

their Customer Delight scores for a chance to spend a few days with Bruce on the California-Nevada border. Each of the twenty-three regions in the Discount Tire Company network is allocated slots for the party, and each regional management team decides which contests to run and how to pass out the rewards.

The corporate office doesn't set the rules for Tahoe, because the corporate office doesn't run the show. Unlike most corporate retreats, it's the workers and not the suits who are the honored guests. And the ticket to entry is earned in the store, where the customers make the ultimate decisions about success.

Some of the "Discount Tire Warriors," as Assistant HR Vice President Staci Adams refers to them, will make the trip three, five or six times as they work their way up from the assistant manager ranks. Halle is always happy to see the familiar faces, of course, but he's most excited for the first-timers. "If you're a guy twenty-three or twenty-four years old, and you're working in a store, and you win a trip like this to Tahoe, it's really cool," he explains, sounding more like one of the twenty-three-year-olds than the captain of industry he's become. To Halle's mind, first-timers should make up the majority of every Tahoe party, even as the most consistent warriors battle for return appearances. "It doesn't do any good to have one guy come there five or six times, and then have people who never get there at all," he argues.

Halle worries about those twenty-three-year-old tire jockeys, and cheers for them to earn the journey to Tahoe. In the Discount Tire network, a trip to Tahoe is a sign of both your recent achievement and your manager's confidence that you're going places in this company.

Halle greets a few of the corporate staffers working the event, then hustles to the cantina set up for afternoon snacks. Anticipating a few hundred carnivores, Men Wielding Fire is offering burritos the size of NBA sneakers, and Halle devours one, observing that his wife wouldn't quite endorse this dining option.

His afternoon repast is interrupted by well-wishers who ask him to pose for cell-phone photos, then shake his hand. Marvin Martinez, a senior assistant manager from Encinitas, California, hustles up to thank