



Why SMS Assist wants employees to move up, not move on

By Brian Nordli | July 31, 2018

In the professional world, moving up often means moving companies as well. [SMS Assist](#) wants to buck that trend.

New hires at the company go through a training course called SMS University, while prospective and current leaders can learn the tools they need to succeed in its Amplify and Anthology trainings.

For Chief Human Resources Officer Becky Lowe, the key to success is to never stop learning, and her team's goal is to give employees the tools they need to make that a reality.

FOUNDED: 1999

EMPLOYEES: 826 (790 local)

WHAT THEY DO: SMS Assist simplifies facilities maintenance services for companies through its proprietary cloud and mobile-based platform.

WHERE THEY DO IT: Chicago

HUMBLE ORIGINS: SMS Assist started as a floor care company with just six people in a tiny office. Today, it occupies a 100,000-square-foot office in the John Hancock Center.

DEVELOPING LEADERS: When it comes to filling promotions, SMS Assist CEO Taylor Rhodes invests in his employees. [Learn more.](#)

Becky Lowe, Chief Human Resources Officer

Becky Lowe leads a group of HR professionals functioning in roles from recruiting to talent development and HR operations. She also represents HR on the senior leadership team and is responsible for creating a motivated, engaged workforce at SMS Assist.

BEYOND WORK: Becky is an avid traveler. Her travels to India, Central Europe, the United Kingdom and South America have given her a deeper appreciation for different cultures and mindsets, which informs the inclusive and engaged culture she promotes.

What's one lesson you've learned from a previous job that you brought to SMS Assist?

With any culture, the key is making it clear to our people that we're as invested in their growth and development as we want them to be invested in their work.

My team is organized to allow for everyone to try new ideas and techniques and build new skills. This gives them a chance to discover where their passions lie, what their strengths are and how they can leverage their capabilities. The more we invest in our employees, the more they can develop lifelong skills and add value to our business.

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What is your philosophy when it comes to professional growth?

I always tell people that, no matter the stage of your professional career, never stop learning. On the senior leadership team, we grow every day through our conversations with SMSers at every level and the diversity of thought they bring.

For any employee looking for the best growth path to follow, I'd encourage them to be curious, seek learning opportunities and, most importantly, find their passions. We want employees to pinpoint what drives them. Then our job is to figure out how we can marry those passions with a role best suited for them.

We understand new hires go through a program called SMS Assist University. What does that involve?

SMSU operates under the philosophy that employees not only work better and smarter with great training but they find enjoyment in their positions as a result of it. The training team provides high-level insight into the company and works closely with each new hire to ensure they have all the tools necessary to succeed and grow.

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What initiatives does SMS Assist offer to facilitate professional growth for current employees?

We have two programs at SMS Assist designed to help SMSers grow in their professional careers — Amplify! and Anthology. SMS Assist is growing quickly, which means we have to continuously develop our internal talent and prepare them for new roles at a rapid pace.

Anthology is a leadership training course. When our top-tier operations specialists get promoted, they go through training for their new positions so they can feel confident in their new roles. Amplify! is our emerging leaders program. Employees have the opportunity to learn about their own leadership skills and personality traits, as well as how they can utilize them to facilitate a better working environment.

What company tradition is most meaningful to you?

Every year we host a talent show. Sometimes when you're working in an office, you're not aware of all your coworkers' passions and talents outside of work. There can be a gap in how well you really know the people you work with every day.

That's why our annual talent show is great. It gives our team an opportunity to learn about who their coworkers are as people. We get to see their talents and what interesting things they do outside of the office. The more you know people you work with, the easier it is to form meaningful friendships and relationships with them. Sometimes, we even find creative ways to use our coworkers' talents in the work we do.

In addition to professional growth, what other ways do you promote culture at SMS Assist?

We want to embolden the voices of our employees and foster a dialogue of honesty that breaks down barriers. To do that, we started a peer-nominated group called "The Council," which brings together people from all over the company to discuss ideas for improving our culture. Since they know the ins and outs of daily life at SMS Assist, they can provide us with new insight and different approaches.

We're also heavily invested in Chicago. We sponsor service events in the community through partnerships with organizations such as the Anti-Cruelty Society and Special Olympics Chicago. We also sponsor engagement activities like the Bike to Work Challenge. On top of this, we're launching local community and university campus recruiting efforts to recruit some top talent from the Chicagoland area.

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What do you look for in a new hire?

We're looking for a combination of enthusiasm, skills, competencies, desire and drive that all work in tandem with that person's passions. When we know that you're passionate about the work, that's when we get most excited.

As we assess the types of people and roles we need as a company, we want to know what you can bring as an individual. Do you have a natural curiosity? Do you like to teach others? Do you have a passion for travel? What are you involved in outside of work? It's up to us to figure out how to best capitalize on that blend of life experience, education, skills and passion.