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GREAT PLACES TO WORK

Chances to learn and grow

Good pay

Generous benefits

Stimulating work

Flexible schedules

Rewards and recognition



PLUS
The secrets of getting ahead at any job and tales of the area's worst bosses

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Great Places to Work

Companies, nonprofits, and federal agencies where you'll find interesting work, opportunities to learn and grow, flexible schedules, and generous pay and benefits

Forget the sluggish economy, government shutdowns, and furloughs. Information-technology firms in Washington are hiring like crazy—making the competition for talent stiff. “A good person can have 10 to 15 job offers if they want, easy,” says Rashad Moore, CEO of Software Theoretic, one of this year’s great places to work. “I personally—and I own the company—get e-mails from two or three other companies a day asking if I want to come work with them. So I imagine my team members are getting those, too.”

To attract top candidates, many IT firms offer generous salary and benefits—from fully paid health-care premiums to unlimited vacation—and make sure employees are content. It’s no surprise that many of this year’s 50 Great Places to Work are IT firms.

How We Choose the Winners

Any employer interested in consideration first filled out an application asking about everything from vacation time to charitable outreach and employee turnover. We then surveyed a sizable sampling of each firm’s employees to see if they enjoyed working there. Worker satisfaction is a major part of each company’s score. An employer can offer great-sounding benefits, but it isn’t a great place to work if the staff doesn’t feel supported, rewarded, and heard.

Government agencies were chosen differently. To determine good federal workplaces, we consulted with the Partnership for Public Service, which does its own ranking of best places to work as a public servant.

What Makes Employees Happy?

“Many people think salary is the deciding factor about job satisfaction, and no doubt it does rank highly,” says Leora Lawton of TechSociety Research in Berkeley, California, who designed our surveys and analyzed the data. But she says salary is “second to having a job that provides opportunity for career development and advancement. Personal and professional growth is what gives people a sense of purpose.

“The next important driver of job satisfaction is what one could call the ‘warmth’ of the office: Does it feel like a place you want to go to? Do you get along with the people you work with?”

Another key factor is how much flexibility an employer allows.

“Flexibility, in many ways, is part and parcel of what it means to have a good job—one that allows you to balance other parts of your life,” Lawton says. For many workers, being able to come and go as needed and the ability to telecommute correlated most with satisfaction.

We considered more than 200 workplaces and compared like with like—small companies with other small companies, nonprofits with nonprofits, and so on. Competition this year was the toughest since we started Great Places to Work in 1999, as more workplaces seem to be paying attention to what makes an employer of choice.

Just because an employer isn’t on this list doesn’t mean it’s not a great place to work—many choose not to apply. And just because a company can be found here doesn’t mean it’s right for everyone. But the good news is that most of our winners are hiring—because we also looked at how firms are faring in this economic climate.

Home Builders Institute

NORTHWEST DC

275 EMPLOYEES

At HBI, turnover is low and the average tenure eight years. What keeps people there is the mission: The nonprofit trains youth from underserved communities and others in the building trades and promotes careers in construction. Employees also appreciate the autonomy management gives them to do their jobs. A bonus: HBI contributes 8 percent of every employee’s salary to a 401(k) plan.

