Many companies today espouse various corporate values. Some companies value creativity, some pride themselves on their adaptability and some promote honesty above all else. Of course, developing a set of corporate values is fairly easy. Maintaining those values—especially in the face of an uncertain or downright bleak economic climate—is another thing altogether.

So you can’t blame companies for losing sight of their stated values. A company that puts customer service above everything else might have to cut a few corners in that area to boost profitability. And a company that claims its employees are its most important asset may have to cut employee benefits just to survive. But that’s certainly understandable. When you’re running a business, you sometimes need to make sacrifices. Those carefully worded values may feel warm and fuzzy, but clinging to them too tightly can just drag a business down.

Or so we think—incorrectly, as it turns out. In our own industry, we have an example of a company that is succeeding because of—not despite—its core values. That company is Mathews, Inc., and its core values of integrity, innovation and impact have been driving the company’s success for 20 years.

Matt McPherson of Mathews, Inc.

By Michaelean Pike
Twenty years of innovation and extensive testing culminate in the 2012 Mathews Helix™. Fast, smooth and quiet, this incredibly advanced bow weighs a mere 3.5 pounds.
Mathews’ founder and CEO Matt McPherson has been shooting bows since he was a child. “My father was a small town preacher and he was looking for ways to save money,” McPherson recalls. “He decided that he was going to hunt deer to get some meat for the table. But my mother was petrified of guns and worried that he could get hurt. So my father went out and bought a bow. Not long after, he got kid bows for my brother Randy and me. We absolutely fell in love with bows.

“When we were old enough, my dad took us hunting. I think I would have enjoyed hunting of any category—guns, sling-shots, anything. But I was introduced to bowhunting. We weren’t very good at it back then because we didn’t really know what we were doing. But I loved it. The thing that made it so cool was that, from a kid’s standpoint, you felt kind of like a pioneer. There’s something amazing about being out in the wild. There was always this feeling that anything could happen. At any moment, an animal could appear and you had to be ready to make a good shot. It was exciting.”

McPherson admits that, when it came to school, he wasn’t exactly the best student. “To be honest, I was always in another world. I hated school. Absolutely hated school. I got my high school diploma and that was it for me. I felt that anything I needed to know I could learn on my own. As I got into archery, I studied metallurgy, which is the study of metals. I studied composites. I studied compression molding, plastic-injection molding and metal-stamping processes. I ended up really just studying engineering on my own and learning what I needed to know to do what I do today.

“Everybody is wired differently. I see in 3D. When I imagine things, I’m literally seeing them three-dimensionally. I can spin them in my head. I can see all the facets of them and how they look and how they’re going to look if I change a particular part. That’s how I am. Reading a book isn’t an effective way for me to learn. I’m just not wired for that type of studying.”

After high school, McPherson did auto body...
A Timeline of Success

1992
McPherson's inventions, including the 5000SGM, revolutionize the archery industry.

1994
Zebra 25 Twist bowstrings' debut is an instant success.

1995
Matheus inaugurates new location in Sparta, WI, currently at 140,000 sq. ft.

1995
Matheus pioneers dramatically faster and lighter bows, including the Ultra Light.

1996
Even Tiller, Dual Feed Single Cam reduces lack point travel inconsistencies.

1997
ZMax reaches an unheard-of-at-that-time speed of 320 fps at 60% letoff.

1997
Perimeter Weight means a smoother release, less recoil and maximum arrow speed.

1998
Matheus makes the Inc. 500 fastest-growing companies list two years in a row. 1998 / 1999

1998
Matt McPherson is inducted into the Bowhunters Hall of Fame.

1998
StraightLine, Dual Feed Single Cam introduced with the IQ.

2000
Harmonic Damping System is introduced, becoming an industry standard accessory.

2001
Genesis Project is unveiled, introducing a family-friendly bow for all ages.

2002
Matheus, Inc. celebrates one decade of incredible success.

2002
String Suppressors debut, halting string slap.

2002
National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) is launched. Over 9 million young participants to date.

2003
Matheus shooters capture 100% of all national and world competition titles.

2004
U-LOC® Zero Tolerance Limb Cup System forces limbs into positive and constant alignment.

2007
E Composite SlimLimb introduced. Thinner, lighter and more durable.

2007
Mission Archery is born, offering affordable bows with the Matheus quality standard.

2008
Lost Camo joins the camouflage market. 100% of Lost Camo profits are donated to charities.

2009
Matheus stuns the archery community with McPherson Series Dual Cam Monster featuring NUS Technology.

2009
First Annual Matheus Retailer Business Show opens to great success.

2009
Matheus paves the way for lady bowhunters and introduces the Passion.

2010
GridLock and Reverse Assist Roller Guard introduced.

2010
Matheus produces its one millionth bow.

Matheus has been making headlines with the lightest bows on the market as early as 1995. The Ultra Light weighed in at just 3.5 lbs.
work while he figured out what his calling was.

