

# At Your Service: Mortgage Company's Valet Parking Helps Their Workers Feel Like Royalty

Last winter, when below-zero temps and frigid air kept people



Kyle Kent helps Diane Dabira arrive at work in comfort at United Shore. *Photos courtesy of United Shore*

huddled indoors, Brad Pettiford was grateful for his company's valet car service.

In harsh weather, the communications manager at United Shore's headquarters pulls his 2013 silver Toyota Camry up to the glass-enclosed office building and

before he can get out, his door is opened by a gracious valet with a generous smile. Another valet opens the building door and wishes him a good day.

“I felt like a celebrity,” says Pettiford, 28, before heading to work for the mortgage company. Pettiford had only used valet parking before on his wedding day.

But this valet service is not for C-Suite types; in fact executives are discouraged. The service is for staff, and up to 250 people use it daily. It’s free –and tipping is not allowed

“One of my least favorite things is having to scrape off the windows and let my car warm up when it’s icy and cold,” he says. “Before I leave work for the day, I call the valet and say I’m ready to go. They say, ‘Sure thing, Brad,’ and have my car warmed up and waiting for me at the curb.”

According to a study on Retaining Talent by the Society for Human Resource Management, one of the most critical issues facing organizations today is how to keep good employees. Strengthening employee engagement is one way to keep good people, the report shows. Engagement refers to people who are satisfied with their jobs, their colleagues and the amenities of their workplace.

More than that, though, a satisfied worker knows their job is important – they “take pride in the company and believe that their employer values their contributions,” the study reveals. Employees who feel “embedded” in the company, and who feel valued, are five times less likely to leave.



Laura Lawson is chief people officer at United Shore.

Valet car service is one of many ways United Shore tries to make the 1,350 people working at its Troy, Mich., headquarters feel special and valued, says Laura Lawson, chief people officer. She heads the family owned company’s Team Member Services department, which is the name Lawson gave to what used to be Human Resources.

“It’s so much bigger than HR,” says Lawson, 38. “Our people are our greatest asset. We are always looking for ways to roll out the red carpet. We focus on servicing clients with ‘wow factor’; we first have to show our people the ‘wow factor’ if we want them to show it to our customers.”

Team members say it feels like the company

prioritizes “work-life balance,” says Pettiford, which explains other perks like on-site dry cleaning, a cafeteria and Starbucks on the premises, and a gym for staff to use before and after work or at lunch.

“The company is focused on making sure we have amenities and services so the rest of our lives are efficient,” Pettiford says. “They want people to feel happy working here, and so they try to reduce the stress of our lives. I don’t have to wait for 15 minutes in line at Starbucks on my way in to work and make my commute longer. I can get my coffee here on the way to my desk.”

“It makes you feel like



Monis Ahsan helps co-worker Bettie Williams keep dry in the rain outside the office. United Shore's valet service is for staff. Executives are discouraged from using it.

royalty,” she says. “You can’t help but think, ‘Wow, I feel so important.’ We want our team members to feel like they’re the most powerful people.”

The company is home to the No.1 wholesale lender in the nation, United Wholesale Mortgage. They are top ranked in number of loans closed and number of purchase loans.

United Shore emphasizes investing in their employees from the top down so staff members want to build a career there, Lawson adds.

“We want to hire to retire. We don’t want our people to leave, so we help them feel

comfortable, special and that they can build an internal career path. This is just one of the ways we do it.”

*Note: United Shore is celebrating being recognized as one of Metropolitan Detroit's 2015 101 Best and Brightest Companies to Work For, [www.101bestandbrightest.com](http://www.101bestandbrightest.com). For more on Troy, Mich.-based United Shore, visit [www.unitedshore.com](http://www.unitedshore.com).*



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Lynne Golodner is author of eight books, renowned blogger ([www.lynnegolodner.com](http://www.lynnegolodner.com)), and a spiritual entrepreneur dedicated to helping people make a difference in the world. Through her company, Your People LLC, ([www.yourpppl.com](http://www.yourpppl.com)), Golodner helps people grow businesses and nonprofits, improve personal satisfaction, develop skills and find ways to live a meaningful life. She believes relationships and storytelling are the keys to success.

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