class of Ultimate HR Executives, government agencies have been targeting small employers on enforcement of the Federal laws.

"[McKenzie] found that the lending authorities such as the Small Business Administration do not educate the people they lend money to on the need to be in compliance with these laws," she wrote in her nomination. "In the past year or so, when he saw some outrageous fines being placed on small businesses, he started campaigning throughout the area at any small-business meeting he could attend to educate employers on what they need to do to be in compliance with federal and state regulations."

McKenzie said that he loves the company because the atmosphere is different from other HR positions he's held.

"It's different from corporate America because my clients actually thank us and pay us," he said.

His employees like working for McKenzieHR because of the work environment.

"I can sum it up in one word: Fun," said Chuck Petruska, a senior human resources adviser at McKenzieHR. "When it's just us guys and girls, it's very informal and Bob gives us a lot of independence.

"Unless I need his help, he lets me run the show. We've known each other a long time, but he treats everyone the same way. Once they establish credibility, he cuts them loose."

McKenzie only has four people working for him at McKenzieHR, but he hopes all of the employees feel like Petruska because he wants them to know they're genuinely valued.

"My whole philosophy is give people a standard to follow and then let them go," he said. "I don't want to micromanage anybody. We also have fun and have a great sense of humor even though we take everything seriously."