

## Best Place to Work: The Neenan Co.

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Neenan builds by investing in employees

By **Kelli Lockett**  
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Lots of companies offer training in soft skills such as communication and confidence building.

But employees often view soft-skills training as a diversion from "real work."

Not so at The Neenan Co., an integrated building and design company in Fort Collins, where employees say they look forward to training in communication, managing commitments, building confidence and other soft skills.

Bill Perry, an assistant pre-construction manager at the company, recently took a course chairman and chief executive David Neenan offers to employees once a year called "Business & You, The Working Game."

"(David Neenan) teaches courses about developing your own sense of humanity and how to work with one another in conflict resolution. He encourages us to understand the need for soft skills," Perry, 39, said. "Anything that involves skills for improving communication with peers is useful."

The internal soft-skills training — led by Neenan and others at the company as well as outside consultants — also wins points with Neenan architect Whitney Churchill.

The training is just part of the overall familial culture at The Neenan Co., she said.

"David Neenan — I can't begin to tell you how inspiring he is. He is an eloquent speaker and great storyteller. Those are the kinds of things that you make you feel the company is yours not his," Churchill, 32, said.

"There is a lot of care for others here," she said. "People want me to be on top of my game. They want to help me."

Good communication and relationship skills, such as accepting constructive criticism and making effective complaints, are important in any company. But at a company like The Neenan Co., where development, design, construction and warranties are handled under the same roof, such skills are even more crucial.

This collaborative approach to serving the client challenges designers in ways they might not be challenged in traditional architectural firms, Churchill said.



*Richard Haro/The Coloradoan*  
Randell Johnson, left, manager of health care architecture, and Bob Herzog, senior project architect, go over a program at The Neenan Co. in December 2005.

"In some ways it makes you more creative because there are more people who push you more. There are always people looking over your shoulder and saying, 'Are you sure about that?' You have to defend (your design) more and sell it to the client," Churchill said.

The company attracts people who are interested "in transforming the built environment," said Paulette Hansen, director of career development for the company.

Salaries and benefits at The Neenan Co. are above what is expected in the industry, but that's not why people stay at the company, she said.

"I don't believe that people leave a company because they want to make \$2,000 more a year," Hansen said. "What they are more interested in is having more input and being a part of a solution that they can be proud of."

Being able to work with clients on innovative projects such as a new Fort Collins police station that The Neenan Co. is building on Timberline Road brings an immense sense of satisfaction, Perry said. The building will be constructed using green-building techniques that will add to energy savings.

"Neenan has been doing this for years. We try to encourage understanding what the life cycle of a building will cost. It might cost you more up front but in the long run you'll be saving money in energy savings," Perry said. "It's always exciting. I look forward to waking up every morning and going to work."

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*V. Richard Haro/The Coloradoan*  
The Neenan Co. general superintendents Jim Ferguson, left, and Randy Stewart go over the planning of future projects in December 2005. The Neenan Co. has won in the categories of Innovator of the Year and Best Place to Work.

### **Best Place to Work of the Year: The Neenan Co.**

- **CEO:** David Neenan
- **Number of employees:** 150
- **Contact:** 2620 E. Prospect Road, 493-8747
- **Finalists for Best Place to Work:** Northern Engineering in Fort Collins and Houska Automotive in Fort Collins