

MONDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2007

## BARCLAY WATER MANAGEMENT, INC. NAMED TOP SMALL WORKPLACE

The company's 100% employee ownership and friendly and accommodating culture make it a place where employees frequently build lasting careers.

*"This is the kind of company where people come to work and forget to leave."*

— Bill Brett  
President and Chief Executive

**Business:**  
Manufactures water-treatment chemicals  
**Based:** Watertown, Massachusetts  
**Founded:** 1932  
**Employees:** 89  
**2006 Revenue:** \$13.4 million



Liza Fraser exits a steam boiler during an internal inspection for a client in New York. Ms. Fraser, a regional manager, has worked at Barclay for eight years

Employees of Barclay Water Management Inc. own 100% of the company. But they don't own it through an employee stock ownership plan, like many small companies offer. They buy their shares directly.

The company holds a stock offering each year in which only employees can buy shares of Barclay stock. About 80% of employees own shares, says Bill Brett, the company's president and chief executive. The advantage of direct ownership, Mr. Brett says, is that employees get shareholder voting power. People who own stock through ESOPs — where the company contributes shares of the stock through a qualified retirement plan — don't get actual voting power with those shares because the ESOP's trustee controls them.

Barclay's employees "don't have to worry about what their employer is going to do, because they are the employer," Mr. Brett says.

Each January, the company hosts an annual meeting where the employee shareholders can ask questions and vote on pressing issues. A few years ago, a major U.S. company moved into the water-treatment business by acquiring one of Barclay's competitors. The employee shareholders discussed the issue at the annual meeting and voted to have the company respond to this new threat by investing money to hire additional engineers, lease more space and purchase new equipment — even though it meant Barclay would forgo profitability for a few years.

The stock ownership also is one of the reasons employees stay at the company for a long time. As of earlier this year, current employees had an average tenure of about nine years.

Barclay also encourages employees to stay by giving them career-development opportunities.

"We have a history of home-growing successful people, and very few people today are doing the job they were hired for," Mr. Brett says. Several senior leaders at the company, including Mr. Brett, started in lower roles. The human-resources manager, for instance, started as an administrative assistant. The information-technology manager and the company president were both originally hired as chemists.

Sometimes that also means accommodating employees who are unhappy with their current jobs or need a change.

Former sales engineer Amelia Brower, 35, told her supervisor last fall that she and her husband wanted to start having kids, and she could no longer be constantly exposed to water-treatment chemicals. She suggested creating a new position in which she'd design software tools to help manage large clients' accounts — something she had already done for one client.

The supervisor agreed, and Ms. Brower now works in the office full time. "He was super open — very, very nice about it," she recalls.