“My dad had a body shop,” he explains. “I started working on cars when I was about 14, fixing dents and painting and doing finish work. That was kind of my training. It gave me an eye for detail and an eye for finishes and shapes. When you fix a dent on a car or fix a spot where you have a rust hole, you have to imagine how things should look. You want to make the car look as if it’s never been dented or rusted, so you have to be able to see the right shape. That has helped me tremendously in designing and building bows that have a natural flow to them.”

In 1985, McPherson started his first bow company with the help of three investors. McPherson Archery was based on ideas McPherson had for a new type of high-letoff eccentric. The revolutionary InnerCam featured 75-percent letoff at a time when 40- to 50-percent letoff was typical.

But the InnerCam proved too far ahead of its time, and McPherson’s investor partners were too conservative in terms of promoting this groundbreaking new product. Three years after starting McPherson Archery, McPherson sold his controlling interest in the company and moved on.

Although that first archery company ultimately had limited success, the lessons McPherson learned from that experience proved
Invaluable. In 1992, he founded Mathews, Inc. with one employee, Joel Maxfield, and another radical idea—the Solocam. Mathews single-cam bows were quieter and more accurate than other bows on the market, and they eliminated synchronization issues. With proper promotion, Mathews bows were soon flying off retailers’ shelves.

But McPherson realized that just producing quality products and running a few eye-catching advertisements wasn’t enough. For his company to be successful, it needed to be defined and guided by its core values: integrity, innovation and impact.

Integrity

In a world where consumers who have a problem with a product or a service have to jump through hoops just to speak with an actual human being from the company in question, integrity seems like a rare quality indeed. Dealing with a company that provides minimal customer service or that doesn’t stand behind its products is extremely frustrating.

That’s why so many people find working with Mathews refreshing.

“We really have an amazing synergy with the people out there that buy our products,” McPherson says. “They trust us, and we don’t ever want to betray that trust. Nobody’s perfect. The thing about integrity is that when you make a mistake, you work to make it right. You don’t try to hide it. You fix it.

Matt McPherson and his brother, Mathews President Steve McPherson, in the Mathews warehouse. The banners hanging from the ceiling bear the company’s three core values—Integrity, Innovation and Impact.
“We’re building what we believe are the best bows in the world, and we’re always looking for ways to make bows better. That’s probably the best explanation of how we view integrity. We’re not looking to build things cheaper. We’re looking to build them better. That, to me, is integrity.”

That core value of integrity has shaped Mathews’ philosophy toward its customers.

“For us, the person who has already purchased a Mathews bow comes first,” McPherson explains. “A lot of businesses focus on getting new people to buy their products, and they put their existing customers second. But we focus first on the people who’ve already made an investment in our products. They’re part of the Mathews family, and once someone is part of the family, we do everything we can to make sure they’re happy. If you’ve already bought a Mathews bow and something on the bow breaks or you run over your bow with a car or you need something done on it, you’re our priority.

“This goes back to integrity. Integrity would say that those who’ve already made the investment are the priority. So if someone has a problem with a bow, we want to resolve that within 24 hours whenever possible.

“Our customers appreciate that. The response we get from them is really incredible. They’re passionate about their Mathews bows and about our company. Just look at our Facebook page. We have 180,000 fans, and the comments they leave for us are just overwhelmingly positive. They bleed black and gold. We couldn’t ask for better customers.”

Integrity also shapes Mathews’ distribution method. Mathews sells bows exclusively through a limited number of quality archery pro shops.

“We have a select group of retailers. There are about 1,100 authorized Mathews retailers,” McPherson says. “I think, generally speaking, local archery shops are small. They can give their customers personal service and an amount of time that many of the larger stores find hard to do. I believe, however, that the larger box stores have their place in the industry. I think they help get a lot of people into the sport, and they no doubt service a lot of people. But we feel that selling only through pro shops is the right model for our products. We sell high-end products, and we want our retailers to have the time to really educate the consumer on those products.

