

# FUTURE 50

## Chesapeake Environmental Management, Inc.

### President and CEO: Stephanie Novak Hau

**INDUSTRY:** Environmental consulting  
**LOCATION:** Bel Air, MD  
**FOUNDED:** 1993



**IN A NUTSHELL:** Chesapeake Environmental Management is a full-service environmental consulting firm serving commercial and governmental entities.

**QUALITY OVER QUANTITY:** When we reviewed the strategic business plan that had guided our company for the previous five years, we re-examined our current mission, determined where we wanted to go in the next five years, defined strategies to get there and set specific goals to implement the strategies. Through this process, we realized that we needed a revision to our corporate structure and a bolder program for sharing the wealth we create. What resulted is our Shared Success Plan, which rewards success, not years of experience. This change is 100 percent responsible for the significant growth of our staff, our sales and our profits.

**“Our clients pay us for results, not effort.”**

**LET GO:** Unlike many firms in our industry, we do not try to “plan” our growth. We prefer a more organic approach, where we look to add smart, creative people that have an entrepreneurial outlook. We give these people freedom to pursue projects, clients or opportunities that meet

our two basic criteria: they must be profitable and they must result in practical scientific applications to improve communities. We balance this freedom of pursuit with an expectation of personal and financial responsibility to both the client and the company.

**MAKE IT HAPPEN:** The biggest challenge I have faced in leading CEM is getting through to our staff that our clients pay us for results, not effort. And, in turn, we pay our staff for results, not effort. For some, this is a difficult concept to adopt because it requires a high level of personal responsibility.

**MORE THAN WORDS:** I could not possibly improve on the leadership definition offered by John Maxwell, who said, “Leadership is influence – nothing more and nothing less.” True leaders have people following their vision – voluntarily. I could describe my leadership, but just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, the same is true for leadership. All I can say is that I allow my actions, not just my words, to express my priorities for myself and my company.

**PROVIDE INCENTIVE:** The single most important growth decision I have made was the decision to radically change our corporate structure and compensation plan. This has allowed us to intentionally hire people who are motivated to help grow the company, give them the freedom they need to grow it, and then reward them according to their contribution to its growth – with cash awards and the opportunity for direct purchase of company stock. To us, this is just common sense, but in our industry, where a top-down hierarchy is the norm, our culture is seen as unique. And I think that our growth in the recent economic climate, where our competitors have shrunk or stagnated, validates our approach.