



## Learning to Work Together

In 1884, John H. Patterson bought out the other investors of the National Manufacturing Company & the National Cash Register Company, or NCR, was born.

When business began to slump in the early 1890's, Mr. Patterson moved his desk into the factory and started an investigation to discover the reason. He found that trained workmen were leaving because working conditions at NCR were no better than conditions in any other factory. The neighborhood itself was a drag on business—skilled mechanics simply refused to live or work in 'Slidertown', which had a reputation for being full of thieves, gamblers, and other shady characters.

"But the greatest trouble of all, [Patterson] soon became convinced, was that he lacked the co-operation and sympathy of his employees. He, representing capital, and his employees, representing labor, had both been trying to get the most for the least from each other, with the result that neither derived much satisfaction from the arrangement.<sup>[1]</sup>"



On the theory that beautiful surroundings promote good work, and that an employee who is invested in their surroundings will perform better at work than employees who live in a shack, Patterson embarked upon an ambitious program of improvement.

The factory buildings were painted & premises enriched by planting flowers, shrubs and grass. Prizes were awarded to workers with the best kept yards. Employees were offered hot meals, rest periods, & medical services—including eye exams & company-provided glasses. Each new employee attended a health & safety lecture

during their first half hour on the job. Machine operators sat on actual chairs with backs for support rather than old-fashioned stools.



Mr. Patterson made it a habit to regularly walk through the factory, where he would pause at each bench to speak with the workers. This had the dual benefit of winning the confidence of his employees & giving Patterson the opportunity to hear their suggestions.

By investing in his employees, John H. Patterson created a business where workers felt comfortable, respected, valued, and supported on a daily basis. Safe working environments and healthy employees were able to consistently provide high quality work, which elevated the prestige of NCR. Patterson's efforts attracted the best workers, who remained loyal to the company, allowing them all to develop a successful business together.

Above images courtesy of the '[Dayton Postcards Collection](#)' at the Dayton Metro Library.

[1] [America's Best Employers - John H. Patterson's Work: How the National Cash Register Company's Founder Makes Workers Happy and Efficient](#) by P.O. Warren, published by *Forbes Magazine* 3/16/1918

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## Office Hours

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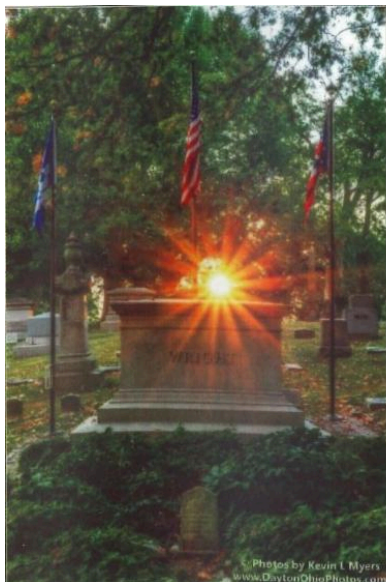
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