



## Aaron Witsoe: President of Creative Business

Aaron Witsoe, the president of Creative Business Resources (CBR), discovered his interest in HR while working with a startup company in Chicago that was "developing the first statewide insurance publication in the nation," says Witsoe.

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By Robin Salisian

Watching that startup grow into something much larger was not only very gratifying and a big step in his career, but it was also the job in which Witsoe acquired "many valuable skills related to sales, leadership, and team management," all of which he applies in his current position.

10 years after that Chicago job began, the Trinity University graduate was ready to "pack his bags" and move to Arizona, where he joined Creative Business Resources in 2000 as the regional sales manager. After only four years with the company, he was promoted to president, a position he has now held for two years.

"I think it was a combination of my leadership tactics, sales skills, management experience, and my commitment to employees and clients that made me an appropriate candidate for the promotion," explains Witsoe. Today, his responsibilities are numerous and include "managing the strategic growth and initiatives of the business, overseeing the executive team, as well as promoting the company vision to clients, vendors, and employees."

Headquartered in Arizona, CBR was founded in 1998 by Michael Tope and remains to this day an HR outsourcing company. It is the company's vision, says Witsoe, "to be the best place to work in the Southwest, having the best talent with whom to work."



*"In the past we have had some difficulties hiring the right kind of employees. We've tried our best to troubleshoot that issue by educating ourselves on what to look for during the interview process."*

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How does CBR realize that vision?

**Q. What do you like to do outside of work? Any odd hobbies/interests? Are you married? Do you have children? Can you explain a little about your personal life outside of your company?**

**A.** A. I'm heavily involved in my community, working with organizations such as Project Cure and Phoenix Rescue Mission. I'm currently acting as a chairperson to the Leadership Council in Arizona for the National Association of Professional Employer Organizations. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my wife and three boys, outdoor activities such as basketball and softball, as well as listening to music.

**Q. What CD is in your CD player right now?**

**A.** Reliant K and the Psalms on CD.

**Q. What is the last magazine you read?**

**A.** *New Man*.

**Q. Who is your role model?**

**A.** Jesus. He's had the most influence on my life. No other role model has come close to teaching me about how to teaching me about how to treat and lead people.

“We have to offer our employees excellent benefits and rewards that they’ll find nowhere else,” says Witsoe. “We often have clients asking us to mirror our exact benefits and rewards program. Here are just a few of the benefits and rewards we offer CBR employees:

- Because of the prevalence of identity theft in today’s society, CBR implemented a program that provides identity theft protection to all CBR employees.
- Community outreach is also an important component of CBR, and the entire team believes that giving back to the community and the world is not just a kind service, but is an obligation for those who are able. With this belief in mind, we offer all CBR employees volunteer time off.
- Another unique benefit program we offer CBR employees is the Holiday Savings Program. A pre-determined amount is taken out of each paycheck and placed into a separate account. Right before the holidays, we cut each employee a check. This takes away some of the financial stress that comes from holiday spending.

“In October, we’ll open an office on the West Valley of Phoenix, and the main reason for opening this is to shorten employees’ commute and improve their overall quality of life.”

With employees spending more than 10 hours per week commuting to and from the office, Witsoe realized that opening a second office would “shorten the commute for many CBR employees” and allow “them to spend less time on the road and more time at home.”

The HR president has also increased the employee retention rate from 50% to 93%.

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“A recent internal audit of the executive team and management team revealed that employees believe that CBR is a great place to work. The numbers and feedback are evidence that we practice what we preach, and we are living out our vision.”

But as with every company, challenges arise, specifically, maintaining company unity and a positive working environment. Witsoe, however, thrives on discovering new ways to improve employees’ and clients’ morale and has overcome these challenges by promoting company unity and increasing productivity. Because of Witsoe’s dedication, CBR is not defined by its challenges. Instead, the Arizona-based company continues to grow and provide employees with an honest and ethical work environment.

“The most common praise I hear from CBR employees is that they love being a part of the CBR team. They appreciate...the open communication management has with its employees,” says Witsoe.

And integrity is key when CBR hires new workers. “Ethics is always at the forefront of our business practices, so it’s extremely important that prospective employees share this same level of integrity.”

Witsoe also describes how CBR differentiates from its competitors-with its quality of services. This includes payroll, workers’ compensation, employee benefits, and human resources consulting as well as CBR’s “unprecedented level of customer service,” and its “honest, hands-on approach.”

A veteran in HR, Witsoe continues to grow and learn and credits much of this growth to his CBR colleagues. “They have a lot of experience to bring to the table, and it’s great to bounce ideas off of them.” But when asked to name a specific mentor, one name in particular came to Witsoe’s mind: “Rocky Nystrom. He helped me during a tough time in my career by keeping me focused, determined, and goal-oriented.”

Because of this and because of Witsoe’s own passion for HR, he too can offer others advice.

“The best advice I can offer is to always keep your integrity at the forefront of business practices, be committed and demonstrate respect for your clients and employees, and find a team that values the business as much as you do.”

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