

GREAT PLACE TO WORK®
INSTITUTE EUROPE

MAGAZINE

European Great Place to Work® Magazine, Spring 2009



1000

BEST

WORKPLACES IN EUROPE

Welcome

to the European **Great Place to Work®** Magazine!

It is our privilege to celebrate the winners of the Best Workplaces in Europe 2009, our annual list of the most outstanding companies to work for in 16 nations across Europe. These organisations represent the “best of the best” among European workplaces, as determined by employee surveys and a comprehensive evaluation of workplace practices.

In this publication, you'll read about some of the creative ways that these companies support their employees, whether by “rolling out the red carpet” to new hires, keeping everyone informed about the company's affairs, or providing training and recognition to help people grow in their jobs.

While our primary goal is to honor what makes these 100 companies so special, we also hope their stories will spark ideas, insight, and inspiration for other companies. After all, as the companies featured here have discovered, creating a great workplace can produce many business benefits, including higher levels of productivity, loyalty, and dedication among employees.

No matter where your organisation is on the “path” to becoming a great workplace, we welcome your interest and participation in our mission. The **Great Place to Work® Institute** is dedicated to building a better society by helping companies transform their workplaces. We offer a range of services – including consulting, surveys, research, and more – to help companies enrich their employees' lives while fostering a high level of trust across the organisation. We have 17 affiliates in Europe who can work with any size company – including many of those ranked among 100 Best Workplaces in Europe – to continue to improve their workplace – and enjoy the business benefits that result.

Again, to the 100 European organisations profiled in this list, congratulations – and for those not yet on this list, may the stories included here inspire you. We thank you for your interest, and encourage you to visit our web site, www.greatplacetowork-europe.com for more information about our organisation – and this process.

Sincerely,

Otto Zell
Director of Operations and Finance, Europe

Palle Ellemann Knudsen
Managing Director, Europe

Robert Levering
Co-founder

Ricardo Lange
CEO, Global

Great Place to Work® Institute Europe
info@greatplacetowork-europe.com
Phone: +45 33321292
www.greatplacetowork-europe.com



table of contents

	2 Foreword	
	3 Table of contents	
	4 The Best Workplaces at a glance	
	5 Methodology	
7 Best Large Workplaces in Europe 2009		fairness
10 Top 3 Large Winner Case Stories Microsoft impuls Finanzmanagement Google		48 Special Award: “I AM PAID FAIRLY FOR THE WORK I DO” SMA Solar Technology FedEx Express Microsoft
14 Staying up in the downturn		51 Culture Counts
16 The Business Case		53 The Value of Difference
18 Best Small and Medium-Sized Workplaces in Europe 2009		55 Special Interview with Piscines Ideales
21 Top 3 Small Winner Case Stories Piscines Ideales Reaktor Innovations ConSol Software		pride
24 Steady as a Rock		57 Special Award: “THIS IS NOT JUST A JOB” Coca-Cola Hilti Microsoft
26 Cultural Champions		59 Rolling out the Red Carpet
		61 Building Meaning
		63 Giving Back
		credibility
30 Special Award: “I AM TOLD THE TRUTH” Bristol-Myers Squibb Cisco 3M		33 Staying In Touch
		35 Together Online
36 Special Interview with TANDBERG		camaraderie
		65 Special Award: “WE HAVE FUN” SimCorp Cushman & Wakefield Trodat
		67 Hand in hand
		70 Company Index
38 Special Award: “I AM TREATED AS A PERSON” ATP Denmark Piscines Ideales Google		71 Where do I find Great Place to Work® Institute
		41 Striking a Balance
		44 In Praise of Praise
47 Share the Wealth of Knowledge		

METHODOLOGY

Just where do these lists of the Best Workplaces in Europe come from?

THIS MAGAZINE features lists of the 50 Best Small and Medium-Sized Workplaces in Europe (those smaller than 500 employees) and the 50 Best Large Workplaces in Europe. So just where do these lists come from?

Any non-governmental organisation with more than 50 employees can apply to appear on the list of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe. All companies are evaluated with the same basic methodology: an extensive employee survey known as the "Trust Index[®]" accounts for 2/3 of the final score, while an independent evaluation of management practices known as a "Culture Audit[®]" accounts for the last 1/3.

