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TGI named Winner of Best Places to Work

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For the past 30 years, the Gonzalez family has built Tire Group International Inc. (TGI) into a successful wholesale tire business by stressing personal contact, both within the business and with customers.

Internally, those working at TGI call it “Selling Happiness.”

As the company grows beyond its comfortable and familiar South Florida surroundings — a third warehouse distribution facility is under consideration — that business model increasingly will be put to the test. But Joaquin Gonzalez Jr., president of the Miami-based company since 2015, is confident the bonds built over the years will carry the company forward.

The company’s 100-plus employees appear to agree. Based on their feedback to the 2021-22 Best Places to Work survey sponsored by *Tire Business*, TGI is the winner of the annual ranking award, which is administered by Best Companies Group (BCG), an independent research firm specializing in identifying and recognizing great places to work.

BCG judges the firms that entered through two sets of data, one supplied a company’s owners or management and one from its employees. The survey includes seven demographic and two open-ended questions.

For TGI — a finalist for the award two years ago — earning the award this year coincides with the company’s 30th anniversary.

The company was founded in 1992 by Tony Gonzalez, then just 23 years old, as a tire brokerage operating out of the garage of his family’s home in Miami.

“When you work for something you believe in, it’s called passion,” Joaquin Gonzalez said. “TGI has been inspiring belief and committing to it, since its humble beginnings, empowering our team to be the very best at everything we do.”

Tony Gonzalez, CEO and chairman, added: “We are a true family that takes pride in everything we do, a family that never stops fighting for our clients, and is only satisfied with being the best.”

From those relatively humble beginnings three decades ago, TGI today does business in more than 80 coun-



Brothers Tony and Joaquin Gonzalez lead Tire Group International as chairman/CEO and president, respectively.

tries, distributing more than 30 brands of tires, focusing on a range of private brand tires, including one proprietary brand, Cosmo, and a handful of others for which it has secured exclusive distribution rights.

Distributing private tire brands allows TGI to offer its partners exclusivity within their markets, something that some other brands do not provide. Both TGI and its partners can work to establish those brands without fear of having manufacturers swoop in and change the landscape, the owners said.

Last year the company generated sales of \$75 million, nearly double that of just a few years ago. Roughly 70% of sales are generated in the U.S. versus 30% abroad, Joaquin Gonzalez said, which contrasts with a 30/70 split just a few years ago.

Joaquin Gonzalez — who won a national football championship at the University of Miami and played professional football for five years as an offensive lineman for the Cleveland Browns and Indianapolis Colts — credits much of the company’s success to the family-like corporate culture that has evolved at TGI.

“We don’t have employees at TGI,” he told *Tire Business* recently. “We are all teammates, colleagues.”

Fostering a family-like corporate culture “showcases a spirit of culture,” he said. “People want to do a good job cause they don’t want to let others down.”

In a company with around 100 workers, “people notice how you treat them, ... and it’s reciprocal in that fashion.

Perhaps as a testament to the company culture, TGI experiences little employee turnover, Joaquin Gonzalez said, noting that the average experi-

ence among the sales team is over nine years and over four-and-a-half years among the warehouse staff.

The family culture extends to hiring as well.

“We promote from within,” he said. “I’m a huge fan of giving people opportunities. It’s one of the best parts of my job.

“We could hire a highly qualified person from the outside, but a lot of times you have someone in-house who — due to their walk of life, or whatever — doesn’t have the academic credentials. If given the opportunity, however, they’ll do a much better job and will be forever indebted for that opportunity,” he added, noting that several of the firm’s best customer service representatives started as receptionists.

In short, individuals “take ownership of their jobs,” he continued.

That philosophy carries over to hiring and promoting, Joaquin Gonzalez



However, the executive said he makes a point of meeting every candidate who applies.

“I like to interview everyone who walks through the door,” he said. “I like to see their faces and get a vibe, even if it’s only for a few minutes.

In those short meetings, he makes a point of asking two questions: “What was your best vacation, and who with? Who were your idols growing up?”

“I don’t delve into the qualifications,” he said. “I can’t ask personal questions. But these questions help interviewees open up and share more of who they are.”

In the end, he noted, all that matters



TGI ‘teammates’ help promote the launch of the revamped Cosmo brand in 2019.

said, stressing that department heads have final say on who they hire or promote, because, “You empower people to make decisions and you support those decisions, good bad or indifferent. I think it builds a lot of confidence in the team.”

is doing the job. Can you sell?

As for winning the Best Places to Work award, Joaquin Gonzalez said it’s a “testament to the culture we have here in the building.

“Family comes first. That’s something I learned from Tony and from football,” he said, stressing that TGI kept all of its staff employed during the pandemic.

While still active in the business as chairman and CEO, Tony Gonzalez has branched out, following his passion for film and music, creating Rock the Moon, a successful music label, and Exilium, a film production company.

His first movie release, *Vandal*, is streaming on all major services.

