

By BILL QUINNAN | FOR O.C. REGISTER SPECIAL SECTIONS

# THE MORE FACTOR

Full-service employee-benefits brokerage and consulting firm that strives to deliver more services, more analysis and more insight receives recognition for fourth time.

Full-service employee-benefits brokerage and consulting firm **Burnham Benefits** has been garnering recognition as a model employer in the Orange County community and beyond. The Irvine-based firm earned a spot among the Orange County Register's Top Workplaces in 2013 and, for the past three years, has ranked No. 1 in the small-employer category among the Orange County Business Journal's Best Places to Work in Orange County.

Burnham also earned top recognition among the Best Places to Work in 2013 by Business Insurance Magazine, a leading industry trade publication. The national magazine ranked Burnham Benefits No. 1 among companies with 25 to 250 employees in insurance-related industries, including property/casualty, claims, and human-resources information-system on-line administration software.

According to the firm, Burnham's ability to attract and retain the best staff in the industry derives from the firm's philosophy to put employees first. The firm strives to offer an environment in which employees have the opportunity to create their own career paths, advancing at a pace that works best for their work/life balance and plays to their professional strengths.

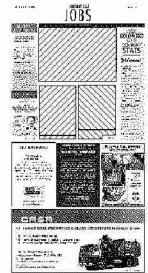
Within Orange County, Burnham employs executive-level professionals, along with a staff that in-

cludes underwriters; attorneys; account executives, managers and representatives; skilled financial professionals and chief financial officers; wellness consultants; marketing specialists; graphic designers and artists; social-media and communications experts; and human-resources professionals.

Employees enjoy an eco-friendly office space, reflecting the firm's general attitude of responsibility. The office surroundings are bright and clean, providing an upbeat and supportive environment for optimal client service. The office features a stocked kitchen, and catered lunches are offered weekly. Regular events include birthday parties, holiday gift-giving, wellness challenges and celebrations to recognize achievements and milestones.

The company's mission to give back to its community is reflected in its commitment to matching employees' personal charitable donations of up to \$500.

Among the goals of Burnham Benefits is to provide an empowering company culture that will attract and retain the right people to build long-term careers and



partnerships with clients. The firm strives to create opportunities for employees to grow and develop in a family-like environment where employees can remain for their entire careers.

According to the firm, opportunities for employee ownership at Burnham contribute to the leadership that drives the positive course for the organization overall.

As a wife and mother, Burnham President and Chief Executive Officer Kristen Allison – who founded the privately owned firm in 1995 – has always wanted her employees to maintain a positive work-life balance. The firm offers flexible hours, enabling employees to coach their children’s soccer games or attend dance recitals. The firm believes that the atmosphere of camaraderie and individual leadership that Allison has developed at Burnham is largely responsible for the company’s success at retaining talented employees.

In its recruitment efforts, Burnham seeks exceptional and forward-thinking, talented professionals who have keen ability to understand clients’ needs and goals. Exemplary relationship skills are must, as clients count on the firm to guide them through building financial strategies.

One distinctive aspect of Burnham is its offering of client-specific employee-benefit plan designs. Drawing from diverse employee backgrounds enables the firm to customize each client’s experience in choosing and administering employee benefits that fit their individual companies.

As for employee development, Burnham emphasizes mentorship, and its leadership continually encourages employees to seek out their own roles and hone their skills for the industry. According to the firm, its employee-development strategy, which allows individuals to work in hybrid roles some organizations might not be comfortable with, has enabled the company to transform and remain current. Roles develop and are enhanced with skills such as Affordable Care Act specialization, social-media expertise, finance, wellness, communications and graphics knowledge.

As a benefits and brokerage consulting firm, Burnham offers a forum to enable employees to express personal opinions related to their benefit packages in a healthy way. Being in the benefits field, the firm is familiar with the range of options for benefits offerings and plans, enabling it to be more critical of its own benefits. Each year, Burnham employees are surveyed and asked to provide feedback on the benefits offered, and that feedback is taken into consideration in creating the benefits package.

Burnham designs its plans around the ability to attract and retain top talent, believing in the importance of balance between competitive benefit offerings and budget.

Burnham has seen major expansion throughout the past year, now boasting seven locations throughout California, including offices in Irvine, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and the San Francisco Bay area.

In early 2014, Burnham opened a new office and hired several seasoned industry professionals to spearhead an expansion into Sacramento. The firm plans to continue to grow its presence throughout the state, with the goal of further establishing the firm as a statewide leader.

Efforts to implement healthcare reform in recent year have created significant changes for the benefits industry over a relatively short period, the firm notes. By staying on top of trends and maintaining a firm infrastructure, Burnham has worked to become a leader in healthcare-reform consulting. By providing education to its clients, carefully guiding them through compliance with confidence, Burnham believes it has positioned itself as a trusted resource, boasting well-informed ACA consultants, underwriters and attorneys.

The partnership of Burnham Benefits and Burnham Gibson Financial Group was featured as the cover story in the February 2012 issue of Employee Benefits Advisor, a leading trade magazine in the benefits industry, including a profile of Allison and Burnham Gibson President, Darin Gibson. The firm sees the partnership as an example of the company’s innovative spirit and its ability to remain relevant.

According to the firm, it has recently found itself attracting a significant number of people in the industry who want to focus on clients, have fun, trust leadership and have a positive impact on the organization they serve.

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