They are produced by a global organisation called the Great Place to Work[®] Institute (GPTW), which has been identifying and researching great workplaces for the past 25 years, ever since Robert Levering and Milton Moskowitz, two journalists based in San Francisco, California, wrote their bestselling book 100 Best Companies to Work for in America. Their first list of the Best Workplaces in Europe was supported by the European Commission, which sought to help the European business community to develop great workplaces to improve people's quality of life and elevate the competitiveness of European industry.

Companies are divided by size into two categories, resulting in lists of the 50 Best Large Workplaces and the 50 Best Small and Medium Workplaces in Europe. These lists are compiled from the highest scoring companies across 16 European nations (Poland will publish the national list after the European list and is therefore not included); companies represented on more than one list (i.e. multi-national companies) have their scores averaged for consideration for the European list.

Today, the Great Place to Work[®] Institute conducts national workplace studies in more than 40 nations around the world, including 17 national studies in Europe, which are carried out by a network of affiliate offices. For the 2008-2009 edition of the European Best Workplaces Study, more than 1,350 European companies participated, representing approximately more than 1.1 million employees who participated by filling out the Trust Index[®] (an employee survey) and providing anonymous, written opinions about their organisations.

The methodology for evaluating workplaces derives from the Great Place to Work[®] Model[®]. According to this model, the definition of a great workplace is an organisation where employees trust the people they work for, have pride in what they do, and enjoy the people they work with. Trust is broken down into three components – credibility, respect, and fairness – which are considered in addition to employees' sense of pride in their work and organisation, and the camaraderie that they share with those they work with.

ABOUT THE GREAT PLACE TO WORK[®] INSTITUTE'S TRUST INDEX[®] SURVEY AND CULTURE AUDIT[®]

The majority of the information in this publication came from two sources, both of which are required of companies to be considered by the Great Place to Work[®] Institute to appear on the list of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe.

The Trust Index[®] is a standardised survey tool developed by the Great Place to Work[®] Institute Inc. The survey includes 57 statements related to the five dimensions of the Great Place to Work[®] Model[®]. Employees respond anonymously to each statement on a scale of 1-5: "almost always untrue", "often untrue", "sometimes untrue", "sometimes true", "often true" and "almost always true". Random, but representative samples of all employees – including managers – are invited to complete the survey. In smaller organisations, all employees receive a survey.

The Culture Audit[®] is a detailed overview of a company's value system, management practices, and policies, and is usually completed by the HR manager and other senior leaders. The Culture Audit[®] includes both statistical data and open-ended questions and is evaluated based on a standardised methodology developed by Great Place to Work[®] Institute.

A LEARNING JOURNEY

Many companies use the Culture Audit[®] and Trust Index[®] Survey as tools to improve their organisations.

Many companies have found that annual participation in the Great Place to Work[®]'s Trust Index[®] Survey and Culture Audit[®] process helps them to gain valuable insights about their organisations. By monitoring trends in Trust Index[®] Scores, and by describing their workplace culture in detail, as is required for the Culture Audit[®], companies gain a deep insight to their own culture and a conceptual structure to drive forward positive changes.

For example, when **Jones Lang LaSalle**, an Irish business and commercial real estate agency, participated in the list-process last year, the company was quite pleased with its scores. But it also found that its Trust Index[®] scores were lower among employees 25 years or younger or who had fewer than two years of service, particularly in the areas of communication and recognition.

"To be honest this did come as a shock to the management and HR team and we were eager to investigate," the company told us this year in their Culture Audit[®].

To follow up, Jones Lang LaSalle managers convened focus groups of employees and used statements from the Trust Index[®] Survey as a starting point for discussion. These discussions resulted in the development of a new internal newsletter at Jones Lang LaSalle Ireland, as well as new informal opportunities for employees to meet with managers at all levels.

Similarly, managers at 3M use the Trust Index[®] Survey, as well as Great Place to Work[®] Benchmark Reports (by which any company can compare their results to those of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe or other relevant benchmarks), to identify opportunities for improvement, which has resulted in increased payouts in the profit sharing program for employees.

2009 STUDY:

Participating companies: 1,350. (8% growth from last year)

People surveyed (surveys filled out correctly): 287,166.

Employees with the participating companies: 1,104,145.

What industries do the Best Workplaces in Europe come from?

