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Monday, September 22, 2014, 6:30 am

Best Places to Work 2014: Boisset Family Estates

First-time winner

By Jeff Quackenbush, Business Journal Staff Reporter

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ST. HELENA — The middle word in Boisset Family Estates goes beyond the recognition that the second generation is leading the three-decade-old Franco-American wine company.

“The wealth of our family is within the extremely exceptional human beings, souls and spirits that constitute our extended family,” said Jean-Charles Boisset, co-proprietor with his sister, Nathalie.

A number of family ties are among the 191 employees in the U.S. and France — all but 20 in the North Coast at estates such as Buena Vista in Sonoma Valley, DeLoach in Russian River Valley and Raymond in Napa Valley.

“We have many husband-wife, sister-brother, parent-sibling, pairs who work with us,” one employee said. “We also invite our furry friends — dogs — that get to come to work with us too.”

The average length of time employees stay with the company is nearly five years. Boisset was started in 1961. Jean-Charles Boisset launched U.S. operations in 1980, but he ratcheted up the business with the purchase of DeLoach in 2003.

Innovation in packaging and new wines flows from the corporate culture, employees said.

“We are always looking at how to do things differently,” one said. “They believe in their people and support their goals. I was given an opportunity when I came on board and appreciate having the chance to make a difference. The culture allows you to flourish.”

Boisset actively supports charities in Napa and Sonoma counties. The company garnered the most for a lot sold at the benefit Auction Napa Valley earlier this year, raising \$840,000-plus. Boisset has raised nearly \$2 million for Napa causes since acquiring Raymond five years ago, including \$450,000 raised for Napa Valley Hospices and Adult Day Services during an auction at Raymond. Boisset had the No. 1 live lot at Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction last year, raising more than \$50,000, and the company raised \$200,000 for the Sonoma Community Center via another event.

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