

# 100 Best Workplaces in Europe

## 2006 Report



Company Profiles, Special Award Winners, and  
Characteristics of the 100 Best Workplaces  
in Europe, 2006



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## Introduction

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At first glance, the companies represented on the 2006 list of the “100 Best Workplaces in Europe” would seem to have little in common. These organisations span across fifteen different countries, vary widely in their size and structure, and represent a dizzying spectrum of industries, ranging from large multi-national corporations, such as Microsoft and Philips, to a Finnish confectioner, Swedish school, Belgian shoe retailer, Danish autism clinic, and others.

What all these companies have in common, though, is a high level of trust, as determined by the Great Place to Work® Institute, an international organisation dedicated building a better society by helping companies to transform their workplaces. These 100 companies were selected from a pool of more than 1000 companies from 15 European nations, all of which voluntarily participated in the Great Place to Work®’s Best Workplaces Study for 2005/2006. The Best Workplaces Study is the largest annual study of workplaces in the world, and aggregates data from more than 3,000 companies in 29 different countries.

Through this initiative, the Great Place to Work® Institute elaborates a series of lists of the Best Workplaces in each respective nation, as well as for Europe as a whole. The Institute’s “100 Best Workplaces in Europe” ranking is printed annually in the Financial Times.

The Best Workplaces Study is an open contest; any organisation with more than 50 employees can apply to be considered. Two-thirds of the scores used to determine the Best Companies are based on survey responses from employees themselves. As an additional element of the evaluation, each participating company is required to prepare a two-part “Culture Audit®,” an in-depth analysis of its HR policies, company values, and corporate culture.

This report includes brief profiles about the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe for 2006, listed in alphabetical order. We also provide more detailed profiles of the overall winner, as well as the Top 10 companies, as determined by their Culture Audit evaluation and employee survey scores. Also presented are five companies that were chosen by the Great Place to Work® to receive Special Awards for outstanding practices in each of the five dimensions of trust. We also highlight the three highest-ranked companies as subdivided by industry and size categories.

In addition to being great workplaces, the companies represented in this report have one other important quality in common: they are all highly successful businesses. During the past 12 months alone, the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe have grown their staffs by approximately 8,1%, accounting for 6,000 new jobs. As research has repeatedly suggested, being a great workplace requires an investment in time and money, but ultimately pays off in profits.

We at the Great Place to Work® Institute offer our congratulations to these companies, and also express our heartfelt thanks to all companies who participated in the Best Workplace Study. It is our sincere hope that these case studies will serve as a source of inspiration for other organisations who also aspire to improve their workplaces. If you would like to learn more about the Great Place to Work® or participate in the Best Workplaces Study, please see [www.greatplacetowork-europe.com](http://www.greatplacetowork-europe.com) or see the “About Great Place to Work®” chapter at the conclusion of this document for contact information to your local Great Place to Work Institute.

## The 100 Best Workplaces in Europe 2006

Following is an index of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe for 2006<sup>1</sup>, listed in alphabetical order. The Top 10 highest scoring organisations are marked in bold.

The 100 Best Workplaces in Europe 2006	
Abbott Laboratories, (Ireland)	Johnson & Johnson, (Austria, Italy)
Abel & Cole, (UK)	Lands' End, (Germany)
Admiral Group, (UK)	LifeScan, (Germany)
Airtricity, (Ireland)	Lilly, (Norway, Spain)
Amgen, (Portugal)	Länsförsäkringar Halland, (Sweden)
Autismecenter Vestsjælland, (Denmark)	Mag. Milenkovics, (Austria)
<b>Bain &amp; Company, (Belgium, UK)</b>	Mapfre, (Portugal)
Beaverbrooks The Jewellers, (UK)	<b>Microsoft, (Finland, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, UK)</b>
Boehringer Ingelheim, (Denmark)	<b>Middelfart Sparekasse, (Denmark)</b>
Brightwater, (Ireland)	<b>Minervaskolan i Umeå, (Sweden)</b>
British Gas Business, (UK)	Morgan Stanley, (France)
Care, (Belgium)	Network Appliance, (Germany)
Children's University Hospital, Temple Street, (Ireland)	Novartis, (Norway)
CIBA Vision, (Germany)	Novo Nordisk Farma, (Finland)
Cisco Systems, (Germany)	Novozymes, (Denmark)
Cloetta Fazer, (Finland)	Nycomed, (Denmark)
Clontarf Castle Hotel, (Ireland)	<b>O2, (Germany, Ireland)</b>
Coca-Cola, (Italy)	OC&C Strategy Consultants, (Netherlands)
<b>Cofinimmo, (Belgium)</b>	OMD, (Denmark)
<b>Colgate Palmolive, (Greece)</b>	Omicron electronics, (Austria)
Computer Associates, (Denmark)	PEI, (Ireland)
<b>ConSol* Software, (Germany)</b>	Pentastep, (Netherlands)
Cultivator, (Denmark)	Pepsico, (France)
Danone, (Spain)	Philips, (Austria (Styria), Ireland)
Dell, (Norway)	Piscines Ideals, (Greece)
Deloitte, (Finland, Ireland)	ProCivitas, (Sweden)
<b>DePuy, (Ireland)</b>	Procter & Gamble, (Austria, Germany (Market Development Organisation), Greece (Hellas), Sweden)
Diageo, (Ireland)	Real Seguros, (Portugal)
E.ON Ruhrgas, (Germany)	Roche, (Italy (Diagnostics), Portugal, Spain (Farma))
eBay, (Germany)	SAP, (Germany)
Ethicon, (Germany)	Sapient, (Germany)
Fater, (Italy)	SC Johnson, (France, UK)
FIM Group, (Finland)	SCA Hygiene Products, (Denmark)
Finn.no, (Norway)	Schoenen Torfs, (Belgium)
Fishburn Hedges, (UK)	Skytec, (Germany)
Frøs Herreds Sparekasse, (Denmark)	SMA Technologie, (Germany)
GE Commercial Aviation Services, (Ireland)	Sparbanken Gripen, (Sweden)
General Electric, (Portugal)	Sparkasse Neuhofen, (Austria)
Genesis Pharma, (Greece)	Stopgap, (UK)
Genzyme, (Belgium)	Tourism Ireland, (Ireland)
GlaxoSmithKline, (Finland, Norway)	Trident, (UK)
Google, (Ireland)	Unimerco, (Denmark)
Grundfos, (Germany)	Unique, (Belgium)
Guidant, (Italy)	Visma Spcs, (Sweden)
Happy, (UK)	<b>Vitae, (Netherlands)</b>
Hewlett Packard, (Austria)	W.L. Gore & Associates, (Germany, UK)
HUF, (Portugal)	Wragge & Co, (UK)
Impact Development Training Group, (UK)	Wyeth, (Greece)
ING Direct, (UK)	3M, (Germany)
Intel, (Denmark)	
Irma, (Denmark)	

<sup>1</sup> Several Multinational Companies (MNC's) that participated in the Best Workplace Study earned spots on the national and Europe-wide lists. In cases where several subsidiaries from one corporation appear on the list, the company is only listed once, with rank based on an average of the scores from the different division.

## The overall Winner: Colgate Palmolive from Greece

The number one position on the list of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe for 2006 goes to **Colgate Palmolive Hellas**, or “Colgate Greece.” This subsidiary of the multi-national, U.S.-based manufacturer of toothpaste, dish soap, and other products, earned the distinction for its high levels of internal communication, dedication to employees’ health and work-life balance, and comprehensive professional development systems.

As Colgate Greece demonstrates, developing a great workplace is good for business. Forty percent of Colgate’s 271 employees have worked for the company for more than 15 years, and voluntary turnover across the company averages just 3.3%. The company also benefits from a low rate of absenteeism, which was just 0.3% last year, as well as substantial revenues of about 125 million Euros last year.

That Colgate excels in promoting work-life balance is not surprising: the first of the company’s values is “caring” – for employees, customers, shareholders, and business partners. The company’s vision states that people “are the foundation for our business strategy and are reflected in every aspect of our work life.”

As a result of this policy, Colgate Greece offers flexible scheduling, training days off, extra annual holiday, numerous sick days, early Fridays, and extra parental leave. One hundred percent of Colgate employees are free to use flex time; between 20-30% can work out of their homes; and new mothers can take up to 24 months off of work, well beyond the legal requirement of 15 months.

The company also has a nice human touch: at Christmas, Colgate gives gifts like DVD Players, wireless phones, and other gifts to temporary and full-time employees alike; at New Year’s, the company pays for employees to purchase meat or chicken and two bottles of wine.

Colgate Greece’s training curriculum is considered to be one of the best in the company; it is a proving ground for pilot seminars and best practices for the whole corporation. Training is offered to employees on an individual basis, based on their particular set of skills, knowledge, and abilities; factors such as managerial rank, gender, age, or other characteristics are never considered. In addition to unlimited tuition reimbursement for job-related courses, the company also pays for employees to enroll in non-work-related courses, placing no limit on the amount of time or money that people can spend on their interests.

Employees can also rise through the ranks through cross-functional moves, promotions, or international transfers at one of its dozens of international divisions. This cross-pollination of people from various ideas and best practices across the organization also serves the company’s other value: Global Teamwork, which states, “All Colgate people are part of a global team, committed to working together across countries and throughout the world. Only by sharing ideas, technologies and talents can the Company achieve and sustain profitable growth.”

Fairness in compensation is another strong point for Colgate Greece: the company offers salaries that are higher than what is required collective agreement and higher than the average for the industry. The company’s salaries, incentive rewards, night shift pay, and overtime are also higher than industry standards and higher than what is required under collectively bargained contracts.

The company also offers a defined benefit pension plan, a fixed percentage that allows workers to supplement their state pension to earn almost as much in retirement as they did on the job. The company also pays for private medical insurance for employees. And as an extra perk unique to the job, employees get significant (if not total) discounts on Colgate's own products.

Colgate's employee survey responses confirm that when people are given support to improve themselves both on and off the job, their attitude toward work improves.

## Top 10 companies

<b>Bain &amp; Company</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Belgium, UK	www.bain.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	73 (Belgium), 348 (UK)	2005 (Belgium), 1979 (UK)

This international strategic consulting firm is represented on the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe list by both the U.K. and Belgium divisions this year.

At Bain Belgium, employees have breakfast together every two weeks, providing an occasion to share ideas with the managing director in an informal setting. About 9% of total payroll costs are spent on training and development, whether through online training modules, informative lunches, or outings. Most training for consultants is provided by their peers, who are honored to be recognized as worthy "trainers".

As one employee explains, "Bain provides ongoing and relevant training, offers formal semi-annual reviews, provides a mentor for informal advice, and encourages case managers to meet at your request to provide feedback on performance and development."

For the 348 employees of the U.K. Bain branch, meanwhile, perks include an on-site doctor and nurse available for consultation and annual health screenings, free use of a private gym in the office (including access to a personal trainer and classes), and regular visits from a hairdresser and masseuse.

"They provide internal support to make the job fun," says one employee. "This includes structured programmes like Friday beers and special interest clubs like the theatre group, wine tasting club, and footballers team."

<b>Cofinimmo</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Belgium	www.cofinimmo.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	100	1983

This small real estate investment firm has an internal process improvement group known as FBO, or "For Better Organisation," which is run by administrative assistants; as the front-line experts in the tools they use every day, this group has helped to develop new, helpful processes across the organisation.

Teamwork is emphasized from day one. Every time a new employee joins a department, its members go on a paid teambuilding trip for some informal bonding. Company bonuses are

tied to team performance. And frequent casual celebrations and lunches further bring employees and managers together.

About 2.2% of payroll is spent on training; job-specific and “soft skills” training are available to new recruits and to the office cleaning staff. “This company shows a great sense of dynamism and ambition,” says one employee. “Although the company has seen strong growth, it keeps its feeling of a small, familiar team.”

<b>Colgate Palmolive</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Greece	www.colgate.com.gr
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	271	1962

The 271 employees of the Greek division of this personal and household products company come together at off-site teambuilding retreats whenever a new manager is hired, and also reach out through “teaming” with colleagues at other European offices. Cross-functional teams are responsible for projects like the company newsletter, awards and recognition, and safety issues.

To allow for better use of free time provided through flexible scheduling, the company offers on-site dry cleaning, banking, travel, and mailing services, along with training about how to balance personal and work life. Time off is granted liberally, and allows people to leave work early on Friday. The company provides financial support to employees in difficult personal situations and supports employees’ children’s university tuition (€150 for each student).

Differences matter, too: the company supports diversity programme like “Value Colgate People” and “Managing with Respect”. During exit interviews, employees are asked to evaluate the company’s diversity policies. Regardless of race, gender, or age, people are valued: “The company doesn’t ‘kill the old horses’ but works to retain employees who are close to retirement age,” says one employee. “New mothers have the chance to leave the office for 24 months, when the law says 15 months.”

And anyone who still finds something to complain about can voice an opinion through annual surveys, focus groups, and an ongoing suggestion programme.

<b>ConSol* Software</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.consol.de
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	113	1984

This Munich-based IT consulting and software firm allows two of its 113 employees to attend each meeting of the Board of Directors, based on the order in which they apply. Wealth and rank are also shared equitably: a profit-sharing plan gives employees a piece of ConSol’s annual profits, and a formalized internal ranking system is used to determine promotion into managerial positions.



<b>DePuy</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Ireland	www.depuy.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	755	1997

This division of Johnson & Johnson manufactures orthopaedic joint replacements for the global market. Employees stay up on the latest research through a customised learning centre that allows them to access the company’s massive e-university any time, at no cost; more than 300 courses are available.

Individual and team contributions that go “above and beyond” are recognised on a regular basis, and quarterly organisational talent reviews ensure that managers are constantly developing the next generation’s leadership talent pool.

“Management do listen to you if you have any ideas,” says an employee. “Everybody is approachable and friendly.”

