

# Empowering Growth:

## Well-Being as a Driver of Productivity & Innovation



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*James White, President and CEO of Wellmaster, is a visionary leader who plays a pivotal role in driving the growth and success of the company. Wellmaster, a leading manufacturing of products for the groundwater, energy, and horticultural sectors, has a rich history and a reputation for excellence.*

**W**ellmaster, an established company nestled in Tillsonburg, Ontario, has earned a reputation as a leading force in manufacturing and supplying products for the North American groundwater, energy, and horticultural sectors. With a strong commitment to quality and innovation, Wellmaster has been serving these broad industry sectors for several decades, consistently exceeding expectations and setting new standards in quality as well as product and process innovation. Rooted in rural Southwestern Ontario, the Wellmaster team takes pride in their deep connections with their local community, contributing to the region's growth and prosperity.

Wellmaster is a family-owned company with second generation ownership, James White, serving as company President and CEO. James' journey to leadership wasn't a straightforward path; it involved careful planning, a five-year succession plan, and a steadfast determination to honour the family legacy. Taking over from his father, Doug White, James embraced the responsibility with a deep sense of purpose, recognizing the significance of preserving Wellmaster's values and unwavering commitment to excellence.

"Doug's vision for the succession process was to create the conditions for the Wellmaster team and I to chart our own path forward that built on the foundation of innovation and strong company culture," said James. "Through this process, we developed a stakeholder-driven strategy that builds on who we are as a company and has propelled us into a period of historic rapid growth driven by innovation during a period of significant market and societal disruption."





## Wellmaster: A Legacy of Quality and Innovation

Wellmaster has a long-standing presence in the industry, tracing its roots back to a group of seven employees who, with the assistance of an outside investor, purchased Tillsonburg Pipe and Supply Industries Inc. Naming their new company Wellmaster Pipe and Supply Inc., Doug White was one of those seven founding partners, serving initially as CFO and then as President in 1993. In 2012, Doug purchased full ownership of the organization and began planning Wellmaster's future as a family-owned company. When James' father approached him with a proposal for the succession strategy, James was already well established in his successful career in Western Canada. However, through their discussions, James recognized the opportunity to contribute to Wellmaster's growth and he and his family decided to return to Ontario and embark on the journey.

During the fall of 2017, the five-year succession plan was set into motion, with James assuming a key role in the company's operations. James immersed himself in the day-to-day affairs while focusing on the financial aspects and worked on understanding the business at a deeper level. James benefited from the years he had spent in this youth on the Wellmaster shop floor as well as his decades of academic and professional experience since.

## A Purpose-Driven Partnership with People Corporation

During his succession journey, James recognized the importance of creating business strategies that provided differentiative value to Wellmaster's key stakeholders; ownership, employees, customers, value chain partners and both the local and global community.

"Our strategy meant we needed to take a hard look at the value we were providing to our team," said James.

**"It is a core value at Wellmaster that each team member has an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the success of the company, and an equally meaningful opportunity to share in the success we created together."**

Wellmaster has several long-standing successful initiatives including profit sharing programs that support this core value. However, status quo was not viewed as acceptable to drive growth with Wellmaster's stakeholders; instead, they recognized the need for proactive adaptation and innovation to address evolving trends and seize emerging opportunities.

We began thinking about the 'what and why' of work," said James. "When the role a person does conflicts with why they do it, there will be attendance and retention issues. When an individual's chosen role aligns with and reinforces their 'why,' it leads to heightened engagement, enhanced innovation, and greater productivity. Based on these principles, we began exploring various factors to intentionally assess the significance of work at Wellmaster and align it with the purpose of our work."

James and his team recognized that prioritizing employee physical and mental well-being, supported by a comprehensive and all-encompassing benefits program, was of paramount importance. This led Wellmaster to engage with People Corporation, a group benefits consulting firm renowned for its innovative thinking, exemplary guidance, and unwavering commitment to fostering sustainable growth.

Through an introduction with the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CM&E), James met with People Corporation's Enterprise team to discuss the objectives of Wellmaster's future total rewards strategy. Their objective was clear: to provide a benefits program that would not only attract and retain top talent but also ensure the well-being of their employees. For Wellmaster, the partnership was about more than just offering conventional benefits; it was about creating a culture of care, support, and empowerment.



## **A Benefits Program with a Heart: Transforming Lives Inside and Outside the Workplace**

The collaboration between Wellmaster and People Corporation led to the development of a comprehensive and forward-thinking benefits program. Together, they crafted an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) that went beyond mere traditional benefits. They sought to make the benefits experience an opportunity to showcase the company's commitment to its employees and reinforce the strength of their relationship.