“Ultimately, it’s about taking care of our customers. Because we have a smaller group of retailers we can provide the kind of service our dealers expect from us. And in turn those retailers provide quality service to the consumer.

“We definitely believe that our model is the right model. It’s hard to argue with the facts, and the reality is that we are the highest grossing bow company in the world. If we have the smallest distribution and are the highest grossing company, we must be doing something right.”

While it’s important for a company’s leadership to believe in the importance of integrity, the company’s employees have to value integrity as well. Luckily, Mathews is made up of approximately 350 people who believe in McPherson’s vision.

“I have amazing people working for me. I’m fortunate to have so many.
“I’m kind of like a red squirrel. I’m just everywhere all the time, moving a hundred miles an hour. I have people tell me I wear them out. But I’m able to juggle several things simultaneously because of the great team surrounding me.

“Honestly, I can’t stress enough how good the people I work with are. Mathews is truly a team effort. Everyone here works so hard because they want Mathews to be the best. It all goes back to integrity. I’ve always been a stickler for adhering to our three core values. When good people see that, they want to be a part of it. That’s certainly what’s happened here.”

Innovation

“If you don’t innovate, you end up just copying other people,” McPherson says. “If people see that you’re always the leader in innovation, they want to be with you. People want to be with the leader, not the companies that are copying the leaders. So innovation is very, very important to us. That’s what I spend most of my time doing—working on new designs, new products, new directions. We work very hard and very diligently at innovating while at the same time making sure that we’re not compromising the integrity of the products.

“People want faster bows, but they also want bows to be quiet. That’s kind of like wanting to drive a dragster but wanting a quiet dragster. It takes a lot of testing and engineering to come up with ways to make bows quieter while also making them faster and more efficient. That’s innovation.”

Plenty of companies claim to prioritize innovation, but it takes a great deal of drive and vision to actually produce genuine, industry-changing innovation. Mathews has been churning out radically new products and

Mission Archery was launched in 2007 to provide consumers with high-quality bows at a lower price point. Like all bows from the innovative minds at Mathews Inc., the bows in the Mission line are highly tested and well-made, utilizing proven technologies that keep the price down while still delivering outstanding performance. Also like bows in the Mathews line, Mission bows are available only through authorized retailers, which means Mission customers receive a high level of service and expertise along with their bows.

For 2012, Mission has introduced the versatile Rally, which serves as both an entry-level target bow and a bowhunting bow, and the incredibly budget-friendly Riot, which offers the adjustability of the 2011 Craze (19-30” draw length and 15-70 pound draw weight) but in a longer, faster, smoother model. Mission also has a number of exciting custom color options available for 2012. Your customers can now choose from finishes like Pink Tiger, White Camo/Marble and Green Carbon. For more information on the Mission line, please visit missionarchery.com.
technologies from the start, with a long list of patents and
game-changing developments under its belt.

Of course, it all started with the Solocam. The introduction
of Mathews single-cam bows in the early 90s stunned the
archery industry and paved the way for the dozens of game-
changing innovations Mathews would produce. The genius
of the Solocam was that it made the bow both simpler and
more efficient.

“I know that single-cam bows are a superior product,”
McPherson says. “They have fewer variables. There are fewer
things that can go wrong on a single-cam bow. Because of
that, they’re more dependable. Our single-cam bows are
faster than a lot of other company’s two-cam bows. They’re
very high-performing bows.”

Given McPherson’s feeling on single-cam bows, it was a
surprise to many when Mathews introduced its first dual-cam
bow in 2009. The Monster featured AVS (Advanced Vector-
ing System) Technology, making it incredibly fast and
efficient. The decision to engineer a top-of-the-line dual-cam
bow was not one McPherson and Mathews made lightly.

“Dual-cam bows typically do store a little bit more energy
than single-cam bows,” McPherson explains. “I actually
built many two-cam bows for myself back in the early 70s.
When I was with McPherson Archery I built the Elimina-
tor, which was the fastest dual-cam bow at that time. I know
how to build two-cam bows. We knew that there are people
out there who want to squeeze those last feet per second out
of a bow. So for those speed fanatics out there, we decided
to build a two-cam bow. We felt we could build a better two-cam bow. So we spent a lot of time testing to make sure that our dual-cam bows are truly superior products.”

In 1996, Mathews introduced the Signature, a bow with a longer riser and shorter, more parallel limbs. Since then, Mathews bows have featured limbs that have gotten progressively more parallel. Parallel-limb bows are quieter and more vibration-free than previous designs.