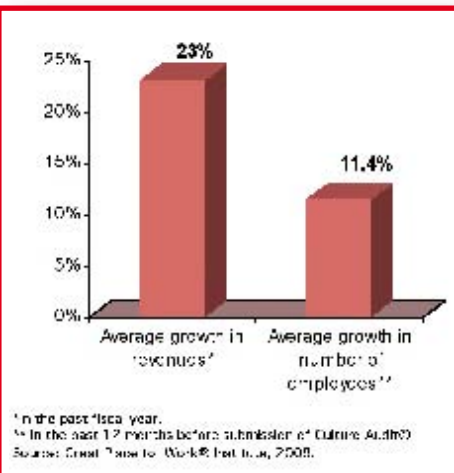


Source: 100 Best Workplaces in Europe 2009 by the Great Place to Work[®] Institute

BEST WORK PLACES AT A GLANCE

SHARE OF THE BEST WORKPLACES IN EUROPE 2003-2009

Percentage of national companies on the European list of Best Workplaces between 2003 and 2009.



Number of people employed at the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe at the end of 2008: 171,428 people

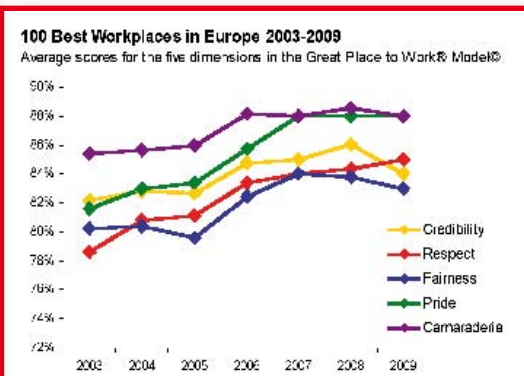
93% confirmed that: "Taking everything into account, I would say this is a great place to work"

**Average voluntary employee turnover: 9%.
Average rate of absenteeism: 2.3%**

Average number of job applications received per year, per existing employee: 6.2

Average number of hours of formal training received each year by employees: 68 hours

Oldest company on the list: The Austrian branch of Worthington Cylinders can date its history back to 1817 – 192 years!





50 Best Large Workplaces in Europe 2009

(500+ employees)

Microsoft

1 **Microsoft** | Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK | 12,544 employees | growth 9.8%
www.microsoft.com | Software | 2003 (4 countries), 2004 (12 countries), 2005 (12 countries), 2006 (8 countries), 2007 (12 countries), 2008 (14 countries)

impuls
FINANZMANAGEMENT

2 **impuls Finanzmanagement** | Germany | 930 employees | growth 50.0%
www.impulsonline.de | Health Insurance | 2007, 2008

Google

3 **Google** | Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland | 648 employees | growth 33.0%
www.ConSol.de | Information Technology | 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008

CISCO

4 **Cisco** | Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, UK | 5,890 employees | growth 2.7%
www.cisco.com | Network and video Technology | 2004 (DK), 2006 (Ger.), 2007 (Ger.), 2008 (5 countries)

FATER S.p.A.

5 **Fater** | Italy | 967 employees | growth -3.3%
www.fater.it | Production of Personal and Household goods | 2004, 2005, 2006

3M

6 **3M** | Germany (3M Deutschland), Germany (3M ESPE) | 4,180 employees | growth 2.0%
www.mmm.de | Production of a broad variety of products including office supplies | 2006, 2007, 2008

SMA

7 **SMA Solar Technology** | Germany | 2,613 employees | growth 62.9%
www.sma.de | Production of solar energy systems | 2006

accenture

8 **Accenture** | Finland, Ireland, Sweden | 3,463 employees | growth 8.1%
www.accenture.com | Consultancy | 2007(Ire.), 2008 (4 countries)

SAS | THE SOFTWARE INSTITUTE

9 **SAS Institute** | Belgium, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden | 794 empl. | growth 7.5%
www.sas.com | Software and IT consulting | 2005, 2007, 2008 (3 countries)

e-on

10 **E.ON Führungsgesellschaften** | Germany | 3,932 employees | growth 5.9%
www.eon.com | Energy company | 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008

NetApp
Dr. Ingrid Isenhardt

11 **NetApp** | Germany, UK | 710 employees | growth 15.4%
www.netapp.com | Storage/Data Management