<b>Microsoft</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Finland, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, UK	www.microsoft.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	199 (FI), 1036 (F), 735 (I), 664 (NL), 179 (NO), 230 (P), 411 (S), 2291 (UK)	1975 (FI), 1983 (F), 1985 (I), 1986 (NL), 1988 (NO), 1998 (P), 1985 (S), 1975 (UK)

The global software giant is nothing if not consistent: without exception, the European Microsoft divisions that applied to the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe list demonstrated that they had the right stuff. Following is a quick tour across the continent:

Microsoft Finland only has 199 employees, but employees reap all the advantages of the global tech giant’s work culture, including the company’s stated “Great Values”. Employees create their own development plans and their supervisors help to clear the path and offer support, in part through monthly follow-up meetings.

Every employee at Microsoft France also meets at least once a year with managers to shape an individual development plan. Several French employees are sent to the U.S. each year to learn and forge ties across the international company. Other perks in the office include an on-site fitness centre, free drinks, and relaxing areas with Xbox video games. Each team has an allocated budget to organise offsite social events, which are often festive, multi-day affairs.

The 230 employees of Microsoft Portugal, meanwhile, all receive laptops and internet hook-ups so that everyone can work at home. The company also supplements the costs of services like dry cleaning, catering, and babysitting. The company has an on-site gym with tai chi, capoeira, and other activities, and also supplements the fees of a local health club. To help put the pounds back, free brunches and subsidised lunches are provided on a regular basis.

For the 735 employees of Microsoft Italy, the company provides flexible scheduling and paid day care. And in the Netherlands, Microsoft employees are empowered to contribute to decision-making and improvement processes through several innovative programs.

Microsoft Norway launched its own programme called “HT\*TP,” a Norwegian abbreviation for health, well-being, safety, and performance. Through the programme, employees go



mountain hiking together and recently climbed seven of the highest mountains in southern Norway as symbols of their seven key business goals. The programme also encourages people to take the stairs, not the elevator, and to learn about nutrition and physical health.

The 411 employees of Microsoft Sweden last year posted an absence rate due to illness of just 1,5%. And at last year's annual meeting, workshops were arranged where the employees could meet with board members to make suggestions and share ideas. The Swedish division also sponsors an orphanage in Lithuania.

The U.K. campus also has an on-site day care facility to serve its 2291 employees, and a "well-being centre" is available to offer advice on a whole range of medical and health issues.

No matter where they are located, employees are effusive with praise in their comments: "We create new ways to communicate, learn, and have fun," says one Microsoft employee. "It's just like a drug you can't live without. You feel like you are a part of something important."

<b>Middelfart Sparkasse</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Denmark	www.Midspar.dk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	162	1853

When it comes to delegating responsibility, this 162-person savings bank goes all the way. Middle managers are trained to coach and support new employees following the principles of "self-management," which permits 100% flexible scheduling and collaborative goal-setting.

"I have been entirely free to choose my own training – and I mean entirely," says one employee of the Danish bank. "No one questions my choices or my arguments for what I have chosen. The bank covers the entire fee, and I am given time off when it is needed."

The benefits of self-management are self-evident: since implementation of the programme in 1995, absence of employees due to illness has been halved.

<b>Minervaskolan i Umeå</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Sweden	www.minervaskolan.se/
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	76	1999

Minervaskolan, a school that is free to its 630 students, describes itself as a "dream factory," a place where students are able to fulfil their life goals. The school does not necessarily have more money than other schools, but instead perseveres through high levels of participation of all concerned parties: as an example, students' parents serve as members of the board.

About 80% of the company is owned by full-time employees, who are equal owners, while the remaining 20% is owned by the school's headmaster.

When asked to respond to the statement, "Taking everything into account, I would say this is a great place to work," 100% of employees answered positively. It helps that they also indicated that they perceive managers to be competent and honest; that they are given adequate responsibility and shown affection; and that they have a high level of work-life balance.

<b>O2</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany, Ireland	www.o2.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	5121 (D), 1351 (Ire)	1995 (D), 1997 (Ire)

This international mobile communications provider has 24.6 million customers in the U.K., Ireland, and Germany; all three of these divisions made the 100 Best Workplaces list this year.

“I don't know how to put it into words but O2 has something very special about it as a place to work,” says one employee. “There is a certain vibe and spirit about the place that is difficult to describe, but I think people at all levels of the organisation feel it.”

Other employee comments cite the high levels of cooperation across borders, departmental parties, and generous benefits that include disability insurance and shares of company stock. Ideas are given plenty of breathing room through a variety of media: the Think Tank, for example, is an anonymous online bulletin board at O2 Ireland where employees can post comments of offer suggestions or questions. The CEO is one of the main contributors, and responds to questions weekly.

O2 also shows that it respects its people through some inspired recognition programs. The company places photographs of “superstar” employees around the building, along with what they achieved; these employees are also recognized with profiles in the newsletter. O2’s directors are provided with thank you notes to send to employees who go “above and beyond.” Other generous treats include flexible work scheduling, telecommuting (for between 1-2 days per week), family days, health screenings, on-site yoga, weight watchers, and “parenting with confidence” programmes.

<b>Vitae</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Netherlands	www.vitae.nl
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	568	1986

Even when this Dutch recruiting and staffing firm company faced a sudden 40% dip in revenues a few years ago, managers held on to their dedication to promoting fun in the workplace. At the request of the 300 employees, Vitae has become an “open network structure,” in which entrepreneurialism is encouraged, and in which groups of employees from across rank and function come together to solve complex business issues and formulate strategy.

The results: last year they were the fastest growing and most profitable firm in their sector – and a substantial portion of the profits were passed on to employees.

To promote pride while doing good deeds, Vitae has a “corporate citizenship day,” where employees’ proven effectiveness as a team is applied toward charitable causes. “We are not regarded as resources, but as human beings,” says one Vitae team member. Another employee expresses enthusiasm for the “great team spirit, strong focus on personal development, great training and coaching opportunities, and lovely colleagues.”

## The Top 11-100

<b>Abbott Laboratories</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Ireland	www.abbott.ie
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	99	1946

At this diversified health care company, employees are invited to attend bi-monthly breakfast meetings, a relaxed forum where they receive progress updates on recent initiatives.

“All employees are encouraged to take 15 minutes per day to ‘think innovation’,” says one employee.” To take advantage of this creative thinking, managers have convened a Continuous Improvement Team, a multi-disciplinary, cross-departmental group to promote innovation through employee suggestions; all ideas are considered monthly and those that are accepted are tracked through to completion, with ongoing communication sent back to the idea’s originator.

Programs like these have developed what one employee calls a “no-blame culture,” where people are taught “not to fear making a mistake but are encouraged to learn from them.”

To help people give back, the company provides paid time off for volunteering; several employees work regularly with school children in the local area, offering classes to children in basic business skills like CV preparation and interview techniques.

<b>Abel &amp; Cole</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	UK	www.abel-cole.co.uk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	187	1988

The 187 employees of Abel & Cole deliver organic foods to homes throughout the U.K. The best way to these people's hearts? Through their stomachs, of course. As part of the company’s regular “Lunch Club,” one team member cooks for the others (using the company’s own products) before they all sit down for a community meal.

This togetherness extends into the workspace: Managing Directors frequently spend time on the shop floor with members of the warehouse teams, drivers, and customer service, even helping out for a couple of hours so they have a clear idea of what everyone does and how things could be improved upon.

A staff newsletter goes out every month to keep everyone informed about what progress Abel & Cole is making as a whole; a booklet of warm emails is regularly circulated, including a thank you message from the Managing Directors and comments from happy customers.

“I have never worked for a company where I have felt as ‘at home’ as I do here,” enthuses an Abel & Cole team member. “I can be myself! The whole ethos of the company is about supporting people to do well. I am immensely proud to be part of it.”

<b>Admiral Group</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	UK	www.admiralgroup.co.uk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	1887	1992

The 1887 employees of this U.K.-based motor insurance firm earn cash for their creativity without ever leaving their desks. People receive between £50 and £100 rewards for submitting ideas through the intranet; usable ideas are put to a vote by a staff forum.

“The way staff at all levels interact, you are not afraid to put in your point of view,” says an employee. “Staff are actively encouraged to participate and offer suggestions.”

To further spread information and garner input, managers all the way up to the CEO walk the floors regularly, bringing them closer to the staff and the business. All senior managers also take turns coming in on the weekends to meet with weekend-shift staff to provide support.

“Henry’s Pot,” set up by the CEO, is a fund to which anyone in the organisation can apply for a donation toward a charity or organisation with which they or their family are connected. In 2005, total donations amounted to £20,000, which was distributed to more than 100 charities.

<b>Airtricity</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Ireland	www.airtricity.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	163	1997

This renewable energy company operates wind farms in the U.S. and U.K., supplying “green” electricity to more than 50,000 commercial customers in Ireland. The company’s “Schools Programme” educates primary school children about environmental issues; more than 50 employees (out of 163) have signed up to be “ambassadors” for the programme.

Airtricity’s new-hire orientation features presentations by the CEO and representatives from every department, providing a holistic understanding of the company from day one. The CEO also holds monthly Q&A sessions for ongoing feedback and information sharing, and the company sponsors in-house group and individual training sessions throughout the year.

<b>Amgen</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Portugal	www.amgen.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	58	1993

“We save lives, all of us!” exclaims one happy employee of Amgen Portugal, a 58-person division of the global bio-tech firm. Beyond pride, employees gain all sorts of nice benefits: the company provides a daily lunch subsidy of €32,5 per day to every employee, for example. Plus, everyone receives between €75-€300 per month in transportation subsidies, depending on their commute. Workers never even have to leave their seats to take care of personal needs, as representatives from a bank visit their office in person to offer services.

Amgen’s communication practices also boost the credibility of managers: quarterly “skip” meetings allow employees to share all their concerns with their bosses’ boss, while “Sys Cycle” meetings bring together office employees and sales team members in order to develop joint action plans. At least once a year, everyone – including remote and overseas

employees – comes together for a meeting, where information is shared and questions are encouraged.

And to drive home the point that they care about integrity, everyone participates in an ethics training programme known as “Do the Right Thing”; employees can report potential ethics violations to a Portuguese or U.S.-based compliance division.

“We are spoiled!” gushes one employee. “We have fruit, juices, coffee, tea, whenever we like. The older persons have a very young spirit and everybody has a great sense of humor!”

<b>Autismecenter Vestsjælland</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Denmark	www.a-c-v.dk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	177	2003

At Autisme Center Vestsjælland, a 24-hour care centre for people with autism, the focus is on excellent communication and a highly visible management team. An unofficial policy for employees is “no complaining,” to emphasise seeing opportunities instead of limitations. At team meetings, employees are asked how they thrive, on the job and in their personal lives. Following several days of courses for all 177 employees about individual values, group leaders from across the company came together to establish the company’s core four values. “It is simply a place that develops you and takes care of you all at once,” says one employee.

<b>Beaverbrooks The Jewellers</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	UK	beaverbrooks.co.uk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	677	1919

This family-owned jewelry retailer uses focus groups to enable open and frank communication among its 677 employees. If that doesn’t work, a formal suggestion programme allows employees to telephone or e-mail directors and executives at any time to ask questions or make suggestions. Winning ideas are rewarded with financial incentives and are first implemented in the department of the idea’s originator to allow immediate feedback. Nearly half of suggestions received in 2005 have been (or are being) developed.

“The managing director knows every member of staff and makes the effort to speak to each person individually to find out their view and opinions on issues concerning the business,” says one Beaverbrooks employee. “Every member of staff has the opportunity to put forward suggestions to the management team and each suggestion is given consideration and constructive feedback.” One of the policies listed in the Mission Statement is “to tell the total truth faster,” to encourage openness and honesty.

The company’s in-house training is renowned within the industry: all employees receive regular in-store and department training, including special Saturday morning training, Jewelry Education Training (including two-year diploma programs), as well as extensive work-related opportunities within the Head Office.

“Never in any other organisation have I been given as much training or development as with Beaverbrooks,” says one team member. “I am treated as an individual and this is reflected in my personal training plan. I feel a real sense of achievement for the work I do and feel I am truly valued.”

<b>Boehringer Ingelheim</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Denmark	www.boehringer-ingelheim.dk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	133	1974

This family-owned drug company takes care of employees as if they were part of one, big 133-person family, largely through an informal tone and a strong sense of fun.

The company held 27 celebrations and other social events between 2004-2005, and employees' children were invited to many of them. Casual after-work celebrations are common; achievements are frequently marked with spontaneous bottles of wine or champagne and chocolate in the cafeteria. The energy is contagious: employees frequently yell out "Yes!" when prompted by managers as a way to reinforce their "yes" culture.

"Our managing director knows everyone and is on a first name basis with all employees," says one employee. "He functions as a father who gathers the family around him."

<b>Brightwater</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Ireland	www.brightwater.ie
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	76	1998

All employees at this recruiting firm have one-to-one business planning meetings with their managers to set goals and seek input. The company encourages employees to take ownership of their own work.

New employees are taken out for drinks by their team before they start, and eat lunch with their manager on the first day on the job. "In over two years I have never heard anyone say to another employee "no" when asked for help, no matter how busy they are," says one Brightwater employee.

<b>British Gas Business</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	UK	www.britishgasbusiness.co.uk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	1484	1996

To encourage creativity at this British energy supplier, the courtyards outside the offices have been turned into a "chill-out area," with giant versions of Jenga, Chess, and Connect Four, where people can gather for fun, relaxed meetings.

The fun continues inside, as well, where the nearly 1500 co-workers can relax with table football tables, arcade machines, and plasma TV's playing MTV. The company also holds weekly workout classes like "Legs, Bums and Tums" and offers on-site guitar lessons, yoga, fitness classes, and more.

"The depths this company goes to in order to make employees feel valued and happy is something I've never experienced in any other place I've worked," says one employee. "It's exceptional."

Employees also benefit from a 24-hour service offering everything from help with noisy neighbours to legal advice, as well as on-site multi-faith prayer rooms, a vast array of lunchtime and evening classes, and flexible scheduling to enable participation in outside classes. The company has several disabled workers and provides wheelchairs and accommodations for guide dogs. Diversity, too, is marked with fun at British Gas: in addition to Christmas, holidays like Eid and Diwali are celebrated.



