

## As metro Detroit's largest accounting firm turns 100, leader prepares to hand over reins

By Anna Fifelski

Going into its 100-year anniversary, Plante Moran is focusing on its culture.

The Southfield-based accounting and consulting firm will celebrate its centennial throughout 2024 with events and on social media, with the company's official anniversary being Jan. 20.

Jim Proppe became the firm's seventh managing partner in 2017 and will retire in October after Jason Drake takes over the role in July.

Crain's Detroit Business recognized Drake in 2015 as a 40 Under 40 honoree for helping the firm increase international business revenue by 400%.

During his seven years as managing partner, Proppe said one of the aspects he's proud of is how the firm persevered through the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have new ways that we do our work. We came up with additional ways that we communicate, we came up with additional services, we adapted new technology," Proppe said. "We ended up coming out of the COVID period stronger as a firm. So I'm just really proud of the way the team handled all that. So it's not necessarily my accomplishments, but it's what we did as a team."

In November, Drake told Crain's that while Plante Moran will continue to look at merger opportunities, that will not be what primarily drives the company's growth. Proppe said it's difficult for the firm to grow through mergers or acquisitions because another company's culture has to align with Plante Moran's.

Plante Moran has a staff of 3,800, four



Credit: Plante Moran

**Jim Proppe (left) became Plante Moran's seventh managing partner in 2017 and will retire in October after Jason Drake (right) takes over the role in July.**

international offices in China, India, Mexico and Japan, as well as 20 offices across Michigan, Ohio, Illinois and Colorado.

The "Count on Us" campaign is the firm's client-focused celebration that will include stories from its clients posted on its website, social media and in advertisements beginning in April.

Proppe said the reason culture is so important to Plante Moran is because it needs to be tended. Businesses that aren't intentional with their company's culture may end up with one they don't like, he said.

In regard to strategies for the next 100 years, Proppe said the firm will continue to look at technology and innovation as a point of growth, though many of the strategies remain the same.

"There's a number of things in (our strategic planning) focused on in terms of innovation and wrapping technology around all of our services to our clients," Proppe said. "There's a number of initia-

tives that we've got around continuing to attract people, make sure that we're training them appropriately and developing our staff and there's things in there around making sure that we're continuing to build great client relationships."

Though the firm will continue to evolve, Proppe said it has and will maintain the same philosophies from its inception 100 years ago, which will help ensure its future.

"The firm really was created with the vision that if you create an organization that focuses heavily on people, then those folks in turn will provide great service to clients," Proppe said. "And so that's our overall philosophy, I would say is to take care of the people and then the people will in turn, take care of the clients and serve them really well. So that hasn't changed. That's never changed. How you go about doing that absolutely has to evolve. And you have to make those changes as you go along in your history."