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# HomeStars:

Building a culture where employee initiative, and ideas thrive



HomeStars is an online review site for homeowners to find the best contractors, renovators and retailers. Its corporate headquarters, located in downtown Toronto, embodies the philosophy of its Founder and CEO, Nancy Peterson: that any successful company needs to support the individual potential and initiative of its employees. Located inside a heritage building, employees are given the space to connect and create and are provided with all the tools they need to grow the company along with their own potential.

## Roots

Nancy Peterson, Founder and CEO of HomeStars, learned about the challenges of finding reputable home service trades while doing an extensive renovation on her own

home. As the effort to track down good contractors mounted, Nancy thought, “Word-of-mouth referrals from friends and neighbours are so helpful but take so much time to collect. If only I could create an online source of reviews written by homeowners like me.”

HomeStars was launched to create an online community of homeowners who share their experiences in order to help each other find the best contractors, renovators and retailers. It also allows those same contractors to tell their story through photos and the words of their own customers.

## Building an Authentic Culture

In just over a decade, HomeStars has become Canada’s largest and most trusted source for connecting homeowners with home professionals. Nancy attributes the success of the company, in large part, to the culture of the company. HomeStars is primarily about three things, Nancy explains, “accountability, communication,



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Lauren Carroll, Manager, Human Resources

and trust. We are a review site, so these three ingredients lay the foundation for not only creating authentic content for our site but also for creating an authentic environment in which our employees can thrive.” Creating an adaptive and energetic workplace to support these traits was Nancy’s next big challenge:

#### **Designing in Flexibility**

A heritage building in downtown Toronto, close to public parks and amenities for her employees immediately captured her imagination. There is a sense of openness and liveliness in the loft-style space. Exposed brick, high ceilings and lots of natural light set the stage for a collaborative and connected space. With the help of the Global team, the space was furnished to provide choices to employees, giving them the opportunity to collaborate with each other in communal work spaces, focus in quiet heads-down areas, or gather in the communal kitchen at the core of the space. Desks are on wheels, encouraging employees to configure their own work environments. They have the option to collapse their tables and clear floor space for

events, to move their work stations throughout departments, or to team up in any configuration with other employees to tackle a project together. Ultimately, they have the option to create their own stories. Lauren Carroll, Manager, Human Resources, explains, “Everybody has the chance to deliver their ideas and make themselves present and heard, to not be afraid to solve problems.”

#### **Empowering for Innovation**

The HomeStars workplace epitomizes Homestar’s vision of empowerment, Nancy expands, “To me, empowerment is about connection. It’s about the whole team producing great results by empowering great individuals.” HomeStars’ readiness to make change, their “relentless disruption of the status quo,” as Nancy puts it, is what makes the company innovative. “You always want to be moving, seeking new ways to solve problems and to create. Having the space that helps us do exactly that feels pretty good – for everyone.”