“The company is a shining beacon and leading the way for other businesses when it comes to ethnic diversity,” says one employee. “When I look on the news and see racial tensions it makes me proud to know that where I work there is a wealth of cultures and religions that work in harmony.”

<b>Care</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Belgium	www.care.be
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	962	1974

This 962-person provider of cleaning services for companies lives up to its name. During “Management on the Floor Day,” managers put themselves in employees’ shoes and clean buildings for a day. They then write up reports about their experiences in the internal newspaper.

“When something happens in your private life that you can’t solve by yourself, you can always call the team leaders,” says one employee. “They’re always ready to help.” This sense of caring extends beyond the front door: the company provides work to more than 80 people who were previously unemployed.

The “Building of the Year Award” is given to small groups of employees, which inspires team bonding and a healthy spirit of competition; the winning team receives a trophy followed by a celebration, but pride is an added benefit.

<b>Children's University Hospital, Temple Street</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Ireland	www.cuh.ie
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	1010	1872

The 1010 employees of this pediatric hospital serve children from all over Ireland; their organisation supports them in all aspects of their work.

The hospital’s Social Work Team are involved in bereavement counseling for siblings of children who have died. And the hospital’s dietetic, nursing, and psychology staff are involved in the “Streetwise Programme,” a voluntary community initiative facilitated by staff that targets obesity in children and adolescents.

Managers work to make sure everyone gets fair treatment: a Diversity Committee made up of individuals from different backgrounds convenes regular focus groups with staff to tap into opinions of underrepresented employee groups.

“People try their best to help one another to give their very best care and attention to the patients,” says one Temple Street employee.

<b>CIBA Vision</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.cibavision.de
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	907	1964

All 907 employees of this contact lens company, a subsidiary of the Swiss Novartis, are eligible for an annual bonus, and all have access to the intranet on public PC’s in the lunch rooms and warehouses. The company pays for a taxi for employees who need a ride home due to illness.



“After a very hard day’s work due to a lot of work or problems with machinery, there’s always a compliment from the boss, which is motivating,” comments one CIBA employee.

Additional meetings, led by executives and other managers, are held for production workers who cannot otherwise attend due to their work shifts. One production shift is shut down for a day every summer so everyone can take part in an annual party.

<b>Cisco Systems</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.cisco.com/de
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	578	1993

This leading network supplier has seven locations in Germany and employs 578 people, all of whom are invited to have a two-hour breakfast (via internet television) with CEO John Chambers in the month of their birthday, providing a forum for candid questions and answers.

Many employees have either a company car or a “car allowance”; board members and junior account managers get the same type of car. Employees and their dependents are eligible for disability and life insurance.

One German board member sends an email to all German employees once a week with updates, praise, and other information. The “Cisco Achievement Programme” includes prizes like “Win of the Week”, “The German Master of Impact,” or “Best Practice Award”.

“The company allows me to make my own decisions about my work,” says one employee. “I can work from home and the necessary equipment is supplied by the company.”

<b>Cloetta Fazer</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Finland	www.cloettafazer.fi
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	204	1891

The Nordic region’s largest chocolate maker and sugar confectioner gets employees at every level involved in long-term strategy by encouraging teams to develop six “daily deeds” that are aligned with corporate goals. An “All Stars” award is granted every year to people who excel in cooperating with others.

As one employee says, “The environment is encouraging, and if a person has abilities and motivation to advance in their career, it is only up to them and opportunities will arise.”

<b>Clontarf Castle Hotel</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Ireland	www.clontarfcastle.ie
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	135	1997

The hotel’s managers show weekly appreciation for employees who demonstrate excellent service through the “Wow of the Week” programme.

Supported by an active Diversity Committee, all 135 employees are provided with diversity training, and foreign workers are provided with a special welcome and orientation package.

“Many celebrations of work well done make it a happy place to work,” says one employee. “Support from senior management is strong and sustained consistently.”

<b>Coca-Cola</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Italy	www.coca-colahbc.it
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	2625	2005

The Italian subsidiary of the Greek Coca-Cola bottling company has a wide variety of methods for promoting two-way communication between managers and employees, including internal surveys, review meetings, and suggestion boxes. The company also spreads information through CokeTV, a regular newscast, and through “Parliamo di Noi,” which consists of open meetings in every headquarters. The company’s newsletter is 32 pages long, featuring personal news about employees.

Flexible scheduling and proactive mental and physical health programs promote wellness across Coke's workforce. The company’s “CCHBC Equality Policy Statement” ensures that all employees, regardless of background, are eligible for the same opportunities and are protected from discrimination.

Company pride runs high thanks to strong values and progressive social policies, not to mention that the company’s brand is known around the world. “The brand value and company products type are a great reason to be proud and to have a sense of membership,” says one employee.

Coca-Cola also offers free lunch for employees and their guests; invites people to company-sponsored parties like “Coca-Cola Live@MTV”; and regularly gives away tickets for sponsored football matches and other sports and entertainment events. And, of course, employees can buy Coca-Cola products at a generous discount.

<b>Computer Associates</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Denmark	www.ca.com/dk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	121	1986

A high ethical standard is vital to this technology consulting firm; all 15,000 employees around the globe attend mandatory ethics courses.

Twice a year, employees also have to meet with their manager to discuss their professional development goals and scheduling needs. Employees, not managers, nominate their choices for the “Employee of the Month,” an award that comes with a gift certificate, flowers, and the right to park in the best parking spot for the month.

Associates are also duly proud of their contributions to charity. This year, donations went to help kids and teens with life-threatening diseases to fulfil their last wish, and also to a school project that helped troubled teens straighten out their lives.

“CA has succeeded encouraging a performance culture without giving up on a good climate and a healthy family policy,” says one employee. “It is unique to see this winner mentality and competitiveness go hand in hand with softer values.”

<b>Cultivator</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Denmark	www.cultivator.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	76	1983

The basic philosophy of this Danish recruitment firm holds that “people make all the difference”. To ensure that these are not just empty words, the 76 employees receive ongoing, team-based recognition and training. Training courses are offered bi-annually, during a “Winter Camp” and “Summer Camp”; employees’ spouses are welcome to attend the courses free of charge.

Cultivator employees say that they have a “hugging culture” and function as a family: individual accomplishments are published on the intranet, and prizes are given to groups or individuals in the form of ski vacations, extra time off, or gifts. Corporate social events are put on in style: the Christmas party dress code is tuxedo and gowns.

“At Cultivator there is always room for a hug, encouragement, and recognition,” says one employee. “Colleagues and the management always take their time to teach and help where they can.”

<b>Danone</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Spain	www.danone.es
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	1849	1919

A football tournament of all the European divisions of this yogurt maker takes place every two years – the Spanish team won the most recent tournament. Their secret? Teamwork, most likely. The company frequently states that its 1849 employees are its most important asset. And they practice “management by proximity,” through which managers and employees are expected to work side-by-side, cultivating each other’s talents in pursuit of the “Danone Way,” a vision and set of values.

Other benefits abound: the company provides 24-hour telephone counselling to all employees, as well as two weeks of 100%-paid parental leave beyond the legal minimum (16 weeks). “I feel very proud to belong to this company and I start every day with happiness and optimism, and I do this each year that I spend here,” says one employee.

<b>Dell</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Norway	www.dell.no
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	105	n/a

Under the helm of Founder Michael Dell, Dell Norway’s 105 employees sell and market computer hardware across the region. The organisation promotes one-to-one communication between employees and managers through monthly, one-hour meetings for coaching and two-way feedback.

“This workplace has a culture like a small company,” says one employee. “It’s a short distance to the executive management; the management is ‘one of us’. And it’s a short distance from a new idea to its implementation.”

<b>Deloitte</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Finland, Ireland	www.deloitte.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	283 (F), 809 (Ire)	1970 (F), 1990 (Ire)

Professional development is a priority across the European offices of this Big Four accounting firm; both the Finland and Ireland subsidiaries qualified for the “100 Best Workplaces” list in 2006.

Between 20-30 employees gather four times per year for “networking lunches” organised by senior management, for discussion about such topics as advancing women’s careers. Deloitte’s people are constantly called upon to design their own benefits: the “Women in the Workforce” survey was offered to men, as well as women, to make sure all employees had a chance to offer input. And employees themselves choose topics for the Lunchtime Lectures, which have covered sports, nutrition, work-life balance, and working as a parent.

Deloitte’s people also relax through the “Equilibrium Programme,” through which people can enjoy wine tasting lessons, golf lessons, yoga, and other activities to clear their heads of all those numbers and keep a fresh perspective.

“The company has a feedback box, and all the changes I have suggested have been picked out of so far,” says one employee. “In very few workplaces can one influence long-term routines. We have an unbelievable drive and a sincere willingness at every level of the organisation to work together and develop the company – all going for the same goal!”

Community outreach is also a constant: company leaders often provide a 1:1 match to employees’ charitable contributions, and everyone gets time off to serve the community. During “Impact Day,” employees volunteer in their local communities, cleaning up their neighbourhood or volunteering at homes for the elderly.

Just how does Deloitte keep a good thing going and appear on this list year after year? In Ireland, at least, the 809 employees have developed cross-functional work groups to focus specifically on the five dimensions of the Great Place to Work Model (credibility, respect, fairness, camaraderie, and pride) and to find new ways to enhance their work place. Each of the groups is sponsored by a key partner to ensure buy-in from on high.

<b>Diageo</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Ireland	www.diageo.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	403	1759

The comments of one employee at this Irish alcoholic beverages maker sound like a worthy toast: “100% fair always. We live our values. We invest in training and developing people. We invest in the community at both a local and national level. We’re proud to be a part of Irish heritage and history. We celebrate successes together.”

The weekly newsletter, called “DIA-Log,” is produced in real time using a website and includes articles and ideas submitted by employees. The site is used to recognise and celebrate successes at the individual and team level; articles are archived to keep a running “record” of past achievements.

Each member of the top management team holds “connect” sessions with members of various functions and groups; these meetings have no fixed agenda and discussions are open and honest. Each new employee attends a connect session, building relationships across the company.

<b>E.ON Ruhrgas</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.eon-ruhrgas.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	2613	1926

This marketer of natural gas has regular meetings among randomly selected employees and at least one member of the board of directors. Special professional development is offered to women on maternity leave. A new online training programme boosts professional development, and intranet-based employee suggestion and survey programs allow everyone to contribute ideas.

<b>eBay</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.ebay.de
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	179	1999

More than half of German internet users have bought or sold goods through eBay.de – not too shabby, given the web site is just five years old. The company has grown quickly, but teamwork and “family spirit” still run strong, enhanced by team lunches, quarterly lunches, annual two-day workshops, and ongoing sharing of best practices with other divisions around the globe.

The German eBay branch has 179 employees, among them a Diversity Manager and a Business Ethics Officer. An on-site gym and massage round out the quality of life.

“There [are no] status symbols or marked-off working places, no ‘hidden agendas’ or political intrigues,” says one happy employee.

<b>Ethicon</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.ethicon.de
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	2489	1956

This German company marks its 50th anniversary in 2006. Operating as part of Johnson & Johnson, the nearly 2,500 German employees manufacture and sell medical technical appliances and products. Employees’ training plans are approved by top-level executives and are enabled at the on-site learning center; high-potential employees are provided with management-track roles.

The company pays for external debt counseling for employees. An onsite fitness area and team sports programme keep employees physically healthy – and keep team spirit high. “I am proud of our products, which help others to have better health,” says one employee.

<b>Fater</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Italy	www.fater.it
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	996	1957

Fater, a joint venture between an Italian group and Procter and Gamble, markets personal hygiene products. Employees stay in touch through a variety of communication tools, and offer their input on the state of the company through regular climate surveys. The generous benefits are distributed with a high sense of equity, and employees are active in the community, a point of pride. “Everyone is responsible for his/her job and can decide the

best way to perform it – and so is personally responsible for the results,” notes one Fater team member.

Vacations and gift coupons are given to employees who offer cost-saving ideas or who demonstrate the company values. For senior managers, the company also contributes toward the cost of buying of a first house, paying up to 50% of the interest on a 15-year mortgage. New hires and transferred employees also receive a discount on their rent.

To promote a healthy workforce, Fater pays 50% of the cost of a local gym membership, then pays for the rest through interest-free loans deducted from workers' salaries. Employees can receive a company loan for personal expenses of any kind to be paid back in 24 months without interest.

Other generous touches abound: the company pays for a football school for employees' kids; sends a food-filled Christmas packet to every worker's home; provides about 3000 diapers to new babies; and celebrates Epiphany with a party attended by Italian celebrities.

<b>FIM Group</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Finland	<a href="http://www.fim.com">www.fim.com</a>
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	195	1987

During the past two decades, this investment services company has grown to become one of the key players in the Finnish financial services industry.

Managers receive ethics training, and every employee has a name tag with the symbolic “money nose,” to remind themselves and each other about their commitment to sniffing out financial opportunities.

“Employees are trusted and one gets a feeling that their own contribution is important to the company, even if you work at the entry level,” says one employee.

<b>Finn.no</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Norway	<a href="http://www.finn.no">www.finn.no</a>
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	81	2000

Owned by several newspapers, this popular online marketplace receives more than two million unique users every month. The staff grew by 80% last year (they now have 81 people), but still the company retains a young and informal culture, with plenty of fun social activities, both on and off the job.

An internal learning programme known as the “Finn School” includes a game designed to improve employees' financial understanding and improve cost control across the organisation; winners of the game are recognised within the company.

As one employee says, “I wake up every day and look forward going to work, because I know that at least once I will laugh until tears start rolling!”



<b>Fishburn Hedges</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	UK	www.fishburn-hedges.co.uk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	145	1991

This 145-person public relations and design firm spends about 4-5% of profits each year on training, amounting to about eight days of development per person annually. Through the “FH Training and Development Pyramid,” any employee can follow a six-step track to guide her development; FH also pays for employees’ memberships in professional organisations and subsidises non-work-related courses.