GORE
Creative Technologies
Wattville

12 **W.L. Gore** | France, Germany, Italy | 1,514 employees | growth 4.6%
www.gore.com | Production of GORE-TEX products | 2005 & 2006 (Ger.), 2007, 2008 (2 countries)

randstad

13 **Randstad Group Belgium** | Belgium | 1,571 employees | growth -0.9%
www.randstad.be | Staffing & Recruitment | 2007, 2008

DOW CORNING

14 **Dow Corning** | Belgium | 627 employees | growth -3.7%
www.dowcorning.com | Production of silicones

ADMIRAL

15 **Admiral Group** | UK | 2,704 employees | growth 1.6%
www.admiralgroup.co.uk | Auto Insurance | 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008

atp=

16 **ATP** | Denmark | 744 employees | growth -0.1%
www.atp.dk | Pension and fund management

50 Best Large Workplaces in Europe 2009

(500+ employees)



17 **PricewaterhouseCoopers** | Ireland | 1,952 employees | growth 6.7%
www.pwc.com | Consultancy



18 **Coca-Cola HBC** | Greece, Italy | 4,691 employees | growth -4.9%
www.coca-colahbc.it | Production of soft drinks | 2006, 2007, 2008 (It)



19 **Irma** | Denmark | 2,181 employees | growth 7.1%
www.irma.dk | Supermarket chain | 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008



20 **Sparda-Bank München** | Germany | 631 employees | growth 6.9%
www.sparda-m.de | Banking | 2008



21 **Alka Forsikring** | Denmark | 588 employees | growth 16.7%
www.alka.dk | General Insurance



22 **Deloitte** | Ireland | 1,165 employees | growth 23.3%
www.deloitte.com/ie | Consultancy | 2006, 2008



23 **EnergiMidt** | Denmark | 531 employees | growth 6.2%
www.energimidt.dk | Energy company



24 **Trodat** | Austria | 629 employees | growth 1.1%
www.trodat.net | Production of stamps and supplies for printing



25 **NetDesign** | Denmark | 502 employees | growth 117.9%
www.netdesign.dk | Network and internet technology



26 **DIS AG** | Germany | 834 employees | growth -1.6%
www.dis-ag.com | Staffing & Recruitment | 2005, 2008



27 **McDonald's** | Belgium, Denmark | 6,138 employees | growth 5.7%
www.mcdonalds.com | Restaurant chain | 2008 (2 countries)



28 **Beaverbrooks the Jeweller** | UK | 821 employees | growth 11.5%
www.beaverbrooks.co.uk | Jeweller stores | 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008



29 **Elica** | Italy | 1,388 employees | growth -5.1%
www.elica.com | Furniture and design | 2008



30 **Vitae** | The Netherlands | 1,271 employees | growth 7.3%
www.vitae.nl | Staffing & Recruitment | 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008



31 **EMC Ireland** | Ireland | 1,717 employees | growth 5.2%
http://uk.emc.com | Storage/Data Management



32 **Hilti Deutschland** | Germany | 1,650 employees | growth 9.9%
www.hilti.com | Production of tools for construction



33 **FedEx Express** | Belgium, Italy | 1,742 employees | growth 0.6%
www.fedex.com | Courier service | 2004(Ger.), 2005(Bel.), 2007(Bel.), 2008 (2 countries)



34 **Techniker Krankenkasse** | Germany | 10,573 employees | growth 0.7%
www.tk-online.de | Health Insurance



35 **SAP** | Denmark, Finland, Germany | 19,151 employees | growth 7.0%
www.sap.com | Business software | 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 (Ger.)



36 **Diageo** | Ireland, Portugal, UK | 1,186 employees | growth 6.2%
www.diageo.com | Production and distribution of alcoholic beverages | 2003 (3 countries), 2004 (3 countries), 2005 (Sp.), 2006 (Ire.), 2007 (Ire.)



