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◀ **MOST ADMIRIED CEO**

Career & Workplace

Most Admired CEO winner: Steve Swinney



Steve Swinney poses for a portrait during a Most Admired CEO photo shoot at 1660 Lincoln on Sept. 27, 2023, in Denver.



By **Denver Business Journal Staff** – , Denver Business Journal

Nov 17, 2023

Steve Swinney

Organization: Kodiak Building Partners

Title: Founder & Chief Executive Officer

Industry: Building Materials Supply & Construction

Years in role: 12

Denver metro employees: 900

Headquarters: Lone Tree

Hometown: Arlington Heights, IL

Current neighborhood: Littleton/Ken-Caryl Valley

Tell us about your organization: Kodiak Building Partners is an acquisition firm that supports locally owned and operated building materials companies that supply builders in both residential and commercial construction. With a strong focus on operational excellence, decentralization and continual improvement, Kodiak empowers these businesses to succeed in the communities they serve.

What's a big change you've made in the last year? This spring, we asked our corporate staff to be in the office at least four days a week, Monday - Thursday, with employees having a choice to work remotely on Friday, if they choose. While not the most popular decision I have ever made, I see it creating a more collaborative environment, bringing back some energy and camaraderie to our team and increasing the effectiveness of our efforts to support field operations.

I'm glad that we can still provide some increased flexibility over the traditional, five-day work week but firmly believe in the importance of being together to create a cohesive and high-performing team environment. With a young workforce, the value of their interaction with more seasoned leaders is essential for their growth and development.

What motivates you? I truly feel like my leadership role is a calling. It's a calling to steward and enhance a great culture and to set an example for others. It's a calling to create value and opportunity for all our partners (employees, investors, vendors, customers and our communities). It's a calling to lead with integrity and be a blessing to others. Because I'm where I believe I am supposed to be and doing what I am supposed to do, I wake up extremely motivated every day!

Big lesson: For a successful business venture, the biggest lesson I have learned is the essentiality of great culture. Without the culture we have at Kodiak we would not be anywhere close to what we are today. I did not appreciate that factor earlier in my career. On a personal level, to be successful in my role has required me to learn humility. Without developing that character trait in myself I would not still be successful in this role today.

Behind the scenes of a difficult decision: I try to navigate every difficult decision in my life, personal or professional, with prayer, wise counsel, reflecting on past experiences and an open mind. Usually, the best decision is not an obvious one to me until I have done those things.

Big trend: We have a very core value in our organization of a deep desire and commitment to be "better tomorrow than we were today." Our desire is to consistently strive to collaborate, learn, challenge existing processes and assumptions and find the next improvement in our organization. It is this pursuit that will help us stay ahead of the curve.

Advice for future leaders: First, keep your priorities right in your life – and becoming a CEO should not be at the top of the list. Second, put yourself in situations that accelerate your learning; challenge yourself. And third, get comfortable taking risks, not reckless ones, but calculated, well-thought-out risks with a strong likelihood of a valuable return.

How do you give back? I believe that success in business requires active involvement in the community. Giving back is not an optional exercise but an obligatory part of leading a successful company. It's a critically important piece of our culture. As a business leader, I'm working to ensure Kodiak and its operating partners have every opportunity to be involved and make positive impacts on the communities where we live and work. This includes volunteer projects, civic engagement and financial contributions to help fund important causes. I helped establish, and currently chair, The Kodiak Foundation, which has expanded our capabilities for philanthropic giving and facilitates our operating partners in supporting various causes. Last month the Foundation hosted its first charitable golf tournament and raised over \$350,000 to fuel community enrichment projects. Outside of my role at Kodiak, my wife, Linda, and I also established the Swinney Family Foundation, which primarily supports Christian-based organizations focused on ministry, higher education and relief efforts.

Who inspires you and why? I'm inspired by Christ. He is the centering and inspiration for everything I do. That may not be a typical business answer, but that's who inspires my leadership and guides and influences my decisions as a leader, how we do business, the culture we strive to create and the person I strive to be.

Secret talent: When I was younger, I could jump rope sitting in a chair but I highly doubt I could still do that and have no intention of finding out!

What else would you like our readers to know? It's an honor to be a part of the Denver business community. Our industry has grappled with many challenges and opportunities over the past few years. Embracing our culture and remaining committed to being a locally-led and collaborative organization has fueled great success in terms of our growth and the positive impacts we can make on the communities we serve.