“The company goes out of its way every day, week, month, and year to think about its staff, recognise great work, reward, surprise and delight,” says one employee. “Look at the list of presents, parties, drinks, spontaneous celebrations and care. I write this on the day that I, along with every member of staff, received two brochures of European boutique hotels and a voucher for £175 to spend on a weekend away.”

Regular company celebrations include pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, mini-eggs at Easter, a Valentine’s Day gift, ice cream on hot days, a Halloween gift, and a glass of port or sherry and mince pie on Christmas Eve. The company also has a DVD library and supports employee clubs and interest groups.

The company’s Charity Committee encourages people to be active in the community and organises fundraising events, such as auctions and raffles. Following a 12-month fundraising campaign for a London-based charity (including an “auction of promises,” when someone got to “buy” a week of tea and cake delivery from the CEO), employees went to visit the charity in person to see the benefits of their generosity.

“I feel this company makes an extra special effort when it comes to raising money for charity,” comments one employee. “We hold some great events which raise a lot of money and the Management matches the amount we raise, pound for pound.”

<b>Frøs Herreds Sparekasse</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Denmark	www.froes.dk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	107	1872

This privately owned savings bank was the first in Denmark to offer its customers drive-through services. Today, its 107 employees continue to innovate, thanks in part to the company’s programme of “competence grading”. Through this programme, employees at all levels create individual development plans and are evaluated on professional and personal skills.

Employees then learn to realise their potential through a course called “Master Mind”, which brings together two employees from each department in groups of 20 for collaborative training and brainstorming. So far, 70% of employees have participated in the course.

“The employee’s development is a high priority and there are no limitations,” says one employee. “There is great appreciation of your work, which is rewarded both verbally and in the form of flowers, wine, money, and more.”



<b>GE Commercial Aviation Services</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Ireland	<a href="http://www.gecas.com">www.gecas.com</a>
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	99	1993

Shannon-based “GECAS” owns a fleet of about 1,300 airplanes that it leases to commercial airline companies. The company’s leaders reach out to the 99 people through all-employee meetings followed up by roundtable discussions, facilitated by senior management.

GECAS also sponsors an employee assistance programme, offering prompt and confidential support for family, work, or personal issues from an external, independent provider.

The GE Women’s Network encourages women to advance professionally through annual events, mentoring, coaching, classes and informal networking at dinners and office lunches.

As one GECAS member explains, “We work with needy organisations by making contributions through different fundraising events, but we also get involved directly with the organisation by giving hours, i.e. painting, decorating, cleaning up, etc.”

<b>General Electric</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Portugal	<a href="http://www.gefleetservices.com.pt">www.gefleetservices.com.pt</a>
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	293	1992

GE Commercial Finance Fleet Services and GE Money, based in Portugal and Ireland, maintain a fleet of automobiles for rent, and also provide a range of financial services, including insurance, home and personal loans, and credit cards.

The company ensures that all of its 293 are committed to a common set of principles through an annual “Week of Values,” when a variety of games and presentations are used to communicate the company’s core values. The company’s directors have even performed theatrical skits to drive their message home.

Gender equity is also a priority here: the GE Women Network is an organization exclusively designed to promote the professional development of female employees at GE and to boost their self-confidence in the workplace. The group meets every 15 days to discuss some of the issues facing women both at GE and in the corporate world at large. Through this program, high-potential women leaders have been identified, ensuring that a healthy gender balance exists at all levels of the GE “universe”.

And when it came time to present an “external face” for a branding campaign, the company looked no further than its own staff members, who were invited to be models for the campaign. GE also pays the full costs of health insurance for employees and all their household members, and provides on-site English classes free of charge.

What does all this lead to? As one employee gushes, “After seven years at GE, I still feel excited to come to work just like the first day!”

<b>Genesis Pharma</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Greece	www.genesispharma.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	135	1997

This Greek pharmaceutical firm pays its sales reps more than €20.000 in bonuses, but that's just for starters. They also pay for extra private life and health insurance for all 135 employees and their families. They provide company cars to 75% of employees (with a €700 annual bonus to pay for tolls). They pay €1.000 whenever someone gets married, and new mothers receive four months of paid leave, plus a €3.000 "birth bonus".

The company also offers €3.000 to all employees' children who start university studies, and pays up to €10.000 for postgraduate studies for employees themselves.

And everyone even gets €800 bonus just for hanging around for five years.

As if that weren't enough, at the annual New Year's party, the company gives away prizes such as vacations, plasma TV screens, DVD and sound hi-fi systems, golden coins, etc. One lucky employee even wins a new car valued at €40.000.

"Genesis Pharma supports not only the successful professional career but also our personal happiness," says one employee.

<b>Genzyme</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Belgium	www.genzyme.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	189	2001

The 189 employees of this biotech firm have organised a "Social Committee" and a "Health Committee" to enhance their workplace; the committees' membership rotates and participation is considered in employees' annual evaluations.

Employees developed a fun game called "Genzyme Goose" to promote company values to new employees; the winning team of each session is rewarded with a prize. And the winner of the WIK-award ("Werknemer in de Kijker," or "Employee in the Spotlight") rewards outstanding contributions, particularly those that promote interdepartmental cooperation while supporting company goals.

"I feel at home at work," says an employee. "I wake up and look forward to going to work each day. There are always new surprises and challenges waiting."

<b>GlaxoSmithKline</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Finland, Norway	<a href="http://www.gsk.fi">www.gsk.fi</a> www.gsk.no
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	187 (F), 153 (No)	1830 (F), 1850 (No)

This pharmaceutical giant employs more than 110,000 employees in 80 countries, who work together to tackle disease, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria in the shape of nearly four billion packs of medicine and other products per year. Both the Norwegian and Finnish branches of Glaxo qualified for our list this year.

Whatever their location, employees have plenty to be proud of: their company distributes free medicine to about one billion people in 83 countries every year. GSK's people are also bound together by the GENOM values (translated as "Joy, Involvement, Innovation, Care, and Courage," including the courage to say "no".)

Glaxo's employees gush with enthusiasm for their company. One describes it as "a positive atmosphere in everything we do. It's a party going to work!" Another adds, "I have work tasks I only dreamt about during my education."

In Glaxo Norway, about 70% of employees teamed up for an initiative known as "Giro the GSK," when they cycled across Norway, from south to north (about 2500 km) in about 12 days. Next year they will climb the highest mountain in Norway.

And four employees from GlaxoSmithKline Finland got to head to Cancun, Mexico for an "All Stars" trip, along with co-workers from 17 countries around the world. Employees can also nominate each other for "Spirit Awards," for doing a good deed or showing a positive attitude; the prize is worth about €200.

<b>Google</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Ireland	www.google.ie
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	700	2003

The Irish employees of the world's largest search engine firm benefit from ongoing performance management, with individual goals linked to team and company targets. Annual 360-degree evaluations (from self, manager, and up to five peers) and quarterly performance reviews further reinforce individuals' progress. The "Google Education" internal website provides employees with development tools, including a database of "Techtalks," lectures given by subject matter experts to the wider global community.

No matter what their country of origin, employees feel welcome from the get-go. Non-nationals of Ireland receive a guide on Ireland to help them settle in while attending a relocation seminar. All new hires receive a phone call from their assigned "buddy" prior to starting work, and are introduced to co-workers at a fun, weekly "Thank God Its Friday" event, when they are offered a chance to say something about themselves.

"Coming to work in the morning does not feel like work and sometimes I feel genuinely guilty about that," admits one satisfied Googler.

<b>Grundfos</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.grundfos.de
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	329	1960

The German division of this Danish manufacturer of pumps and water systems has a corporate culture characterised by openness, fairness, and personal responsibility. "Very much attention is paid to the work conditions and the health and psychological well-being of coworkers," says one employee.

Ongoing training (in part through the company's own "Poul Due Jensen Academy") and regular 360° feedback for managers ensure that employees guide their own career paths. The company pays employees for kindergarten fees and offers flexible working hours; ergonomics training and massages are offered at work to improve employees' health.

<b>Guidant</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Italy	www.guidant.it
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	165	1994

The 165 employees of Guidant Italia take pride in their life-saving work, selling pacemakers, defibrillators, and other medical devices. The company pays close attention to the development of potential leaders through a structured programme called “Circle of Champions”. They also promote gender equality at the management level through a networking and development programme called “Guidant Reaches Out to Women” (GROW); women make up nearly half the employee population.

Guidant’s Communication team, composed of a representative from each department, has come up with a wide range of media, including text messaging and a monthly voice bulletin. The company intranet features candid “Ten Questions” interviews with senior managers.

A permanent committee of managers and employees drives “Miglioriamo Guidant,” a programme that rewards excellent suggestions for improvement. Employees can frequently work at home, enjoy flexible hours, and take leaves of absence if needed. One employee singled out “colleagues’ collaboration and availability to help each other when needed, even if is outside of their work duties.”

<b>Happy</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	UK	www.happy.co.uk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	59	1987

This 59-person IT training and business coaching company works hard to live up to its name: employees are kept happy through a flat management structure and transparent business practices. All financial details, including the salaries of managing directors and other senior leaders, are available on the company’s intranet.

The company also offers a time bank of 100 days (or about two days per employee) that any member of staff can draw upon for community projects. Recent “time bank” projects have provided service in Uganda, Nigeria, and Cambodia; others have taught IT to the deaf and built web sites for charitable organisations closer to home.

“Last summer our Chief Exec took the whole team on a day trip to Paris to thank us for the hard work, closing the office so it could happen on a work day and not on our own time, even though it was not a working trip,” says one employee.

“Happy” people can choose from several flexible work arrangements, including compressed work weeks; part-time arrangements; job shares, term-time working; annualised hours; and paid leave for religious observance, bereavement, compassion, or family needs. Employees can also take career breaks of up to two years or can take month-long paid sabbaticals after six years. They also receive wellness benefits, such as on-site massage and reiki.

“Each person is viewed as an individual and is encouraged to make their own work-life balance suit them,” says one Happy employee. “There is a lot of flexibility around how you manage your working time.”

<b>Hewlett Packard</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Austria	www.hp.com/at
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	1096	1971

HP Austria turns 35 this year; the 1096 employees stay on the leading edge through an internal training portal, which allows online and classroom learning, as well as 360-degree feedback and other professional development tools. Managers participate in conferences and ongoing meetings to exchange strategies and best practices.

Health is a priority, too: a wellness initiative known as “Fit in the Company” is fully subsidized by HP, providing some employees with a weekly trip to the gym and online fitness training.

“In this company I am supported, my talents are appreciated, and I am complimented continuously to keep up the motivation,” says one HP associate. “Employees get a lot of responsibility and it is okay to make mistakes.”

<b>HUF</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Portugal	www.huf-group.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	394	1991

This automobile component manufacturer is based in Spain and Germany, but employs 394 people in Portugal. In 2005, the division commissioned ergonomic studies of all its work areas with the help of the Lisbon Technical University, leading to a 22% reduction of muscle and bone injuries. Assembly line workers rotate jobs frequently to reduce the chance of sustained injury. Tips about ergonomics are published in the company magazine and newsletter and on the intranet.

These machinists have a nice human touch: portraits of some workers are hand-drawn by a colleague and published in the internal magazine. Other benefits include legal counseling; medical services for employees and their families, as well as language training (in French, German, and English) and IT classes. Employees’ photos and birthdays are announced in the weekly newsletter and are well-publicized on the factory floor.

As one employee relates, “An independent auditor described our company with one word: harmony.”

<b>Impact Development Training Group</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	UK	www.impact-dtg.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	97	1980

This 97-person U.K. company offers teambuilding and other organisational development skills through outdoor experiential learning. They “walk their talk” by making sure their own people enhance their organisation through team-based activities.

Through the ‘Learning in the Community’ initiative, Impact employees are expected to spend a minimum of three days per year performing charitable work as part of their personal development plan. The company’s fundraising arm, “Impact Aid,” is run by a committee made up of employees from a cross-section of the organisation; money is raised through a wide variety of activities and supports local causes.

“We do a lot of great work in our local community and I have been fortunate to be involved in a number of different projects,” says one employee.

Other special benefits include the opportunity to enjoy Lake Windermere: the company owns canoes, kayaks, and rowing boats, as well as equipment for rock climbing, caving, and orienteering. As the offices are housed in two hotels, staff receive subsidised meals, snacks, and drinks; they can also rent the properties for weddings and banquets at a discount. “We have picnics in the summer by the lake and mulled wine in the office in the winter,” says one employee.

<b>ING Direct</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	UK	www.ingdirect.co.uk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	639	2002

This direct retail banking retailer boosts its 639 employees’ long-term growth through an extensive wellness programme that includes health surveys, mountain bikes for use at lunch, and hypnotherapy to quit smoking. Other “mind-body” perks available at the office include reflexology, Indian head massage, manicures, lunchtime language lessons, and an annual family fun day.

The “Pure Orange” programme rewards employees who go above and beyond the call of duty or who demonstrate one of the company’s values; recipients receive a handwritten card from the CEO, along with gift vouchers, days off, or charitable donations in the employee’s name.

“Our company logo is orange, and we talk about what it means to be orange and we reward orange behaviour,” explains an employee. “Anyone can nominate anyone else to get an “Orange Reward,” with shopping vouchers or a day’s training at the local college. One of my team mates just won a day at a pottery class. It’s nothing to do with work, so it really is a fun, genuine reward for helping us succeed.”

<b>Intel</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Ireland	www.intel.com/ireland/index.htm
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	5224	1968

The world’s largest chip-maker keeps people up to date on the latest, greatest research through “Intel University,” which includes more than 7,000 training programs and empowers employees to design and build development plans online. “Training and Development opportunities here are vast,” says one Intel Ireland employee, “with excellent training provided in house complemented by support from management, and time off and funding to complete external courses.”

