

DBS Employee Recognition Program

Employee of the Month - 2014 Recipients

DBS 2014 Employee of the Year



Underwriter Brianna Olson was chosen as the 2014 recipient of the DBS Employee of the Year award. Brianna consistently offers customers and her fellow co-workers detailed and thorough information that is needed, with a quick and timely response. She uses a straightforward and friendly manner that our customers appreciate.

Brianna is an asset to the Underwriting Department, and is known for her diligent and thoughtful approach to underwriting challenges that may come forward. She listens, considers the options, and advises advisors and fellow employees on the best direction to go to move forward. She is currently preparing for her 2015 Academy of Life Underwriting (ALU) examination.

Jessica Malmquist - December Employee of the Month

January 6, 2014

Jessica has been a valued DBS employee since 2010, when she started as part of the FASTerm team. In 2011 we were excited to have her join the commission accounting team. Jessica continuously has a positive attitude and gives everyone she comes in contact with the absolute best customer service. One of her nominations noted that she always puts herself in the agent's shoes, and it shows on a daily basis how much she cares about our customers. Even with the added pressure and urgency at year-end to get commissions put through quickly, with many special off-cycle requests, she maintains her calm composure and always has a smile on her face.

Her co-workers regularly recognize her for being dependable, happy & engaged with everyone she works with. She is truly a great "go-to" resource at DBS. Jessica was chosen out of 23 employees nominated for the month of December. There were 17 external nominations and 23 internal nominations.

Laura Thompson - November Employee of the Month

December 16, 2014

The employee of the month for November is known for her creativity and ability to get projects done almost instantaneously. Laura Thompson joined the DBS team in the fall of 2011 on a part-time basis to help with various marketing projects. From the start, Laura was a tremendous contributor to DBS's marketing efforts and it wasn't long before she was asked to join the marketing team on a permanent basis. Laura was chosen for the November employee of the month from 15 employees who were nominated.

Laura is involved with almost every DBS marketing communication including Twitter tweets, Facebook posts, banner ads, updates on the numerous DBS websites, as well as the distribution of the many marketing emails and other pieces. Laura is uniquely qualified to take the lead on the marketing communications involving the use of technology since she is married to another key DBS team member, Jason Thompson, IT Manager.

Laura is also the go-to person for the numerous projects that crop-up involving the need for graphic design work. Laura consistently receives accolades from co-workers, especially on the sales team for the support she provides personalizing marketing communications for their accounts. Recently, Laura took the lead on revising DBS's brand image. This involved the creation of a number of new flyers, brochures and a completely redesigned display booth, which required the coordination of the photographs of the entire DBS staff.

In addition to all the projects Laura performs for DBS, she also teaches piano and violin, and volunteers at the schools where her three boys, Joshua, Benjamin, and Isaac attend. In her spare time she enjoys gardening, cooking, spending time with family and friends, and more recently, playing with the new dog Dexter. Laura and Jason have been married 18 years and live on 10 acres west of Waconia.

Brianna Olson - October Employee of the Month

November 9, 2014

Brianna Olson has been an exemplary employee since she joined DBS in 2009 as a New Business Assistant in the Case Management team. Brianna was promoted to Underwriter in July 2013 and has since been a tremendous contributor to the underwriting team. Brianna has a logical no-nonsense approach that has served her well as an underwriting advocate for our clients.

Brianna was chosen for the October employee of the month from 17 employees who were nominated. There were 34 nominations last month and 15 different employees were nominated. Brianna received glowing feedback from an advisor in October; this advisor was incredibly impressed with how Brianna was able to get a standard offer on an 82-year-old client who was declined 2 years ago. Brianna conducted a telephone interview with the client and was able to secure information that wasn't known in prior underwriting attempts. Brianna used this new information she gathered to advocate for the client successfully. The advisor said "Brianna is GREAT!" and will bring his future business to DBS directly because of his positive experience.

