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In the 2012 Detroit Free Press Top Workplaces Competition...

Evola Music has placed third in the small business category. Evola Music is a third generation family owned business since 1931. Jim Evola, store owner, places his primary emphasis on delivering quality musical instruments and exceptional customer service in its four Michigan locations. Here, assistant store manager Tony Trupiano plays a piano as sales woman Norma Roemelen and store manager Mary Anne David listen in Shelby Township store.

Evola Music employees get free music lessons for themselves, kids...

To motivate his employees, Jim Evola puts his money where his ears are.

The owner of Evola Music, which sells pianos and organs and offers lessons to students of all ages, inspires the 55 staffers by offering them access to the beautiful sounds three generations of his family built their business on.

Not only do workers, ranging from salespeople to delivery personnel, get tickets to the many music performances Evola Music sponsors, but they also get free music lessons for themselves and their children.

"We find balance with performing,



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educating and retailing," Evola said. "My people love coming to work."

Repair technicians also have their guild dues and continuing-education seminars paid for.

Founded in 1931 by his grandfather, Evola Music now has stores in Bloomfield Hills, Shelby Township and Canton and an affiliate site in Traverse City. Jim Evola bought out his father and his brother in 2002.



Employees are constantly reminded of how important they are to the company. That appreciation culminates with a co-worker banquet held every year.

Plus, there are bonuses for successful salespeople. For example, during the holidays, those who hit their targets will get extra cash and vie for \$500 hotel packages for vacations of their choice anywhere in Michigan.

Good customer satisfaction ratings also translate into employee bonuses. According to Evola, a good delivery person can earn a bonus the equivalent of 20% of his or her salary if clients are pleased.



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"My people know I care about them," he said. "I don't have a turnover issue."

His three metro Detroit store managers have been with him for 22, 31 and 32 years. One repairman has spent 34 years with the company.

Evola Music has 100% paid health care for full-time employees and a matching 401(k) program, up to 5% of the employees' gross wages.

And the lines of communication are always kept open. Good ideas percolate to the top and are acknowledged.

Evola pointed to the company's relatively new music program for children as young as 18 months, which now boasts 300 students.

He said he didn't believe in music programs for children under age 4, but an employee suggested it and the idea blossomed into a success.

"They come to work in a small company for a sense of purpose. They ... believe they **make a difference**. We seek their input," he said.