A stock option programme is available to all employees at all levels to encourage a sense of ownership. The company also pays for “Family Links,” a resource for employees and their families. During prolonged school breaks, the company runs camps for employees’ children, ages 5-12; about 200 kids attended the four-week camp last summer.

The “Intel Involved” programme facilitates employees painting local schools, planting trees, teaching computer skills, and other activities. One department even set up a schoolhouse in a village in Africa. As one employee comments, “It is great to see the



company using its sheer size and influence to make a real impact and give something back not just to the local area but also further afield.”

<b>Irma</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Denmark	www.irma.dk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	1680	1886

Balance between work and private life are a high priority at this Danish grocery chain, which opens and closes like clock work, even as its 1680 employees take time off to attend to family life.

“The firm takes care of the employees if they experience personal problems,” says one employee. “The openness from the management to the service employees is highly remarkable.”

To make sure no one pushes too hard, employees are provided with a “stress barometer,” designed to help them to identify when they feel stress and make lifestyle adjustments accordingly.

“All the employees are taken seriously and you are surprisingly close to the top management,” says another employee. “It is a workplace that brings out the best in me.”

<b>Johnson &amp; Johnson</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Austria, Italy	www.jnj.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	191 (A), 452 (I)	1953 (A), 1965 (I)

This U.S.-based company has nearly 114,000 employees worldwide, who make a dizzying array of health care products; the company maintains sales and marketing offices across Europe, two of which – Italy and Austria – made our list of the “100 Best Workplaces in Europe” this year.

At J&J Italy, respect and integrity have been adopted as a way of life, and the 452 employees reap the benefits. Professional support is provided through the global company’s extensive “e-University.” Managers promote equity by working to prevent sexual harassment and racial discrimination and by setting up clear feedback programs and systems for appeals.

At the Austrian branch of J&J, meanwhile, innovation comes courtesy of a “Wickie Team,” named after a character from a popular German television cartoon. Employees can make suggestions for new products or processes directly to the Wickie Team, whose members rotate on an ongoing basis. This practice is part of a company-wide “Big Ideas” programme, a company-wide suggestion programme.

When production records are broken, every employee receives a pack of gourmet chocolate or another gift. And many company activities open to employees and their families, including a painting competition, English lessons, family ski trips, and use of the company gym. The company also organises hiking trips, mountain biking, and football games.

“I have never been more integrated and involved in a company than I am here,” says one happy J&J employee. “It is a pleasure to work for this company.”



<b>Länsförsäkringar Halland</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Sweden	www.lansforsakringar.se/halland
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	147	1889

This member-owned banking and insurance firm's 147 employees serve individuals and businesses across southwest Sweden. The office is characterised by a strong sense of openness and participation. Through several active employee councils, everyone plays a role in shaping the business strategy, as well as the work culture.

The company encourages mobility across its different sites, and pays for employees to attend courses in leadership and personal development, all to ensure that a strong pool of internal talent is always available for promotion. Employees are continually reminded about the importance of their health, and the company encourages wellness practices not only on the job, but also during non-working hours.

Collective efforts bring collective rewards: all employees receive a bonus, regardless of whether they are senior managers or work "on the floor". Rewards are constantly given not only for team accomplishments, but also for shared hardships: after a storm destroyed large swaths of forests in southern Sweden, the company took all affected employees on a trip to Nice, France.

<b>Lands' End</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.landsend.de
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	383	1996

The 383 employees of this multi-channel distributor of clothing thank each other by filling out pieces of paper and posting them on a bulletin board; the company then follows up with recognition gifts.

During "Customer Week," employees are lavished with food; the company also pays for employees' membership in a nearby gym, which has a sauna and swimming pool. "Every employee is respected here, everyone is treated and motivated equally," says one team member. "People from all ages work here, which contributes to the nice atmosphere," adds another.

Communication and fun go hand-in-hand: monthly "birthday evenings" are celebrated with senior managers, allowing every co-worker the opportunity to informally network with the bosses at least once per year. New employees are welcomed with a bouquet and a greeting package; they are also invited to company events before their first day on the job.

<b>LifeScan</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.lifescan.de
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	138	1989

The 138 German employees at this maker of blood sugar meters follow a "work hard, play hard" principle, so company events include plenty of social activity. Fun company-sponsored events include cooking classes, salsa dance lessons, canoe trips, two-day sailing trips, ice skating, and more.

Surveys of employees are followed up with workshops, in which coworkers can bring in their concrete suggestions and ideas for improvement before developing a plan of action.

“The basic training is extraordinary good and intensive,” gushes one employee. “The managers always have an ear for questions. The familiar atmosphere through all levels is unique! Special efforts of employees are appreciated and adequately rewarded! The supporting work equipment is almost perfect!”

<b>Lilly</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Norway, Spain	www.lilly.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	60 (N), 1249 (SP)	1976 (N), 1963 (SP)

At this international pharmaceuticals firm (represented by Norway and Spain divisions on the 100 Best list this year), employees shape their own personal development plans and can spend up to 10 days a year on training that is directly related to work, or on “personal development” of their own making.

“My managers listen to me when I have something to say, and I consider my colleagues to be very good friends,” says one employee.

The Norwegians have also started a “Great Workplace Committee” to develop and implement ideas to continually improve their workplace quality. Twice a year, meanwhile, the President of Lilly’s Spanish office engages in a forum conversation with all employees, where he answers every question asked of him. Employees who submit revenue-saving ideas earn cash or travel as a reward; through this “Austerity and Innovation” programme, the company saved nearly €10.000, 10% of which went back to employees.

As one team member explains, “On more than one occasion, external clients have said to me, ‘We can feel that people from Lilly like to work there, we can see it in your faces.’”

<b>Mag. Milenkovics</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Austria	n/a
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	60	1980

This Austrian company is made up of three subsidiaries, which market and distribute traditional and alternative health products. The owner and his wife make sure everyone is involved in shaping their own future: they developed a seven-step visioning process for their company, called the Steigflug Konzept, or “Ascension Concept,” which aims to help people decide “what we are, what we want to be, and what we believe in”. The company also sponsors an annual “Future Day,” when all 60 employees gather to share ideas and shape the company’s long-term outlook.

Flexible scheduling allows employees to work as few as eight hours per week to better manage their family responsibilities. And to preserve their culture, employees and managers interview new hires together to ensure that they are a good fit.

<b>Mapfre</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Portugal	www.mapfre.pt
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	274	1998

The 274 employees of this Portuguese insurance provider (a subsidiary of a Spanish firm) are highly dedicated to safety and environmental concerns; they participate in multiple educational campaigns to promote a safe, healthy workplace. Performance and

development evaluations are based on informal conversations between employees and managers; personal relationships, the company’s mission, and other subjects are all open for discussion.

Employees frequently volunteer in the community, with groups of ten working together to help the sick and elderly; each month, four rotating groups volunteer for a day. Workers often choose their own non-profit and initiate their own philanthropic projects.

“I would say what best characterizes this company is the family spirit,” says one associate. “We have more strength in the bad moments and we celebrate the good moments as if we were at home!”

<b>Morgan Stanley</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	France	www.morganstanley.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	124	2001

“Morgan Stanley develops the diversity of employees and encourages a variety of profiles and social and professional backgrounds. These are not just words; this practice makes everyone feel that they cannot easily be replaced by anyone else.”

So says one employee of the French branch of the global financial services firm, which has created a charter to promote diversity and fight discrimination; diversity training sessions, featuring actors in interactive sketches, are compulsory for all new employees.

Communication and caring are also given high priority: three times a year, the European president of the group holds a videoconference with all 124 employees; anyone may submit a question anonymously and receive an immediate online response. The company also provides a number of services to encourage work-life balance, helping employees to find a babysitter, renew their passport, get clothes cleaned, etc.

“There is a real team spirit based on a sincere culture of respect toward colleagues as well as clients,” says one employee. “No form of bullying...is accepted here.”

<b>Network Appliance</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www-de.netapp.com/
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	212	1996

Every week, a member of the management board calls between 15-20 employees at this developer of data storage, ensuring that all 212 employees have a direct pipeline to senior leaders. “Such a phone call is an incredible motivation for every employee,” says one team member. The board member spends up to 25% of his time on these calls.

An incentive reward for sales teams gives winners a special jacket and an extra day in Las Vegas at the annual “Sales Kickoff” to go rafting, golfing, or other activities with the company’s senior managers. A 24-hour hotline allows free consultations about dealing with conflict in the work place.

All the offices – include managers’ work spaces – are designed in an open floor plan. “The everyday work is characterised by team spirit and togetherness, which enables a quick integration for new employees,” says one employee.

<b>Novartis</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Norway	www.novartis.no
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	100	1996

This Swiss pharmaceutical and health products manufacturer marks its tenth birthday this year. Senior managers at the Norwegian branch start the day once per month with a breakfast gathering of all 100 employees, for informal information sharing and Q&A.

The company is driven by four main values: innovation, external focus, people, and performance. The HR department's vision is, "People make the difference," and every employee designs an individual development plan to guide their careers.

<b>Novo Nordisk Farma</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Finland	www.novonordisk.fi
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	64	1989

The healthcare company, a world leader in diabetes care, has initiated philanthropic programs in more than 20 countries. Through the "Take Action" programme, employees can travel to treat diabetes, all on company time. Last year, employees spent three weeks in Malaysia and one week at a youth camp in Zambia. As one Novo associate puts it, "It is the humanity in this hard business that makes all of us give a full 100%."

The internal treatment is pretty great, too. The company has an Employee Assistance Programme, through which staff can receive help with personal health, legal, and financial issues. In addition to comprehensive training, the company reimburses employees' educational expenses up to €11,000.

"There's virtually no hierarchy although we work in a large international corporation," says one employee. "Any one of us can contact anyone in different parts of organisation in different countries without having to worry about the right pecking order."

<b>Novozymes</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Denmark	www.novozymes.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	2160	1923

Collaboration and caring run strong at this biotech company, which specializes in the development of enzymes and microorganisms.

The research division's annual "R&D Info Week" brings together employees from around the world to share information, followed by a party accompanied by the company band, the "CopenDavis Band". Their internal newsletter has received awards for its innovative handling of large, complex topics. The company recently launched a global "Managing Diversity" initiative to expand employees' understanding of the importance of a diverse work force.

"The management accepts new ideas the way you see it in small, newly started companies, with a pioneer spirit," explains one employee. "But at the same time we have many traditions and values, which is characteristic of older and large companies, along with high job security."

<b>Nycomed</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Denmark	www.nycomed.dk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	682	1874

“The distance between employees and the top management is close to non-existent,” says one employee of this 682-person pharmaceuticals provider. “All employees can easily go to the management and know that they will be respected and listened to so that they know the heart is in the right place.”

Nycomed provides up to six months of fully paid leave to care for handicapped or elderly family members. And employees enjoy flexibility in defining their jobs, setting their schedule, and even determining where they will work. The company has also developed stress-reduction tools to improve people’s health by focusing on their lives at work and at home and provides coaching in health improvement, which have contributed to a reduction in absence due to illness.

<b>OC&amp;C Strategy Consultants</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Netherlands	www.ocstrategy.nl/
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	54	1992

OC&C is a 54-person, international strategic consulting firm that takes its talent from top universities. Despite the typical rigors of this profession, OC&C employees manage to keep up a healthy work-life balance. The whole firm (including spouses) travel on company ski vacations.

“Since we work hard, all employees are allowed to invite eight personal friends for a Christmas dinner,” notes one employee.

OC&C also invests huge amounts in training and development: “soft with people, hard with skills” is how one survey comment describes the organisation’s philosophy. Employees are matched to assignments through sophisticated systems; on average, consultants spend 100 hours and €15,000 in training annually, and several have received paid M.B.A. degrees from top business schools.

<b>OMD</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Denmark	www.ombd.dk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	101	1992

The 101 employees at this Danish communications and media firm have organised an employee-run baking club; participants take turns baking a cake and then gather once a week to eat and chat. They also have a Spirit Club, which is responsible for organising fun activities like skiing, golf, diving, cycling, and running.

Employees take pride in their company’s many awards; they also drink champagne to celebrate these frequent honours and shared successes. Friday after-work beer sessions are another ritual.

“Our culture is extremely strong – built on enthusiasm and having fun,” says one employee. “We have a winner’s mentality like no other I have ever seen. However, we take good care of each other on the road to success.”

<b>Omicron electronics</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Austria	www.omicron.at
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	114	1984

The 114 employees of this Austrian electronics firm build systems to test electrical power systems. They also constantly measure their own creativity through an “Idea Barometer”: every time someone submits an idea for a new product or process, a ball is put into the large “device” in the office atrium. When the barometer is full, a fun event is planned for the team, with prizes like MP3 players and paragliding weekends given for the best suggestions.

Omicron’s employees also reach out to the world, donating seven percent of profits to kids around the world and enabling employees to volunteer in Albania, Brasil, and beyond. One worker was even allowed to volunteer for tsunami victims for six months on full salary.

As a nice perk and teambuilding exercise, employees can serve on a rotating “cooking team,” helping out the chef in the company canteen once per month – and receiving daily free lunch in return.

<b>PEI</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Ireland	www.pei.ie
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	75	1963

This medical and surgical sales company forms multi-disciplinary project teams to promote collaboration among its 75 employees, with at least one senior manager per workgroup. The Corporate Social Responsibility Team encourages employees to get involved in their communities through their choice of several different charities.

“We all play a part in developing the less well off in our community and we are actively involved,” says one employee. “We put in the effort and know we make the difference.”

New hires are also publicly announced in the company newsletter and are supported with a mentoring programme during the early part of their jobs. “The organisation has always allowed me the space an opportunity to develop and has empowered me and treated me fairly in terms of pay reward and recognition,” says one PEI associate.

<b>Pentascop</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Netherlands	www.pentascop.nl
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	250	1990

This 250-person Dutch consulting firm describes itself as “socially engaged”; much of their work lies in improving other organisations. To make sure their consultants practice what they preach, employees rotate between external and internal assignments, gaining real-world management experience.