Brianna was recently tasked with managing the outsourcing of the administrative duties of the underwriting team. This involved the creation of a detailed training manual, teleconferences with vendor staff and ongoing auditing and quality assurance. Brianna has ensured the success of this outsourcing initiative despite numerous challenges based on her diligence and thoughtful approach. Brianna received internal nominations with respect to her success in this area. Brianna also received several nominations for her coordination of events for the DBS Oktoberfest week. Employees said the Oktoberfest week was "a lot of fun and super positive." Brianna and her husband Joey live in Richfield. Upon graduating with a degree in Education, Brianna spent a couple of years working and traveling in Asia. Brianna enjoys traveling, outdoor activity and learning. Brianna successfully passed her first Academy of Life Underwriting (ALU) examination this year. She will soon start preparation for the 2015 ALU examination.

Liz Kusske - September Employee of the Month

October 15, 2014

Liz Kusske, a great employee who is always here to go the extra mile, received the honor of Employee of the Month for September. Liz joined the DBS team as an Executive Sales Assistant in August 2011 and came highly recommended by numerous industry associates. In fact, before joining DBS she worked with several brokers affiliated with DBS so she came to the company already somewhat acquainted with a few of the DBS employees. Before coming to DBS she also worked for a John Hancock GA as their New Business Manager and as a Regional Sales Administrator for Penn Mutual.

Liz has always gone above and beyond with the many hats she wears at DBS. She has furthered her career with advanced executive training and she strives to be a better Executive Sales Assistant every day. She also takes her role with the DBS Relationship Managers seriously and can often be seen "herding the sales cats" and keeping them organized and prepared. Her organizational skills are truly evident when planning the numerous company events, including our broker meetings, training seminars, employee functions, and day-to-day in-house meetings.

Liz recently got engaged to her long-time boyfriend, Eric, during a trip to the North Shore. When they stopped at Split Rock Lighthouse, he popped the question, and of course she said yes. They live in Stacy, MN, which is 61 miles away from the office; her daily commute alone shows her dedication to DBS! She has two daughters, Rachel, who also works at DBS as an Application Coordinator; and Courtney, who just gave birth to baby Grayson Evan. A big congratulations to the well deserving Liz Kusske!

Jill Neske - August Employee of the Month

September 16, 2014

Jill joined the DBS staff in November of 2011. When she was hired at DBS she mentioned that good things seem to happen for her around Thanksgiving! Well.....you can add another good thing to that list with Employee on the Month!

Jill started out in data entry on the Term Team and then moved to a Term Team Case Manager position. After 11 months on the Term Team, the Receptionist spot opened up, and she moved to that position in March of 2013.

Jill has proven to be a great receptionist and a valuable DBS employee. She is an asset to policy service and the Support and Services Team. Her new business training enables her to be able to field any call up at the busy front desk, from new business and marketing to inforce questions. Recently there were ongoing problems with our phone system and all local calls were routed to the front desk, doubling the amount of calls normally handled (from 200+ to 400+ per week). Jill handled the increased traffic with diligence and grace, in addition to her regular work. With her previous communication training, she has polished skills both written and verbal, and she deals effectively with all callers very professionally. If you ever need anything proofread, just ask Jill to look it over, as she prides herself on that skill in particular.

Jill resides in St. Paul in the Macalester - Groveland neighborhood, with her two rescue cats Gladys and Vernon, affectionately named after the parents of one of her rock idols....can you guess who? (Elvis) She is an animal advocate and loves all animals. In her spare time she enjoys listening to music and going to concerts. This summer she was able to see another of her rock idols, Sir Elton John; she was lucky enough to touch hands with him, and then proceeded to not wash that hand for 12 hours! She also

enjoys the local art fairs, and spending time with friends and vacationing in the Mexican sun when possible. She spends as much time as possible with her family: Mom, Carole; Dad, Glenn; Brother, Jeffrey; and her three nephews, Sawyer, Haakon and Lars. She was born and raised in St. Paul and is very proud of her home town. She is an avid sports fan, with baseball being #1. She played softball for many years and is still friends with many of those teammates that she sees on a regular basis. Jill was chosen from 25 employee nominations and 10 agent nominations. Congratulations on a job well done Jill!

