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MANAGEMENT SECRETS OF

TOP WESTCHESTER CEOs

Local Chief Executives reveal the tactics, strategies, and attitudes that create success.

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At the apex of the corporate pyramid, at the very peak of the enterprise, stands the Chief Executive Officer, answerable only to the board of directors, personally responsible for the success—or failure—of a company.

Westchester CEOs, as you might expect, are a special breed. We asked 10 of them to describe their jobs, tell us what drives them to shoulder the burdens of leadership, and to share the secrets of their success. One spends his day building consensus; another hates the very word. One said his title should really be Chief Fairness Officer while another claimed to actually be Chief Communications Officer. One of our CEOs was told by the President of the United States that he was doing a good job while another is regularly raked over the coals—despite having turned around a failing \$900 million institution.

We surveyed the Westchester corporate landscape and chose these CEOs, whose organizations rise above the skyline. They all have management secrets to tell.



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STUART MARWELL

CURTIS INSTRUMENTS, MOUNT KISCO

Stuart Marwell is a pretty quiet, unassuming guy for someone who was told his company was “doing good work” by Barack Obama, following a private roundtable conference with the President in Mumbai in 2010. But then, the CEO of Curtis Instruments is no stranger to achievement. His company provided components for the Apollo XI moon landing and today designs and manufactures instrumentation control systems for delicate, demanding applications ranging from electric wheelchairs to industrial forklifts that move two-ton loads around crowded facilities.

“I used to get very stressed when I was younger,” the 62-year-old Marwell says with a chuckle. “But after a while, you’ve seen just about everything, and you learn that there’s always a solution. My job is to try to leaven the anxiety levels with some perspective and get people to come up with those solutions.”

Obama’s praise came for the way Curtis Instruments competes in markets around the world. The company has about 1,000 employees worldwide and 125 employees in the Mount Kisco headquarters. There are engineering groups in California, Switzerland, and China; manufacturing sites in Puerto Rico, China, and Bulgaria; and a dozen sales and service offices around the globe. Curtis was a pioneer in global manufacturing—something that was much more difficult in the days

before the Internet and instantaneous communication. “We had a joint venture with two state-owned companies in Bulgaria in 1988,” Marwell explains. “When we formed a company in China in 1995, we were one of the first wholly owned foreign companies licensed there.”

How do you keep on top of a company where office hours are complicated by the International Date Line? “With years of experience, I can pretty much smell a problem. I ask questions when things don’t make sense.” A big help is an ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system that connects every person, every transaction, and every phase of design, manufacturing, and customer service to a computer screen on his desk.

Marwell also is a big believer in flexibility and delegation. “We have a matrix organization,” he says, “so different people work for different managers, depending on the job at hand. There’s a lot more collaboration, which requires much more communication.” That’s complicated by cultural differences among Asian, European, and North American operations, but, he says, “If you allow people the freedom to make decisions on their own, life is a lot easier. Maybe something could be done differently than they do it, but if you’re getting the right results, let it happen.”