37 **Hewlett-Packard** | Austria | 729 employees | growth 4.3%
www.hp.com/hpinfo | IT Consulting and hardware | 2004, 2005 (2 countries), 2006



38 **Vector Informatik** | Germany | 651 employees | growth 13.2%
www.vector.com | 2005



39 **Capgemini sd&m** | Germany | 1,659 employees | growth 14.5%
www.de.capgemini-sdm.com | Software and IT consulting



40 **Ciba Vision** | Germany | 928 employees | growth 4.7%
www.cibavision.de | Production of Personal and Household goods | 2006, 2007, 2008



41 **Statkraft** | Norway | 1,154 employees | growth -8.7%
www.statkraft.no | Energy company | 2008



42 **Leroy Merlin** | France | 16,331 employees | growth -9.0%
www.leroymerlin.fr | Retailer for garden and construction



43 **hulp in huis** | Belgium | 720 employees | 77.7%
www.hulpinhuis.be | Home service | 2008



44 **SBK Siemens-Betriebskrankenkasse** | Germany | 1,267 employees | growth 23.6%
www.sbk.org | Health Insurance



45 **Wolters Kluwer España** | Spain | 1,016 employees | growth 11.5%
www.wolterskluwer.es | Software and IT consulting



46 **Philips Austria** | Austria | 804 employees | growth -18.3%
www.philips.at | Electronics | 2005, 2006 (2 countries)



47 **AECOM (Faber Maunsel)** | UK | 3,039 employees | growth 42.2%
www.aecom.com | Consultancy



48 **Magna Powertrain** | Austria | 2,069 employees | growth 10.5%
www.magnapowertrain.com | Supplier for automotive industry



49 **ING-DiBa** | Germany | 3,047 employees | growth 1.3%
www.ing-diba.de | Banking



50 **CSU Total Care** | The Netherlands | 9,321 employees | growth -6.6%
www.csu.nl | Security and Health care services | 2007

top 3

LARGE WINNER CASE STORIES

#1: Microsoft (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK)

The global software giant Microsoft reaches the top spot by helping its people to “realize their full potential.”

Microsoft, the global software maker with about 100,000 employees around the world, has earned the top spot on the 2009 list of the **50 Best Large Workplaces** in Europe.

Just what does it take to get to the top of this list? A diverse mix of programs designed to promote high levels of trust, pride, and camaraderie among employees and managers alike – and a singular mission that unites the company’s 100,000 employees around the world: To enable people and businesses throughout the world to realize their full potential.

Because apparently, the people who benefit the most from Microsoft’s focus on helping people to “realize their full potential” are Microsoft team members themselves.

“Working in a company that serves more than one billion people every day makes us feel special,” wrote one member of Microsoft Portugal on this year’s **Trust Index® Survey**, in a comment indicative of generally gushing statements of praise shared through employees’ comments. “It gives us enormous pride to be part of a company that looks forward to changing the world for the better by offering people the means to develop their potential.”

IN THE DOOR

For Microsoft to succeed in helping others to realize their full potential, it knows that it must find the right types of people. Thus, Microsoft uses a highly focused hiring process that

screens for people who demonstrate four “foundational competencies.” These traits are not related to computer skills, but rather speak to people’s ability to get along and advance the business forward: confidence; cross-boundary collaboration; impact and influence (the ability to generate support from others to achieve the desired business outcomes), and interpersonal awareness (the desire to understand other people).

As Bill Gates has said, “We set high standards for hiring at Microsoft. As we become better and better interviewers, those standards become more refined.”

Once the right people are found, the company integrates them through a systematic process focused on the culture, mission, history, benefits, and business of Microsoft. It also introduces them to the bounty of services and programs available to them: at Microsoft UK, for example, new hires are welcomed by a friendly Citizenship Team that enlists them to join volunteer activities, and by a Social Club that informs them about the company’s many clubs and activities. This warm welcome extends to the highest levels: within a few months on the job, every new hire has an opportunity to have a meal with their General Manager.

IN THE LOOP

As Microsoft understands, today’s competitive market requires organisations in which people are allowed to, question the status quo, and feel comfortable relaxing and sharing ideas. Thus the company uses a wide range of technologies – including e-mail newsletters, internal web sites, blogs, webcasts, and **Really**

Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds – to help people stay informed with company news. Managers also use the company’s own software-based tools to garner feedback from employees through surveys and polls, and they also hold in-person focus groups, employee forums, and “communities of interest” to collect input and ideas from across the organisation.

And Microsoft also supports people to realize their potential by learning directly from people in the organisation whom they admire. The company’s mentoring program has grown to encompass 18,500 participants in 72 different countries, with employees learning through one-to-one relationships with mentors from outside their chain of command. The company provides an umbrella of support of this program, including specialized training and online tools to help mentors and mentees get the most out of their relationships.