“I learned in grade school that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction,” McPherson says. “So if you have two sources of energy—like a bow’s limbs—and they’re moving away from each other, they will actually cancel a portion of each other’s vibration.”

Parallel-limb design isn’t the only innovation Mathews pioneered to keep its bows as quiet and vibration-free as possible. Other new technologies helped to ensure that Mathews bows were remarkably quiet. Other noise- and vibration-reducing developments include Mathews String Suppressors, String Grubs, the Harmonic Damping System, Monkey Tails, the Dead End String Stop and the Harmonic Stabilizer.

“If you’ve ever swung on a swing set, you know that when your feet are in sync with the swing, you’ll keep swinging,” McPherson explains. “If you want to stop swinging, you can start moving your feet in the opposite direction and you’ll slow down. In other words, you swing your feet backward when the swing is going forward and forward when the swing is moving backward. That’s called ‘out of phase.’

“The Harmonic Stabilizer we introduced in 2009 works just like that. When you shoot a bow, the Harmonic Stabilizer vibrates out of phase with the riser. Because of that, the stabilizer starts eating up the bow’s energy, just as your energy is lost on a swing set when you swing your feet out of phase. That process—the stabilizer and riser fighting each other—dissipates energy very quickly. Where many bows may ring for five, six or even seven seconds after a shot, our bows virtually stop ringing in half a second.”

Eradicating noise and vibration to the level Mathews has is an impressive feat, but the company has improved bow design in other ways as well. Advances in bow design have made Mathews bows more and more lightweight. Thoughtful design and extensive testing ensure that Mathews bows are both lightweight and solid.

“We use composite limbs that are capable of handling the loads we need to handle,” McPherson states. “We’re pushing the limits on everything all the time. So we run a lot of tests.

I build and design cycle-testing machines that will cycle-test our bows into the hundreds of thousands and, depending on the parts being tested, even into the millions of cycles. We want to make sure that our parts are performing at a very high level of safety. As we’re thinning things out and making them lighter, we’re also making them more susceptible to fatigue. So, for example, as we make our limbs lighter, we run tests to find any weak areas in the limbs. We then fix those areas. All of this testing allows us to create dependable limbs that perform well but are also exceptionally light.”

Mathews bows also sport advanced, lightweight risers. Innovative riser design has been a hallmark of Mathews bows since the beginning. In 1996, the Mathews Ultra Light delighted bowhunters with its 3.5-pound mass weight.

In 2010, Mathews introduced the distinctive GridLock riser on the Z7, the first member of the Mathews Z-Series.

“From the testing that we’ve done, the GridLock riser has the highest strength-to-weight ratio of any aluminum design that we’ve built so far,” says McPherson. “We’re always looking to make things like that—lightweight, enjoyable to shoot and easy to hold. If you’re going to be hiking through the woods and carrying a bow for a long time, you definitely want a bow that doesn’t weigh much.”

The evolution of Mathews riser design continues with the new GeoGrid riser.
“The riser on our new 2012 bow will be tweaked a bit more,” McPherson explains. “The GeoGrid riser will be even lighter than the GridLock riser.”

The new 2012 bows are a culmination of everything McPherson has learned in his decades of building and testing compound bows. Thousands of hours of testing ensure that the latest Mathews bows provide the ultimate in performance and dependability. The 2012 Jewel is a high-end bow designed specifically to meet the needs of female archers. The new Heli™ is unbelievably fast, quiet and smooth. Weighing in at just 3.5 pounds, the Heli™ features a forgiving 7-inch brace height and, thanks to the new Heli™ Cam, produces speeds of up to 332 feet per second.

Mathews has produced a tremendous number of innovative technologies when it comes to bow design. But McPherson hasn’t stopped there. In 2009, he introduced a new camo pattern, Lost Camo, to the archery industry.

“One of the things I noticed about camo patterns is that the patterns are typically not very dynamic,” McPherson explains. “They’re pretty to look at up close, but you when get them at a distance, they look like a blob. I realized that the sections needed to be larger and that there needed to be more difference between the lights and the darks. So I created a pattern that met that need. I also worked to make sure that Lost Camo was a unidirectional pattern. No matter which way you turn it, it looks right. There’s no definite up or down to the pattern.”

Impact

“To me, impact is a very broad statement,” McPherson says. “In one way, we want to impact the world by producing bows that bring families together. There are lots of families that are brought together because of archery. It’s a fantastic sport that can keep families strong in a world that’s very dysfunctional.