Alaina Winson - July Employee of the Month

August 15, 2014

Alaina joined DBS just over 7 months ago on our application team as an Application Coordinator. She has quickly shown her leadership skills when promoted to App Team Lead and MoneyGuard Case Manager. Alaina has proven to be a true leader taking on new roles and tasks with a positive and "go-get-it" attitude. Even though her time here has been less than year, Alaina's leadership and guidance can be described best by one of her fellow team members, "I am truly embracing my work confidently, because she has been an extraordinary leader and teacher." Alaina always goes above and beyond with any task she takes on and does it with a smile!

Alaina has been a consistent nominee & nominator every month. She always takes the time to nominate her fellow co-workers. Alaina was chosen out of 28 employee and 5 agent nominations this month. 27 employees received nominations.

Alaina lives in St. Louis Park, just 5 minutes away from the office, with her husband, Justin and 2 cats, Nips & Chunky. Scooter, her other beloved kitty, is living with her parents. She enjoys playing sand volleyball, coaching volleyball, gardening & spending time with her & Justin's family whether it is camping, canoeing or fishing.

Brian Fair - June Employee of the Month

July 8, 2014

Brian joined DBS almost 7 years ago. Since then he has proven to be an invaluable Marketing Associate. He is not only extremely hard-working, but he has the best attitude each and every day. Brian consistently runs the highest volume of illustrations on the team, but he always seems to find the time to help other team members. He has also been willing and accepting to take on many high-touch and also difficult agents without pause. Brian is a very analytical person which results in some great suggestions for improving the Marketing Department. He is sincerely appreciated by management and his co-workers for his positive attitude and work ethic.

According to one of his co-worker nominations this month, "Brian is a very good example of what a DBS employee should be." He is not only a very dedicated Marketing Associate, but he never hesitates to volunteer for extra activities to help the Marketing Team and DBS as a whole. A good example of his dedication to our company is his hard work on the Education Committee.

Since the Employee Recognition Program's inception, Brian has consistently received nominations each month from his agents and co-workers. This month there were a total of 16 nominations: 11 from co-workers and 5 from agents. Eleven employees received nominations.

Brian enjoys spending his free time with his wife, Tracy, and his step-children Cole and Alexandra, not to mention his 3 cats: Boo, Kaylee and Gooby. Brian has a love for classic cars and proudly drives a 1969 Mercury Marauder. He also enjoys a fine cigar now and then. Brian is a self-professed gamer and has currently found a love for the card game "Magic, the Gathering." When he can get away from DBS, Brian enjoys heading to Jamaica for a relaxing vacation.

Dawn Goss - May Employee of the Month

June 15, 2014

Dawn has been a valuable DBS employee for 4 years, celebrating her anniversary with us on Saturday. Her knowledge of the industry & licensing specific information has grown immensely during this time. She always exudes a positive attitude, no matter what stress she may be under. Not only is Dawn consistently nominated for this award, but she nominates her co-workers on a regular basis as well! Dawn received THREE agent nominations in the month of May. These were all new agents who were so impressed with the service that Dawn provided, they took the time to go online and share their comments. Agents are frequently raving about the quick, accurate & friendly service Dawn provides. Licensing is often the first contact agents have with our agency, and Dawn does everything possible to get these relationships off to a great start. Not only does Dawn provide great service to our customers, but she is always quick to prioritize requests from co-workers and is a dependable resource for many of us.

Dawn was chosen out of 11 employees this month, with 7 internal nominations and 9 external nominations.

Annette Miller - April Employee of the Month

May 13, 2014

Annette Miller has been a Marketing Associate with DBS for over 3-1/2 years, though she has over 19 years of experience in the insurance industry. Since she started working for DBS, she has continually proven to be a great resource for both her co-workers and our customers. Going above and beyond is nothing new for Annette; this is a day-to-day occurrence for her and she is consistently astonishing our customers by her in-depth knowledge of the industry and her top-notch work ethic. It is not unusual to find Annette here until 6:00 or later. She is completely dedicated to her position at DBS and proves that time and time again.

