



Creating Opportunity for Our People Becoming a Talent Magnet

An Interview with Karleen Mussman,
Chief Human Resources Officer, Baker Tilly



Karleen Mussman

EDITORS' NOTE *Karleen Mussman is the chief human resources officer at Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP. Mussman provides forward-thinking leadership to guide the firm's employee value proposition and enhance the firm's position as an employer-of-choice. Mussman has more than 25 years of experience creating and executing global talent strategies.*

FIRM BRIEF *Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP (bakertilly.com) is a nationally recognized, full-service accounting and advisory firm whose specialized professionals connect with clients and their businesses through refreshing candor and clear industry insight. With approximately 2,700 employees across the United States, Baker Tilly is ranked as one of the 15 largest accounting and advisory firms in the country. Headquartered in Chicago, Baker Tilly is an independent member of Baker Tilly International, a worldwide network of independent accounting and business advisory firms in 147 countries, with 30,000 professionals.*

How do you keep up with ever-shifting workforce expectations?

We are constantly researching, benchmarking and staying on top of workforce trends. Above all else, we listen to our team members. Understanding what motivates *Baker Tilly* team members – not just employees in general – leads to insights that improve all aspects of our business.

We involve our team members in the process. One way we do this is through our team member engagement survey. Our engagement scores continue to rise and are way above average company scores.

Beyond the numbers, the value of the survey lies in the volume of feedback and ideas received. From here we look for ways to make things easier so our team members can focus on what they love to do, which is work with clients. For example, we simplified our dress code into one sentence: *Dress for Your Day*. And we streamlined our flexible work arrangements to focus on the value and productivity of work, not where it gets done.

What is the value in making sure your workforce mirrors your client base?

It's important to our clients and our team members, so it's important to us. Every voice counts and different perspectives lead to more creative conversations and better business results.

Every day we work to create a diverse, engaging and inclusive culture where exceptional people thrive. Diversity and inclusion is integrated into all aspects of our business – from recruiting and talent development to client engagements and operational excellence. Our national steering committee drives our strategy and is taking our two signature programs – GROW (Growth and Retention of Women) and SOAR (Supporting Opportunity, Advancement, and Recognition for All) to new heights.

Talk about the value of corporate responsibility.

Stewardship is a core value at Baker Tilly. We know that being connected to something greater than oneself is important.

It's amazing to see how our team members bring stewardship to life in creative ways that come from the heart. In every one of our offices in any given month, one can find an event that is supporting a local cause – organized fun-runs or taking up a food collection. Community outreach is woven into all kinds of programs across the firm. This year we coordinated with the USO and made care packages for veterans on Take Your Child to Work Day. Our summer interns prepared emergency kits for the American Red Cross.

How important is it to have leadership engaged in the people part of this business?

It's critical. The adage "people are a company's greatest asset" is especially true in a professional services firm where *people* create value. Our entire leadership – not just HR – has a shared priority in delivering on our people strategy.

It's gratifying when our collective efforts are recognized beyond our four walls. In the past five years, we've received 60 "best workplace" awards in every market in which we operate – and many of these are since the award's inception.

This year we were recertified as a Great Place to Work® by the Great Place to Work Organization and *Fortune* magazine. It's the gold standard in workplace recognition and benchmarks our workplace culture against the world's most successful companies – providing invaluable data and best practices. It's a level of recognition that gets noticed by our clients and the marketplace and makes our team members proud. ●