“We’ve invested millions of dollars in NASP, the National Archery in the Schools Program. We’re very deeply involved in NASP because it affects kids for the rest of their lives. When kids find success in archery, it gets them believing in themselves. Many of those kids continue to shoot archery after they finish with NASP, but even the ones that don’t continue in the sport are positively impacted by the program. They can leave school knowing that they’re good at something, and that gives them the drive to be good at other things. We see it changing lives. We get literally thousands of responses from parents, teachers, principals and the kids themselves about the impact NASP has made.

“We want to continue being involved in growing the sport of archery and also in growing people. We want to be there for kids who don’t feel like they fit in, giving them hope. Giving them a future.

“We also started an organization called CenterShot Ministry. CenterShot is an archery in church program that parallels the National Archery in the Schools Program.

“The other part of that impact value is our philanthropic work around the world. My wife Sherry and I are very much involved in giving back. The saying ‘To whom much is given, much is required’ is something we take seriously. We didn’t say much about our philanthropic work in past years because we didn’t want people to think we were using that to try to sell products. But people kept asking me why I didn’t tell more people about what we were doing. They explained that people want to know that when they buy a Mathews product, they’re actually affecting people’s lives around the world.

“I also want our retailers to understand the role they play in this part of our company philosophy. We couldn’t do this without the retailers. They’re the ones selling our products. Every time they sell one of our products—whether it’s a Mathews bow or a Mathews licensed product—they’re affecting someone’s life around the world. So I want to thank the retailers for doing what they do because they’re helping us effect positive change all over the world.”

McPherson’s desire to further the company’s positive impact
around the world was a major part of his decision to develop Lost Camo.

“I got to thinking one day about how the Mathews name has significance in the industry,” he recalls. “Over the years people have asked me if they could use our name on their products. So I started thinking that it would be great if we could create our own camo pattern and then license that camo pattern to select companies who make particular accessories. I realized that, if we did that, that we could have a company that could give 100 percent of its profits to charity. Mathews already donates quite a bit of money, but I can’t donate 100 percent of Mathews’ profits because we have to invest part of the profits back into the company—I have to build buildings and buy machinery and computers and desks. But a company with not much overhead—a company like Lost Camo—would be able to donate its profits.

“So I hired Keith Jennings, who had many years of experience in licensing products. He has the same passion that Sherry and I do for making a difference in the world. Ever since then it’s generated more and more money every year. My wife and I don’t receive a penny from this. It all goes to these things around the world. Mathews still donates the most money, but Lost Camo and the licensing division actually generate several hundred thousand dollars a year that all goes to helping people. Lost Camo gives me another avenue to make a difference around the world.

“The other benefit of Lost Camo and Mathews licensed products is that they help us support our independent retailers. Through this program, our retailers are able to provide unique products that can increase their profitability. That’s very important to us. Mathews cannot succeed unless its retailers succeed.”

McPherson and Mathews support many different efforts both globally and in the United States. It’s clear that making a difference in the lives of others is incredibly important to McPherson.

“We participate in disaster relief across the United States,” McPherson says. “In India we’ve drilled wells in 15 different cities. We provide for orphanages. We contribute to missionaries. It’s our passion. I know this much—when I die, I’m not going to be thinking that I should have spent more money on myself. I’m sure what I’ll be thinking is that I could have done more. So I work very diligently at trying to stay focused so I can.

“We’re affecting people’s lives all over the world because we sell bows. It’s important that our retailers and customers know that they’re a part of this, too. They’re helping to change people’s lives, and I think that’s just incredible.

“When you change someone’s life for the better, it changes you. You want to do more.”

For the last 20 years, Mathews has made a difference. It’s made a difference for the thousands of archers and bowhunters who get more enjoyment out of the sports because they shoot a faster, smoother, quieter bow. It’s made a difference for the retailers who are able to make a living selling high-end equipment that consumers want. It’s made a difference to the over 300 employees who believe in the products they manufacture and sell. And it’s made a difference to millions of people around the world.

McPherson keeps a saying taped to his computer. It reads, “Don’t let the little things keep you from doing the important things.” Too often, businesses get tied up in the day-to-day minutiae and lose sight of what really matters. Mathews is such an incredible success story precisely because Matt McPherson and the hardworking Mathews team never forget those three core values. Integrity. Innovation. Impact. As Mathews celebrates 20 years in business, those guiding principles will ensure that it remains successful for years to come.

For additional information, visit mathewsin.com.