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# Employee Owners Build and Share in Engineering Firm's Success

*Burns & McDonnell*

When a company's culture is seeded by the self-determination of its employee owners—from mail clerk to CEO, all with a stake and a say in the company's future—magic happens. Work isn't a daily grind, but a wholehearted pursuit. The future is boundless in opportunity, its contours shaped by those who are vested in it.

And so it is with Kansas City-based Burns & McDonnell, an engineering firm whose 4,000 employee owners design and build engineering marvels and meet some of the world's most complex challenges. Over the past decade, the firm has expanded its workforce by nearly two-thirds and seen its design-

build construction revenues grow from \$60 million to nearly \$1 billion.

As Burns & McDonnell continues expanding on all fronts, it is also being hailed as an exceptional employer. In 2013, *Fortune*

CEO Greg Graves

ranked Burns & McDonnell 18th on its list of the 100 Best Companies to Work For.

"We choose who we want to be," says CEO Greg Graves. "This drives everything we do; it's our way of life."

## Diverse Specialties, Versed in Complexity

Burns & McDonnell's entrepreneurial spirit, like its reach and capabilities,



The Burns & McDonnell world headquarters in south Kansas City is home to more than 2,500 employee-owners who provide more than 300 unique engineering and technical services to clients worldwide.

extends far and wide. Each of the firm's 11 global practices is free to carve its own path to success—a key differentiator, according to Graves.

"We're more like Berkshire Hathaway than we are a typical engineering firm," he says. "Our diverse practices are run by independent leaders who take their own business, if you will, and find a niche for it somewhere in the economy."

Some of the firm's most daunting and rewarding challenges are right here at home. Burns & McDonnell has been chosen to complete Kansas City's combined sewer overflow program, a project of enormous scope and complexity mandated by the Clean Water Act.

Revamping the city's century-old sewer system, says Graves, may take

decades. "We have a large team giving it their best effort. It's very rewarding to be doing this for our hometown."

## Destination of Choice for Top-Notch Personnel

Graves credits the firm's emphasis on employee ownership with its ability to attract and retain the best minds in the field and, by extension, make a distinct impression on clients.

"We have discovered that by being an ideal place to work, the best professionals seek us out," he says. "These are the people who tend to make clients happy. We're not an easy place to work; we demand a great deal from our employees. But those who share our dedication and vision come here to stay."



9400 Ward Parkway | Kansas City, MO 64114  
816-333-9400 | [www.burnsmcd.com](http://www.burnsmcd.com)