The company’s “Pentabase,” a knowledge-sharing tool on the company’s intranet, contains summaries of past and current projects. “Work Councils,” with members from each of the five regional branch offices, are active in improving processes and sharing ideas. Workers have teamed up to develop the company’s strategy, develop a personal reward and recognition system, and enhance internal communication.



As part of their mission, the founders and directors of Pentascope, known as “webmakers,” aspire to move past traditional HR to satisfy employees’ emotional and spiritual dimensions. People are encouraged to seek out their own future assignments and training, join particular teams, choose a specific coach, and work on their own projects. About 50 Pentascopers have taken sabbatical leave since it was started in 2000.

“We walk our talk!” say employee comments. “We are not afraid to look in a mirror to find out where we need to improve ourselves. Nobody works at Pentascope just for the money: we work together to achieve a better society.”

<b>Pepsico</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	France	www.pepsico.fr
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	290	1993

While marketing products ranging from soft drinks to corn chips, Pepsico France’s 290 employees receive customized personal development through an online tool, which allows them to manage and assess their goals and track progress. Managers meet twice each year for “People Planning,” matching employees’ talents and aspirations with current job openings.

“Involving the employees in the life of the company is very important here,” says an employee. Schedules are flexible and, while at work, people can spend time playing table football, watching TV, or just taking a break in relaxing break areas.

Pepsico France also recently set up a special task force to prevent discrimination; the group created a series of fun educational posters, which hang on the office walls.

“We are encouraged all the time to ‘show off’ the results that we obtain in our daily work,” says one worker. “Every time you have made a special effort, you often receive 10 or more emails ... congratulating you for the achievement and maybe offering some tips or simply one word of ‘Bravo’.”

<b>Philips</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Austria (Styria), Ireland	www.philips.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	209 (A), 106 (IRE)	1987 (A), 1929 (IRE)

Philips Electronics, represented on the “100 Best Workplaces” list this year by the Austria and Ireland divisions, is one of the world’s biggest electronics companies. Entrepreneurialism is encouraged across the company and professional development is required.

The company’s “Dual Ladder Program” ensures that technical experts can continue to grow in their careers without taking on unwanted management responsibilities.

The 209 employees of the company’s Austrian branch specialise in “contactless identification,” i.e. RFID or wireless ID systems for car keys, passports, etc. Despite the technical complexity of this work, the company still finds a way to boost its employees’ “Fun Factor,” to capture emerging ideas and provide an ongoing “mood barometer” for everyone.



Cross-functional quality improvement teams offer input on the business and help to shape strategy for the future; more than 50% of employees are involved in these teams. New hires are assigned mentors for the first six months on the job.

In 2004 Philips Austria GmbH Styria sponsored painting competitions and supported troubled students at a local school, raising money in part by collecting used cell phones. Philips Ireland, meanwhile, provided financial and technical support to establish a learning resource centre and develop a designated children's area for a local charity.

"This company makes a great effort at keeping staff informed," says one satisfied Philips employee.

<b>Piscines Ideales</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Greece	www.piscinesideales.gr
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	88	1991

The slogan of the CEO at this 88-person swimming pool company bathe in Athens holds, "It is not an employee's right to express himself, it is an obligation!" The CEO and other senior managers offer their home and cell phone numbers to employees, and managing directors hold dinners with their departmental staffs at least once a year.

Through an annual "job rotation," employees spend a few weeks each year in different departments to gain a more holistic understanding of the company; they follow up by writing a detailed report of their observations and recommendations.

Through it all, the company bathes employees in professional support and even helps them to start their own franchise businesses, as long as they agree to partner with the company down the road.

<b>ProCivitas</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Sweden	www.procivitas.se
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	74	1997

A privately held upper secondary school focused on business, leadership, and sports, ProCivitas enrolls about 940 students and employs 74 teachers and staff members. The school is one of the largest contributors of students to the competitive Stockholm School of Economics.

A unique bonus structure ensures that students and teachers work together. Teachers are given a bonus if they receive at least "4" on their student evaluations (on a scale of 1-5); the scores are based on personal engagement and quality of teaching. Similarly, kitchen staff also receive bonuses contingent on student ratings. And all employees share a bonus if more than 85% of students say they would recommend the school to their younger friends. Fulfilment of all five company goals can mean doubling of employees' salaries.

Particularly compared to peer schools, ProCivitas offers abundant benefits, including opportunities for travel, health care and pension programs, and free banking and legal advice. One employee praises management's "quick decision making" as a pleasant alternative to the "unwieldy politically ruled governmental schools."

ProCivitas works to make sure the work environment is inspiring and pleasant for teachers and students alike. Classrooms are uniquely decorated with large aquariums, big screen TV's, tile stoves, and funky designer furniture.

The school has never experienced an act of vandalism by one of its students. The sick leave rate is just .002 sick days per teacher, per semester. No employees have gone on long-term sick leave in the past year.

“This is an excellent example showing that it is possible to run a school in a positive way, both for the students and for employees,” says one employee.

<b>Procter &amp; Gamble</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Austria, Germany (Market Development Organization), Greece, Sweden	
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	89 (A), 1699 (D), 281 (GR), 185 (S)	
		www.eu.pg.com
		1967 (A), 1960 (D), 1960 (GR), 1969 (S)

P&G is one of the worlds biggest consumer goods companies, producing about 300 household and personal products brands sold in more than 160 countries. P&G is 170 years old as of 2006; no fewer than four of the company's European divisions – Austria, Germany, Greece, and Sweden – qualified for our list this year

Through the “Go, Give & Grow” programme, P&G provides recent university graduates with a chance to work for a non-profit for up to nine months prior to starting their jobs; the company pays for the flights, insurance, and sometimes even a salary. Employees on parental leave can stay in touch with their jobs by training at home, sitting in for co-workers on as as-needed basis, or just attending company events. And P&G'ers also have opportunities to participate in social projects in Africa and other locations.

“The level of professional education and training that is offered is amazing,” says one employee. “The company does not at all consider the cost of money to be an important factor when it comes to training and employees' development.”

The company's “cross-mentoring” programme empowers (mostly female) employees to learn from leaders at outside organisations. As a result, at P&G Greece, for example, the number of women in management has changed drastically during the last five years and the age difference between the youngest and the oldest employee has widened.

Other offerings to promote employees' health include regular wellness checks, yoga classes, flexible scheduling, and child care support for mothers. P&G uses surveys, focus groups, and cross-functional employee taskforces to ensure that everyone has input on important issues that affect them.

P&G also reimburses the costs of babysitters – and even dog sitters – when employees go on business trips. After just a few years of work, employees can take three months of unpaid leave; anyone can take 12 months off for family reasons. P&G Sweden has an onsite laundry room, with unlimited detergent provided at no cost.

“All employees are very clear on what their ‘role in the goal’ is,” says one employee. “Overall goals and strategies for the company are interpreted into goals and strategies for subsidiaries, then departments, and then the individual. Each person is very clear on what is expected from them and how they will personally contribute to the company's goals and vision.”

<b>Real Seguros</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Portugal	www.realseguros.pt
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	448	1988

It's all about "more" at this 448-person insurance firm. Through the "More Health Programme," the company boosts healthy habits by subsidising the cost of a gym and paying for clinical treatments and nicotine patches to help employees quit smoking. The "More Family Programme," meanwhile, uses e-mail and the intranet to encourage employees to better use their leisure time and improve their home lives.

The outcome of these efforts: more teamwork and camaraderie. Every team in the company maintains its own "photo album" on the intranet, showing personal and work information about employees, along with their likes and dislikes.

"I see my coordinator and my director as friends," says one employee. "There's a great friendship and cooperation. I hope this unity continues for many years and with the same spirit," says another.

<b>Roche</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Italy (Diagnostics), Portugal, Spain (Farma)	www.roche.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	497 (I), 238 (P), 1090 (SP)	1999 (I), 1973 (P), 1933 (SP)

This 110-year-old global maker of health care and pharmaceutical products has 60 affiliates, seven research centers, and 33 production centers across Europe. Both the 497-person Italy division and the 1090-person Spanish division qualified for the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe list this year.

Perks like English classes and a commitment to work-life flexibility (and to sponsoring fun events) enhance the life-saving work carried about by Roche's people each day. Employees or teams that perform "above and beyond" expectations receive cash and gifts; last year Roche Spain spent around €250.000 for employees. A strong programme of communications keeps everyone up to date on active projects.

"The company does not seek to impose its ideas, but respects each of our ideas and ways of doing things," says one employee. "I don't know what Roche has, but it is something that engages you. It is almost addictive!"

<b>SAP</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.sap.de
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	11892	1972

This international business software maker has more than 34,000 employees working in more than 50 countries, about ten percent of whom are part-timers. "I work part-time to take care of my children, and I don't have any disadvantages in my career," says one employee.

The company pays the difference between new mother's insurance benefits and their net salaries, and expectant mothers receive a variety of resources from the firm, including consultation with experts and use of special rooms in the office. The company's "Women@SAPFinance" initiative aims to promote gender equality across the company.

So-called WIL-Workshops (“Women in Leadership”), originally offered to female executives, have since been expanded to include all women; a women’s network has since formed and meets monthly.

This caring extends to the community, too: SAP employees are active as leaders and mentors in the “First Lego League,” which promotes creativity in children.

<b>Sapient</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.sapient.de
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	134	2000

This IT consulting firm is the kind of company where the co-CEO’s call employees on their cell phones to thank them personally for a job well done. Through the company’s “Role Stepping,” employees can take on tasks generally reserved for “higher up” positions to see whether the job is a good fit, and allowing managers to evaluate people’s performance.

“Our company attaches a lot of importance to the fact that all employees get to know the values, the goals, and the vision of our company, which results in fewer controls, fewer directives and more freedom to arrange our activities according to these values and goals,” explains one Sapient employee. “I have the feeling that I can bring in more creativity and show more personal responsibility and initiative. More importantly, it makes working here much more fun.”

<b>SC Johnson</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	France, UK	www.scjohnson.com/
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	150 (F), 502 (UK)	1931 (F), 1914 (UK)

The U.K. and France sales and marketing branches for the family-run U.S.-based household products both qualified for the 100 Best list this year. The company offers highly flexible work schedules; no meetings are ever planned before 9:30AM or after 4:30PM, and during July and August, workers can take Friday afternoons off. Any employee can telecommute, too. In return, 99% of the employees surveyed said they would make “an extra effort to get the job done.”

The French division’s “Now Thanks” programme allows managers to show immediate gratitude for individual efforts with dinners, amusement park passes, or weekend family getaways valued at up to €500. And only employees themselves see the results of their 360-degree feedback surveys. A room is kept open year-round at the company for continuous collection of toys, books and clothes for distribution among the less fortunate. A committee of 15 volunteer employees called “This We Believe” meet twice each month to discuss initiatives that might improve employees’ lives or help the local community.

“It’s not unusual to have the president of the region sitting down to lunch with you and know your name,” says one employee. “Human contact makes all the difference!”

The 502 employees of the U.K. branch, meanwhile, keep themselves in order through regular health screenings, a gymnasium, golf and tennis courts, yoga classes, pedometers, massage, reflexology and podiatry services. Employees can also take advantage of independent, confidential advice through professional advisers and psychologists.

The company's community policies also serve as a source of pride for employees, who participate in an annual Community Day and who see their charitable contributions matched by the company. SC Johnson donates 2% of pretax profits to a charitable trust. The U.K. office even donated some of its surplus land to a wildlife organisation to protect snakes and badgers.

<b>SCA Hygiene Products</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Denmark	www.sca.dk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	97	1956

"We have freedom and responsibility, from top to bottom," comments one employee at this Denmark-based developer of personal care products. "Everyone stands together in difficult times."

SCA has accomplished a healthy profit over the last decade – and has continually shown appreciation for people's hard work. When employees work late or are required to attend multi-day courses, their families receive flowers, along with a "thank-you-for-loaning-us-your-spouse" card.

Employees have also benefited from their organisation's commitment to diversity, feedback, and work-life balance. "We have a very unique general manager who uses storytelling as a tool," notes one employee. "The storytelling is a part of our every day life, creates attention, establishes the foundation for the next step, and binds us together."

<b>Schoenen Torfs</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Belgium	www.torfs.be
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	321	1948

This family-owned shoe retailer has 41 different stores, but manages to maintain a unified culture through the help of "coaches," who visit every site on a regular basis and serve as conduits between stores and corporate management. Coaches encourage entrepreneurialism while promoting corporate goals; they also encourage "family, fun, and figures," to ensure that store workers have fun and pursue lifelong learning. Coaches also occasionally bring different store managers together to share best practices and promote cross-company communication.

The result: the company has doubled its profits in the last five years, and employees have benefited. As a Christmas celebration, rather than chocolates or cookies, employees got to split the profits for one day; even after the funds were used to pay for a concert and CD's, everyone still received €250 each.

"This is an organisation with its heart at the right place," says one employee. "They always listen and are ready to help. I wouldn't want to work anywhere else."

<b>Skytec</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.skytecag.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	145	1997

At this IT service provider, the 145 employees are not merely included in decision-making, they are the decision-makers, using team-based democratic principles to guide business

strategy. In the interest of “self-organisation,” employees eschew formal policies and are empowered to solve problems on their own.

The result is a thriving, generous unit: when employees face emergencies or get into financial difficulties for any reason, the company helps out with interest-free loans; these grants are often given by members of the board of directors out of their own pockets. “This company is a workplace, home, and circle of friends, all together,” comments one employee.

<b>SMA Technologie</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.SMA.de
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	1008	1981

This 1008-person company develops solar technologies, communication and control systems, energy storage systems, and railway technologies. The company espouses personal responsibility and openness, and employees enjoy flexible, self-directed work scheduling.

Other benefits include free coffee and tea, lavish summer and holiday parties, and profit-sharing. Employees are extensively involved in the community, both through their work (the company is underwriting the development of energy systems for the Third World) and through generously donating their time. It all follows a basic philosophy that people are the company’s most valuable asset.