Not only is Annette an outstanding Marketing Associate, but she has taken on the role as the DBS Linked Benefit Product Specialist and has run with it. She is a reliable source of information for the other Marketing Associates, DBS staff and all of our accounts. She has given numerous webcasts and presentations to help educate our customers about these important products. For all of these reasons Annette is consistently getting recognized by our customers and by her peers. Annette was chosen from 13 employees who were nominated. We had 10 external nominations and 8 internal nominations, along with additional comment cards.

Annette grew up in the Minneapolis area and actually has a twin sister! She currently lives in South Minneapolis with her husband Brent, her son Alan and her new baby Benjamin who was born in November of last year. She also has a dog, "Jersey." Like any hard-working woman, Annette enjoys getting massages, going out for date-nights with her husband (Benihana is her favorite) and walking around Lake Nokomis with baby Ben in tow.

Being with her friends and family is important to Annette and she still finds time in her busy schedule to have a girl's weekend at the casino or to head up to Madeline Island to visit her Aunt and Uncle.

Raymond Andrews - March Employee of the Month

April 18, 2014

Raymond, one of our Case Managers, has been a dedicated employee with DBS for 3 years, recently celebrating his anniversary April 4th. He started as a Data Entry Specialist and quickly moved into FASTerm case management, and also serves as our eDelivery policy expert. Raymond brings a ton of spirit & positivity to all around him. It's common to find trinkets, such as ninjas left on a co-worker's desk, or to get an occasional email with a fun picture of his youth to lighten the mood. He is acknowledged often by his team members and others around him as a team player, which he demonstrates by how often he looks to help others. The laughter & joy he brings to those around him is contagious. This also spills into his work and he is recognized consistently by our customers for his outstanding service and professionalism.

Raymond moved to Minnesota from Massachusetts in 2007 and we are still enjoying his Boston accent. In his personal time, he likes to enter ice fishing contests, play poker, and he even tried out snowmobiling for the first time this winter. Raymond is also known to enjoy good seafood and colorful, fun socks he must match with his outfit. One last fun nugget about Raymond is that he used to play semi-pro football.

Kristen Kennedy - February Employee of the Month

March 14, 2014

Kristen Kennedy, DBS Underwriter, was named as February Employee of the month. Kristen has been a devoted DBS employee for over 21 years and is a shining example of positivity and tremendous customer service. Kristen was a most exciting addition to the underwriting team in November 2013. Her transition to DBS Underwriter presented significant challenges and a change that she embraced with great enthusiasm and energy. Specifically, it is her wonderful attitude and enthusiasm for her work that resulted in her nomination for employee of the month.

A nomination received on Kristen said that she is "well received by the DBS customers. [She is] genuine; her Case Management and underwriting experience and expertise is well displayed in her discussion with customers. She puts customers at ease and leaves them with a vote of confidence that their case is moving along in an efficient manner."

Kristen's passion for her work and persuasive communication have allowed her to contribute greatly to the success of the DBS underwriting team. She can be relied on to deliver a riveting presentation to our agents that is fired by her enthusiasm. She relentlessly utilizes her unsurpassed persuasive ability with our carriers to improve underwriting offers for placement and to sell agents on existing offers.

Kristen was chosen from 22 employees who were nominated. We had 6 external nominations and 25 internal nominations, along with additional comment cards and individual emails that came in from agents and producers.

John Rogers - January Employee of the Month

February 14, 2014

John Rogers of the licensing department is the first to receive the honor of "Employee of the Month" for the month of January. John has been a dedicated DBS employee for over 24 years, and has always represented DBS positively. He is being recognized in the month of January for all of the extra effort he put in while Dawn Goss was out on maternity leave. Losing half of a department is extremely stressful, and there's the potential to fall behind on providing our customers the high quality customer service they expect from DBS, but John put in extra hours to cover both positions, keeping everything up to date. He responded quickly to the many requests received, while still remaining calm & friendly.

John was chosen from 16 employees who were nominated. We had 11 external nominations and 17 internal nominations