Wellmaster's new benefits program focuses on promoting employee wellness proactively. By providing an accessible and affordable virtual total well-being health platform, valuable profit-sharing opportunities, and enhanced coverage, the organization ensures that its employees have the tools and support they need to reach their full potential.

As part of the benefits study, James felt it was critical to not only have a comprehensive benefits program that attracts new talent, but rewards tenure and company loyalty. Taking a holistic approach, the team at Wellmaster recognized the value of acknowledging long-serving employees' dedication to the company.

In line with this vision, they introduced a health care spending account that provided additional flexibility based on employees' tenure with the organization. This innovative initiative not only demonstrated Wellmaster's appreciation for its employees' loyalty but also ensured that their well-being remained a top priority throughout their journey with the company. This personalized approach to benefits further solidified the culture of care and commitment that sets Wellmaster apart as an employer of choice in their community.

The partnership also led to a significant emphasis on employee engagement and performance. Wellmaster believes that a high-performing workforce is one that feels valued, supported, and connected to their work. By investing in their people and fostering a positive work culture, the company aims to set itself apart in the industry.

## **Where We Are Where We Are Going: A Vision for the Future**

James and his team understand that for any program, project or product to be sustainable within Wellmaster it must provide a return on investment that supports and grows the profitability and by extension the pool of funds available to the employee profit sharing programs. The employee benefits program is no different.

"Our partnership with People Corporation and renewed focus on employee well-being is helping us address many of the key challenges facing Canadian manufacturing today, including productivity and labour shortages," said James.

While Wellmaster has made substantial investments in new equipment, industry-aligned processes, and data-driven decision-making, it remains acutely aware of the pivotal role that individuals play in driving productivity enhancements. The new benefits program stands as a cornerstone of the broader effort aimed at nurturing and cultivating productivity through the empowerment and development of its workforce.





Wellmaster's steady productivity gains has meant continued growth, and has not been limited to availability of labour. Nonetheless, when Wellmaster has occasionally sought to expand its workforce due to rapid growth and retirements, the response from potential candidates has been positive. The enhanced benefits and wellness programs have solidified Wellmaster's standing as a preferred employer within the community, consistently attracting an average of three qualified candidates for each role opening across various job categories.

James and the team understand that their people are integral to Wellmaster's success. By providing a holistic benefits program and empowering their employees to thrive both inside and outside the workplace, they have solidified their position as an employer of choice in a continuously competitive landscape.

Through their partnership with People Corporation, Wellmaster continues to nurture a culture of care, support, and community. As they move forward into the future, they remain committed to evolving and enhancing their benefits program to address the ever-changing needs of their employees.

## Empowering Lives, One Step at a Time

James' journey from working on the factory floor to leading Wellmaster exemplifies the power of vision, planning, and community-driven leadership. With a commitment to continued involvement and success, Wellmaster has transformed its benefits program into a catalyst for positive change and growth. By investing in their people, Wellmaster is not only building a successful business; they are empowering lives and making a lasting impact on the customers and community they proudly serve.

**To learn more about Wellmaster, please visit [www.wellmaster.ca](http://www.wellmaster.ca).**

*A heartfelt thank you to James for sharing his journey and the Wellmaster story.*

*Taylor Valee, Senior Benefits Consultant, People Corporation*

"Embracing the manufacturing industry is not merely a choice; it is an imperative for building a prosperous and sustainable future. Manufacturing is the backbone of economic growth, fueling innovation, creating job opportunities, and driving technological advancement. By supporting manufacturing, we empower local and global economies, bolstering their resilience and competitiveness on the international stage.

Investing in manufacturing fosters a virtuous cycle of growth, as it encourages research and development, leading to groundbreaking discoveries that transform industries and uplift societies. Moreover, manufacturing serves as a catalyst for various sectors, from healthcare to renewable energy, enhancing our ability to address pressing global challenges.

Furthermore, manufacturing creates a sense of community by fostering collaboration between businesses, governments, and educational institutions. Together, they can nurture a skilled workforce, promoting lifelong learning and empowering individuals to adapt to an ever-changing technological landscape.

In essence, supporting manufacturing is a strategic decision with far-reaching benefits. It empowers economies, strengthens societies, and safeguards our shared future. By rallying behind this essential industry, we pave the way for progress and prosperity on both local and global scales."

**Colleen Baker,**  
**Vice President, National Enterprise People Corporation**

*People Corporation is a proud sponsor of the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CM&E).*