IN THE FAMILY

For employees to realize their “full potential,” they must succeed in their personal lives as well as at work – something Microsoft supports through countless programs focused on promoting work-life balance.

For a company focused on computers, they maintain a strong human touch: consider the company’s programs for new mothers in the UK. First-time moms can sign up for the “**Bump Club**,” a network at Microsoft UK dedicated to helping expectant mothers prepare for the birth of their first baby, and then continue on with the “**Bump to Balance**” club, which helps mothers ease back into their jobs. They can also use specially allocated “**Keeping in Touch Days (KIT)**” to tap into work occasionally until they return, just to stay up to speed on their business projects. And once they do return, they can stay close to their kids at the company’s onsite nursery.

Such programs not only benefit the mental and physical health of these women employees and promote a sense of appreciation, but hold on to the investments they have made in these employees: 95% of women who take maternity leave from Microsoft choose to return to work.



THE NEW WORLD OF WORK

In 2005, Bill Gates launched an initiative called “The New World of Work.” While this program was intended to help organisations around the world to improve their work processes and productivity, it is especially alive and well at Microsoft itself.

Through this program, Microsoft people are given laptops and smart phones to be able to work from anywhere, at any time. About 90% of people who work at Microsoft use flexible scheduling, and many work from home one or more days a week.

“The everlasting search for improvement in how we work and the wish to be authentic in everything is unique for a commercial company like this one,” wrote an employee from Microsoft Netherlands on the Great Place to Work® Trust Index® Survey. “The New World of Work connects vision with technology and behaviour and leads to a better balance between work life and private life.”

An employee at Microsoft Belgium shares enthusiasm for this program: “The New World of Work gives us complete flexibility to determine in a creative way how to do our projects and when we want to work,” she wrote. “This gives me energy every day. It allows me to treat my family the way I want. It gives me the opportunity to do a number of things regarding my health and sporting activities. The way things are delegated allows me to work in a flexible way and to combine my job at Microsoft with my tasks as a mother.”

Learn more about Microsoft in the interview with the HR Director of Western Europe, **Frank Abbenhujs**, on page 27.

3

LARGE WINNER CASE STORIES

#2: impuls Finanzmanagement AG (Germany)

The number two company on this year's list of the 50 **Best Large Workplaces** in Europe is **impuls Finanzmanagement**, a 930-person financial services company based in Gersthofen, Germany that has 30 branches and that earns its revenues by selling insurance on commission for other insurance companies, including health insurance (which accounts for 65% of revenues), private pension schemes, and disability and accident insurance.

Thanks to a culture that thrives on both internal competition and a strong sense of unity, impuls has made the list of the 100 Best Workplaces in Germany – and in Europe – for the past three years. The company has also been honored as the #1 private health insurance agency in 2007 and 2008 by a capital investment magazine called *Cash*, and the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Bavaria ranked the company as one of the fastest growing in the region.

In this "work-hard, play-hard" culture, employees are recognized and rewarded for their extraordinary performance. Impuls stages a variety of sales competitions throughout the year, handing out rewards such as watches and bottles of champagne. Bonuses are given for "Sales Excellence," for example, and for the most sales by a new hire. The top ten selling employees each year are treated to luxury cruises to such places as the United Arab Emirates, Dubai, and Mauritius. Awards for hitting sales goals are given out monthly (two-thirds of all employees went home with a bottle of champagne last year).

While there's a sense of friendly competition when it comes to sales, it's "one for all and all for one" at impuls when someone is in need. Last year, when one employee faced a personal crisis, the company gave her time off and helped her to find an apartment. Another employee received the support of the company's legal department to solve a personal issue. And when an employee's pet died unexpectedly, the employee was released from work for a couple of days to recover.

impuls also makes sure that families share in this unity. Every other year, the company organises a gala event to say "thank you" to employees' partners (and business partners), and the annual summer party is always a family event. When employees receive travel awards, the company always pays for a partner to come along. And family members are also free to use the company's fitness center.

impuls keeps its people working well together by bringing problems out into the open in a healthy, respectful way. One unique program is driven by the idea that "everybody can tell anybody what they think." In this workshop, employees are asked to talk openly about any "bad vibrations" or personal conflicts they have with their teams and/or managers; this allows them to air issues so that they may be addressed directly.