<b>Sparbanken Gripen</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Sweden	www.gripen.se
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	167	1853

The 167 employees of Sweden’s second-largest independent bank enjoy an open, friendly atmosphere: employees regularly call or e-mail the CEO or other members of the board, and senior managers hold regular all-company meetings, as well as gatherings with small groups of employees. Workers also participate in committees, including one group dedicated to evaluating and implementing employee suggestions. Through the company’s profit sharing plan, all employees are eligible to receive bonuses – except for managing directors.

Thanks in part to broadly offered flexible scheduling, excellent health care, stress reduction programs, and shortened work days, the company’s absence rate last year was just 1,46%, while just 0,6% of people went on long-term sick leave. The company’s focused approach to health care has allowed its average rate of absence never to exceed 3%.

The company gave employees free cookies in the past, but now gives out free fruit instead. The company pays for acupuncture and mental health care for employees, subsidises fitness and massage, and pays to train willing employees in CPR to help each other out in life-threatening situations.

“They are very open minded to alternatives outside of the traditional medical care,” says one employee. “It is probably because of that that we have such low sick leave.”

Employees have annual discussions with managers to plan out their training and are evaluated on an ongoing basis. All employees – especially managers – receive comprehensive training in the fine art of offering feedback about co-workers’ performance.



The company regularly sponsors fun activities for employees and usually invites retired staff members, as well. The company sometimes gives Christmas gifts to employees, and at other times makes donations to charities in employees' names.

As one employee puts it, "Behandlar andra som jag själv vill bli behandlad," or "We treat others like we want to be treated."

<b>Sparkasse Neuhofen</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Austria	www.sparkasse.at/neuhofen
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	56	1900

"I am very proud to be an employee of this company," says a member of this small, privately held regional bank in Lower-Austria; the bank is 106 years old, but it has a young, vibrant touch. People on the job can snack on free fruit daily, ease their lives through flexible scheduling, and earn gift incentives for signing up for medical check-ups. The 56 employees also developed a "Works Council" to organise leisure activities, such as biking, hiking, and cooking classes.

In keeping with their practice of Fish! Philosophy, employees assign a "Fish! of the Week," a co-worker responsible for making sure everyone has a good time on the job.

"Our management has a special social approach to all employees," says one employee. "In raising a disabled child, I have been able to change my schedule as often as necessary to fulfil the demands of my child."

<b>Stopgap</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	UK	www.stopgap.co.uk
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	93	1993

At this U.K.-based marketing recruitment and staffing company, the 93 employees can take 50%-paid, 12-week sabbaticals every four years for personal development or for community and charitable activities. Past employees have spent this time rebuilding Banda Ache after the tsunami, cycling across Kenya in a fundraising campaign, and researching elephant behaviour in Namibia.

Mental and physical health are a priority for active employees, too. After three months on the job, Stopgap's people are entitled to a "Mind, Body, & Soul Benefit" of £500 per year to spend as they wish to improve their well being, whether through a gym membership, private health insurance, or a programme of their own design. After four years, this benefit is elevated to £1000.

And employees who still feel overwhelmed with work can call upon the "Flying Squad," consultants who can come in to help, and who are also trained to work holidays or cover for illness.

Employee comments also describe the "fantastic company team building weekend events and day events throughout the year" and admire that managers continually seek feedback on how to improve the business.

"Just the best place I have ever worked!" says one Stopgap associate.

<b>Tourism Ireland</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Ireland	www.tourismireland.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	57	2000

This 57-person organisation works to boost Ireland’s tourism industry. The CEO provides regular updates to employees about the latest “goings on,” along with follow-up e-mails. Through the company’s “stowaway” programme, employees can take short-term overseas positions in Europe and North America, providing them with valuable experience while “cross-pollinating” ideas among branches.

“Best Practice Workshops,” open to employees, are also held regularly to share ideas and experiences. As one employee says, “No matter what position you hold your opinion is valued and you are included in decision making processes.”

“There is a constant atmosphere of enthusiasm and drive,” the employee continues. “While we cannot be rewarded in financial terms, as we are government funded, I feel management make an effort to reward us in other ways. Training courses are provided on request and they are constantly looking for ways to make our work environment more enjoyable.”

<b>Trident</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	UK	www.sonoco-trident.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	167	1993

This brand management firm has nearly 170 employees, who receive about 52 hours per year of formal training per year on average. In addition, staff are encouraged and financed to enroll in external training courses and to complete full degrees. The company even pays for unrelated night classes, such as yoga and bricklaying, demonstrating the company’s commitment to lifelong learning and a dedication to “growing its own.”

“They allow people to move into new departments, and give them the training and support required,” says one employee. “You can improve your position by hard work, without having to go off and get the qualifications first. Managers are prepared to take a chance on you.”

Rewards and recognition are also part of Trident's culture: “Spot Bonuses” are given for exceptional performance or commitment, including gift vouchers, a meal for two, concert tickets, or a weekend away at a hotel. Whole teams are recognized with an all-expenses paid lunch or evening out. “Trident’s commitment to staff is their main priority,” says another employee. “The company constantly offers rewards for people doing well.”

<b>Unimerco</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Denmark	www.unimerco.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	396	1964

This tool-maker is 100% employee-owned, and the 396 employee-owners stay duly involved in decisions affecting their workplace through a strong programme of communication at all levels. The company is uniquely set-up as a “covered village,” with production machines and offices together in one big room, and the organisation’s daily revenues are distributed to employees daily. Trust runs high as everyone follows a single central tenet: “We do what we say and we say what we do.”

“The joint ownership provides loyalty and commitment,” says one employee. “People get along well with each other and there’s room for humour, even though we are very busy. I look forward to coming to work every morning and every day I go home happy. Isn’t that the best life you can imagine?”

<b>Unique</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Belgium	www.unique.be
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	254	1998

The CEO of this recruitment and staffing firm personally sent letters to the spouses of hardworking district managers to thank them for their support, along with a cheque for a free meal at a fancy restaurant. The “Wall of Fame” in the headquarters features the handprint of every employee with at least five years of service.

The sense of respect also translates to professional development: the company’s new “United Academy” provides an average of 70 hours of flexible training to employees with two years of experience; courses are provided by internal and external experts.

They have fun, too: recent employee events have included “Family Day” and shopping excursions in Paris. “There is a lot of work, but also a lot of fun things we do together,” says one Unique person. “Everybody knows everybody!”

<b>Visma Spcs</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Sweden	www.vismaspcs.se
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	345	1984

When the CEO of this 345-person accounting and auditing software maker accepted a prize for “IT Company of the Year,” he explained the secret: “It’s not the products but the competent employees that are behind the success.”

A Swedish subsidiary of a Norwegian firm, Visma Spcs is well-regarded by its own people, who see managers as being available and resourceful. “The company develops with its employees and the employees with the company,” says one employee. To ensure everyone is warmly accepted, new hires receive a welcome brochure at their homes, and are supported by “sponsors” from their first day on the job.

On-site educational opportunities include “The Evening University,” featuring lectures on a variety of topics, and various education initiatives aimed at the individual, team, and company levels. An employee club organises lectures, sports activities, and celebrations.

More impressive still, each year, the company sponsors an educational trip for employees who reach their goals to a fun international destination; past trips have taken people to Thailand, the U.S., and Ireland. The trips are often enhanced with work-related themes, such as vision, values, and personal development.

<b>W. L. Gore &amp; Associates</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany, UK	www.gore.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	1270 (D), 482 (UK)	1966 (D), 1958 (UK)

This family-owned maker of polymer-based products (ranging from implantable devices to waterproof clothing) has 1270 employees in Germany and 482 in the U.K. office; these two divisions both qualified for the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe list this year.

Building on the culture of its U.S. parent company (a regular on Fortune magazine's 100 Best" list), Gore Germany has several unique benefits. Employees with more than five years of experience participate in a profit sharing programme. An internal network for female employees promotes women in leadership through a variety of programs. And monthly "State of the Company" meetings let employees receive valuable information while snacking on coffee and cake.

"The lack of hierarchical structure and organisational charts is unique," says one employee. "The idea to challenge and promote the employees according to their talents and abilities instead of fitting them in possible 'planned positions' is extraordinary."

At meanwhile, a "sponsor scheme" pairs employees with mentors who help to guide their growth and development. Associates receive a three-day course in effective communication; a lack of formal titles ensures that channels are open to the company's leadership team. Gore also aims to be a "Diversity Champion" by breaking down barriers, expanding development opportunities, and creating greater awareness about diversity-related issues.

"With the help of our sponsors we are encouraged to grow and take responsibility for our own development, and to make our own commitments in line with the needs of the business," says one employee. "Lots of companies talk about their culture but we really do walk that talk and encourage our associates to do the same."

<b>Wragge &amp; Co</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	UK	www.wragge.com
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	1069	1834

The 'Bright Ideas' intranet site of this nearly 1100-person law firm encourages everyone to contribute ideas on how to improve the work environment and practice; a bottle of champagne is presented for every outstanding idea.

"I am training to be a Legal Executive," says one employee. "Wragge & Co have funded my studies, been flexible with my hours so I could attend college, and given me study-leave days to take around my exams."

One of the firm's core values, "Openness & Honesty," is included as a key performance measurement in the annual appraisal of every partner and staff member. A recently developed "Corporate Communications Team" is working to improve the internal flow of information, both "top down" and "bottom up." The managing partners regularly walk the floors to visit with staff and attend group and team conferences, making themselves available to answer questions in a public or private forum. They also convene a quarterly online chat room for more discussion.

"We are all on first-name terms and there is an open-door policy, which makes it easy to approach people and ask for advice or just to talk," says one employee. "Everyone is made

to feel equal. The partners share the same working space with all of us and they are always approachable and friendly.”

<b>Wyeth</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Greece	www.wyeth.gr
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	204	n/a

Professional development is a priority for this seller of pharmaceutical products, the 204-person Greek outpost of a U.S.-based multi-national. Once per year, the management team conducts Talent Reviews for all employees and develops training around each employee’s strengths and weaknesses. The company subsidises the cost of MBA training for select employees, paying up to the 90% of the total cost, and offers a variety of seminars through external institutions. English language and PC lessons are also offered to all employees, and a new mentoring programme has furthered employees’ development. Nearly 85% of the company’s executives were promoted from within.

Wyeth pays for free breakfast and lunch to all its employees, allows flexible work scheduling, and throws in an option to leave work early on Friday. The company also pays more than four months salary to all mothers and supplies baby formula and vaccines; everyone gets extra days off during the Christmas and Easter vacations, too.

The company also sponsors employees’ theatrical, football and basketball teams; twenty five percent of employees participated in last year’s European Corporate Games, in games like basketball, football, tennis, table tennis, dragon boat racing, etc. The company organises an annual New Year’s event for all personnel, an annual carnival for employees’ kids, and an annual trip for all employees to the Greek countryside.

<b>3M</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>website</b>
	Germany	www.mmm.de
	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Founding year</b>
	3115	1951

The 3M Company produces more than 50,000 products. Where do all those ideas come from? A “15% rule” in research and development allows people to spend up to 15% of their working time on projects drawn from their own imaginations and initiative.

The German division of 3M further puts self-determination into the hands of its 3,115 employees. Bosses and employees are jointly responsible for training through the company-wide “Employee Contribution and Development Process,” and employees steer their own development plans with an eye toward whatever promotion they desire.

The executive staff renounced their bonus in 2005 and made this amount available for the training of additional junior employees. Through the “I Am Part Of It” programme, employees’ good suggestions are rewarded with bonuses.

3M also offers a full year of parental leave beyond what is required by law. “The flat hierarchy promotes the responsibility of each single person and thus increases one’s own initiative,” says one employee.

## Great Place to Work® Special Awards

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The Great Place to Work® Institute recognises great workplaces and outstanding practices to inspire other organisations to transform their workplaces. The Best Workplaces provide many examples of innovative practices that reflect the culture of the organisation and that directly contribute to credibility, fairness, respect, pride, and camaraderie across the organisation.

Of the companies represented on the annual list of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe, five are chosen each year to be recognised for demonstrating “best practices” related to the five dimensions of the Great Place to Work® Model®. Below are profiles of this year’s award winners, in each of these categories.

- **Credibility:** Best practices for Internal Communication
- **Respect:** Best practices for Work-Life Balance
- **Fairness:** Best practices for Diversity Management
- **Pride:** Best practices for Involvement of Employees in Corporate Social Responsibility Activities
- **Camaraderie:** Best practices for Creating a Fun Place to Work

### Special Award: Credibility - Best Practices for Internal Communication

#### **The Award Winner is: Irma (Denmark)**

Irma is a Danish grocery firm with nearly 1.700 employees spread across 70 supermarkets and several administrative offices. Despite its broad geographic reach, 93% of the company’s surveyed employees indicate that the company’s management is approachable and easy to talk to, while 83% agree that management always informs them about important issues and changes.

How do the company’s managers sustain this high degree of credibility in the eyes of employees? By gathering frequently with employees at all levels, communicating through a variety of programs, and reaching out constantly for input and ideas.

This open, receptive management style starts at the top: Irma’s CEO, Alfred Josefsen, is charismatic and understands the value of leaving his office once in a while. Josefsen can regularly be found wandering the halls of the headquarters and, more importantly, the aisles in the stores, speaking directly to the employees on the “front lines” and hearing first-hand about issues facing employees and customers alike. Other communication practices include:

- A weekly newsletter, which provides business information, including a summary of the previous week and an overview of the near-term future.
- Senior managers regularly pay visits to stores and, on a yearly basis, work for 1-2 days in the stores as “interns”.
- Every morning, all stores receive information on the previous day’s revenues as well as other data; these figures are displayed on each shop’s blackboard, showcased for all employees.
- “Strategy Days” where several hundred store-level employees are invited to come together for three days and share ideas in large- and small-group forums.



”[Irma is] a nice and open workplace with great opportunities to be heard and to express one’s self,” says one employee. ”There are high levels of information, a commitment toward employees, and managers who are easy to talk to.”

## **Special Award: Respect - Best practices in Work-Life Balance**

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### **The Award Winner is: Stopgap (UK)**

In an industry renowned for long-hours and an aggressive, results-oriented culture, Stopgap, a UK-based marketing recruitment and staffing company, stands out for its carefully considered approach to facilitating work-life balance. Whether empowering all 93 employees to pursue their personal dreams, or allowing mothers and fathers the freedom to carry out their “jobs” at home, Stopgap ensures that its people remain refreshed, inspired, and happy.

Stopgap has a number of practices that support and encourage people to obtain a good work-life balance. A couple of examples:

- The “Flying Squad,” a group of consultants who are able to come in and offer assistance in a pinch, or who can work holidays or cover when employees are ill.
- The “chill zone,” where people can relax throughout the day and improve their physical fitness.
- All Stopgap employees are entitled to a “Mind Body & Soul Benefit” of £500 per year to spend as they wish to improve their well-being, whether through a gym membership, evening classes, private health insurance, or a programme of their own design. After four years, this benefit is elevated to £1000.
- 50%-paid, 12-week sabbatical (or a 100%-paid, six-week sabbatical) after just four years of service, whether for personal development or for community and charitable activities.
- All employees are allowed to use flexible scheduling, and 28% work from home through the help of company-subsidised broadband connections and computers. Everyone also receives between 25-30 days off per year, plus the office shuts down completely between Christmas and New Year’s.

One employee describes Stopgap as “incredibly caring and understanding of family responsibilities.” Another adds, “Everything about stopgap shouts ‘We care and we appreciate the work you do!’” And as another Stopgap team member puts it, “We are given the opportunity to work and play hard and are given great support. It is a company that really has thought about even the little things to make life better.”

## **Special Award: Fairness - Best practices for Diversity Management**

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### **The winner is: British Gas Business (UK)**

The winner of the category is British Gas Business (BGB), a leading supplier of energy to the commercial sector in Britain. This company’s 1.500 people work at four locations, mostly in customer service, sales, billing, IT, and administration, and work together to

ensure that everyone from the local news agent to national retailers and manufacturers have the energy they need to operate.

Where BPP really excels is in its diversity practices. From their recruitment processes, which reflect and adapt to their local community's circumstances, to the manner in which they embrace the differences across their workforce, BGB is a shining example of a company that has drawn from the diversity of its local community, built upon its people's many backgrounds, and created an environment in which everyone feels welcome and valued as an individual. The awarded practices include:

- New mothers are offered part-time and evening-shift jobs, and highly flexible positions are specifically advertised in local nursery schools and leisure centres.
- The company has also achieved high levels of ethnic diversity, and has exceeded the percentage of minorities in the local community (33% in Leicester County, 40% at BGB Leicester, for example). The company also works with a staffing company to recruit directly from minority groups, including those with disabilities, and continually tracks progress to ensure that promotions and development opportunities.
- And rather than merely tolerate different religions, the company embraces individuals' backgrounds and uses them as a springboard for celebration and camaraderie. In addition to Christmas, BGB celebrates Diwali (a Hindu holiday) and Eid (a Muslim holiday), using decorations, traditional music and dancers, quizzes, and raffles to promote fun while demonstrating respect for each other's different cultures.

"The company is a shining beacon and leading the way for other business' when it comes to ethnic diversity," explains one BGB employee. "When I look on the news and see racial tensions, it makes me proud to know that where I work there is a wealth of cultures and religions that work in harmony."

## **Special Award: Pride - Best Practices for Involvement of Employees in Corporate Social Responsibility Activities**

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### **The winner is: SMA Technologie (Germany)**

The 1.008 employees of SMA Technology AG have plenty of reasons to be proud of their accomplishments. Just 25 years ago, their company spun off from the University of Kassel to become one of the world's leaders in the field of photovoltaics, converting and storing the sun's light as usable energy.

SMA has a "culture of self-management," in which employees feel ownership over their jobs and their company's mission. At SMA, employees themselves initiate CSR projects: when they have an idea about where and how to spend money, they present their idea to others within their organization, who almost invariably provide money and/or time as needed. Upon acceptance of an idea, the employee(s) who initiated a project continue to coordinate it through completion, whether by raising funds (which are often matched by the company) or by stewarding technological expertise and labor hours.

As a result of this method, the work of SMA has been extensive across Germany and abroad. When employees wanted to offer aid to victims of a flood in Eastern Germany, the

company released them from their work responsibilities. The company also works closely with select schools in the area to guide students with career choices, offering internships, and other development opportunities.

The company sponsors an orphanage in Uganda through financial donations, and also sent two employees (who donated their vacation time) to develop an insular system for drinking water purification. Following the tsunami in Sri Lanka, the company converted a cargo container into an energy container, a giant battery to support the electrical needs of disaster victims.

95% of the SMA employees responded in the Best Workplaces survey that they are “proud of telling others that I work here” and “My work has special meaning, it is not “just a job”.

### Special award: Camaraderie - Best practices for Creating a Fun Place to Work

#### **The winner is: Google (Ireland)**

The Irish office of the world’s most popular search engine employs about 700 people, of whom a full 60% are relocated from other countries, and 32 nationalities are represented at the office.

How does the company manage to create such a strong sense of fun and unity among such a diverse group of newcomers, particularly among so many from a generation already oversaturated with video games and other entertainments?

In short, they give them more of the good stuff they love and turn it into a business advantage. Google Ireland has many practices to foster a fun place to work:

- TGIF (“Thank Google It’s Friday”) events every Friday. These events bring the company’s employees and managers together to celebrate the week and learn about the latest company-wide updates.
- Offices are reflective of a campus style environment and are built for constant fun. Every floor is equipped with a game room, with lava lamps, comfy sofas, bean gabs, gym balls, table football, billards, DVD players, and video games. Employees receive a budget to decorate their work areas as they please.
- All weekly, quarterly, annual corporate and team events and parties are open to everyone, with a budget of 50 Euros per person allocated for each event. Quarterly offsites contribute to bonding at the team level, while quarterly ”all-company” meetings ensure organization-wide solidarity.
- Google Ireland also celebrates the diversity of its workforce in fun ways, whether through a Hispanic-themed event with Latin American food and salsa dancing classes, or during a German Christmas Market, when employees can get into the spirit in the Bavarian tradition.

“I have the feeling that I am at the University!” says one employee. ”Always learning new things and surrounded by great fun people from all over the world”

## Best Workplaces within Industry Sectors

Below is an overview of ten of the industry sectors represented on this year's "100 Best Workplaces in Europe" list. For industries with between three and ten companies, only the Best Workplace is identified, while the three highest ranked companies are listed for industries represented by more than ten companies. (The health care and tourism sectors are not listed as they are represented by fewer than three companies).

Best Workplaces within different industry sectors - in alphabetical order		
Industry sector	Best Workplaces	Out of ..
Biotechnology & Pharmaceuticals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amgen (Portugal)</li> <li>Novo Nordisk (Finland)</li> <li>Novozymes (Denmark)</li> </ul>	13
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minervaskolan i Umeå (Sweden)</li> </ul>	3
Electronics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Omicron electronics (Austria)</li> </ul>	4
Financial Services & Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cofinimmo (Belgium)</li> <li>GE Commercial Aviation Services (Ireland)</li> <li>Middelfart Sparekasse (Denmark)</li> </ul>	14
Information Technology & Telecommunication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ConSol* Software (Germany)</li> <li>O2 (Germany, Ireland)</li> <li>Microsoft (Finland, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, UK)</li> </ul>	15
Manufacturing & Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Airtricity (Ireland)</li> <li>Colgate Palmolive (Greece)</li> <li>DePuy (Ireland)</li> </ul>	27
Professional Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bain &amp; Company (Belgium, UK)</li> <li>Brightwater (Ireland)</li> <li>Vitae (Netherlands)</li> </ul>	14
Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Irma (Denmark)</li> </ul>	6
Health Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>	2
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>	2

## Best Workplaces within Size Categories

The chart below highlights the highest ranked five companies from each of three different size categories:

- 50-250 employees
- 250-1,000 employees
- More than 1,000 employees

These companies have achieved the highest overall score within their size category. For multi-national corporations represented with more than one subsidiary on the 100 Best Workplace in Europe list, the number of employees is determined as the average number of employees of the different divisions.

<b>TOP 5 companies within three size categories – in alphabetical order</b>		
<b>Size category</b>	<b>Top Five Companies</b>	<b>Total Number of Companies</b>
50-250 employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Airtricity (Ireland)</li> <li>• Cofinimmo (Belgium)</li> <li>• ConSol* Software (Germany)</li> <li>• Middelfart Sparkasse (Denmark)</li> <li>• Minervaskolan i Umeå (Sweden)</li> </ul>	51
250 – 1,000 employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bain &amp; Company (Belgium, UK)</li> <li>• Colgate Palmolive (Greece)</li> <li>• DePuy (Ireland)</li> <li>• Microsoft (Finland, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, UK)</li> <li>• Vitae (Netherlands)</li> </ul>	33
More than 1,000 employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Gas Business (UK)</li> <li>• Irma (Denmark)</li> <li>• Novozymes (Denmark)</li> <li>• O2 (Germany, Ireland)</li> <li>• SMA Technologie (Germany)</li> </ul>	16

## Background and Methodology

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The list of 100 Best Workplaces in Europe builds on national selection processes. In 15 European countries lists of Best Workplaces have been produced and published during 2005 and in the beginning of 2006. The workplaces appearing on the lists in each of the 15 countries are evaluated against one another to determine the list of 100 Best Workplaces in Europe, as well as the candidates for the Special Awards.

In May 2006, Great Place to Work® publishes the fourth list of the 100 Best Workplaces List in Europe. Back in 2002, the European Commission selected Great Place to Work® to conduct the research for the first-ever list of Europe's Best Workplaces and Special Awards. The list and award winners were announced in Brussels in March 2003.

Based on the success of the Best Workplace List and the positive feedback from both companies and national stakeholders, Great Place to Work® continued this work in 2003 without financial support from the European Commission and has since developed the contest to a yearly repeating event. Great Place to Work® has published 100 Best Workplaces List in Europe in April 2004, April 2005 and now in May 2006.

Since 2003, Great Place to Work® has developed to a European-wide operating organisation with Great Place to Work® Institutes in 15 European countries. In the coming years, Great Place to Work® plans to extend its operations to all new EU-Member states in Eastern Europe and other European countries.

### What makes a great workplace?

The identification of the best workplaces is based on more than 20 years of research conducted by journalists Robert Levering and Milton Moskowitz. In Levering's book on the subject<sup>2</sup> he defines a great workplace as a place where employees:

- Trust the people they work for,
- Have pride in what they do, and
- Enjoy the people they work with

Related to this model, Levering co-founded the Great Place to Work® Institute which developed an employee survey<sup>3</sup> and a management questionnaire<sup>4</sup> used with thousands of organisations throughout the world. Since 1998 these have formed the basis for the US Best Companies Lists published by *Fortune* magazine, as well as similar lists produced in 29 countries in North and South America, Europe and Asia.

### How are the Best Workplace Lists compiled?

We ask the employees for their opinion. All national lists of Best Workplaces are primarily based on the opinions of employees working at participating organisations, who are asked to rate their workplace according to a series of qualitative criteria. The lists aim to identify

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<sup>2</sup> A Great Place to Work: What Makes Some Employers So Good - And Most So Bad? By Robert Levering, 2000 edition published by Great Place to Work® Institute, Inc.

<sup>3</sup> Great Place to Work® Trust Index©

<sup>4</sup> Great Place to Work® Culture Audit©



and positively recognise companies that provide good and healthy work environments and to set an exemplary professional benchmark for others.

Each participating organisation is asked to conduct an employee survey<sup>5</sup>, fill out a management questionnaire<sup>6</sup> and send in supplementary material about their corporate culture and organisational practices.

The overall total score of a company based on the employee- and the management survey determines whether or not national listed companies qualify for the European list.

A range of Multinational Companies (MNC's) have participated across Europe and many of them made it both to national lists and the European List. If several subsidiaries from different national countries made it to the European list, the company is only mentioned once. The average of the total score of different national subsidiaries determines the company's position on the European list. The country of origin is specified for all companies on the list. A multinational may have qualified for the European list in several countries in which case these countries will be mentioned next to the company name.

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<sup>5</sup> Great Place to Work® Trust Index©

<sup>6</sup> Great Place to Work® Cultural Audit©

## About Great Place to Work® Institute

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Great Place to Work® Institute has been identifying and researching great workplaces for 25 years. It started with a book on the “100 Best Companies to Work for in America” and now we are carrying out annual studies of the Best Workplaces in 29 countries worldwide. In Europe we have offices in 15 countries.

It is our mission to build a better society by helping companies transform their workplaces.

Based on learning from our work with best companies, Great Place to Work® Institute also provides consulting services that can help you to measure, benchmark, and positively impact employees’ experiences in your organisation.

Our commitment to our clients:

- We are honest with you about what we see as strengths and opportunities, and work with you to leverage or improve those areas.
- We approach our work with the highest level of integrity using time tested tools, rigorous analysis, and the Great Place to Work® Model® as our guide.
- Our research has shown that trust between managers and employees is the primary defining characteristic of the very best workplaces and a key contributor to financial benefits. As trust experts, we can teach you how to put theory into practice and experience the benefits of being a great workplace.

How can we help? We can partner with you to:

- Gain senior level commitment to create a great workplace
- Measure employee perceptions of the current workplace culture
- Understand the strengths that already exist in your workplace and how to build on them
- Recommend key areas for change that will provide the most leverage in creating a great workplace
- Understand and communicate where you are on the journey to becoming a great workplace
- Show how you compare to and can learn from the best workplaces
- Provide an integrated, company-wide action-planning system
- Train managers to create a trust-building environment
- Review progress throughout the transformation process and understand lessons learned

To learn more about Great Place to Work® Institute and how we can help you create a great workplace within your organisation, please visit us on the web [www.greatplacetowork-europe.com](http://www.greatplacetowork-europe.com) or take contact with your local Great Place to Work® Institute office:

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