To celebrate its employee culture, impuls published a book called, "We Are impuls," which is given to every new hire in the company. The core element of the book is a summary of employees' responses to the **Great Place to Work® Institute's Trust Index® Survey** question, "What makes impuls a great place to work?"

#3: Google

(Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland)

"Innovation" is something that companies around the world seek, but few are able to consistently generate. And yet somehow **Google**, the global search engine and online software company, seems to come up with revolutionary products all the time.

Take one look at Google's workplace culture, however, and it becomes clear that the high degree of innovation is no accident: the company nurtures creativity by encouraging and empowering its people to think freely in all areas of their lives.

A key ingredient of innovation is "breaking the rules," and at Google there are few restrictions on how people behave. There is no dress code, and employees' children and dogs are welcome in the offices. Googlers even receive a budget to decorate their work areas as they please. People can work at home when they need to, and they enjoy generous time off policies. In fact, one of the few restrictions at Google is that employees are required to limit how much vacation time they may roll over from year to year to ensure everyone takes the time they need to "recharge" their creative batteries.

"The company goes out of their way to make employees happy," wrote an employee from Google Switzerland on the **Trust Index® Survey**. "[Google] puts a lot of effort in making sure every aspect of the work environment is friendly, fair, fun and generous. This company doesn't just compensate its employees, it actually cares about them."

Google's work environment is also designed to promote relaxation and the free flow of ideas. The meeting rooms often have bean bags instead of chairs, and the white boards all around the office are designed to capture creative ideas, even if they are often used to keep score during table football, billiards, or other tournaments. The Zurich engineering division has even gone to the extreme of designing meeting rooms to look like a Swiss chalet, an old library, and an aquarium, in which employees can lie on red foam and stare at fish.

The push for creativity even extends to the cafeteria: while other companies would consider it generous enough to give employees three free meals per day, at Google, employees are asked to suggest creatively inspired meals they would like to see on the menu.

"Google understands that we need to relax and be healthy to be productive," wrote one Swiss Googler on this year's **Great Place to Work® Trust Index® Survey**. "That's a great employer!"

Perhaps most importantly, though, Google gives its people the breathing room required to think outside the box as part of their jobs. The company's engineers are allowed to dedicate 20% of their time to "go do something new," which has yielded many of the company's most innovative products, such as Google News.

"From the amazing brain power that is concentrated here to the ground-breaking innovations that we bring to the market, I'm proud to be a (very modest) part of this endeavour!" wrote an employee at Google Switzerland.



STAYING UP IN THE DOWNTURN



Milton Moskowitz is a journalist, author, and editor who pioneered, with Robert Levering, the best workplace lists with their 1984 book, *"The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America."* He contributed this article about the global economic crisis and its impact on companies around the world, including some of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe.

No company is immune to the economic crisis now sweeping the world. While the United States is at the center of the storm, because of the interconnectedness of a global economy, ripple effects are occurring everywhere – and the end is not yet in sight. Each day brings new tidings of woe. As this magazine was being put together, these signposts emerged:

- The International Monetary Fund estimated that financial institutions in the US, Europe, and Asia – banks, insurance companies, pension funds, hedge funds, equity funds – would eventually have to write down \$4.1 trillion in the value of their loans and other assets. In fact, the IMF said that if European and American banks had to take these write-downs right away, it **"would wipe out their common equity altogether."**
- In March of this year Japan suffered its first annual trade deficit in nearly 30 years. Exports to the US dropped 51 percent.
- In Germany, finance minister Peter Steinbrück predicted that the country's gross national product is likely to plunge by 5 percent this year.
- In Ireland, unemployment rose to 11 percent.
- The British economy is expected to shrink by 3.5 percent this year.
- Sweden said that its economy this year was headed for the worst recession since 1940.

Against this crescendo of appalling news, companies – both big and small – have had to cope with diminished expectations. It's not only banks and other financial institutions that have been affected. With the drying up of credit, customers have cut back on their buying. As a result, retail sales have slumped. At the same time, manufacturers of all kinds, from automobiles to computers, have experienced a slowdown in sales, causing them to downsize their payrolls and hold off on expansion. Caution is the watchword.

In the United States, where such venerable banking firms as Merrill Lynch, Bear Stearns, and Lehman Brothers disappeared from sight and AIG, the world's largest insurance company, became a ward of the state, the *Great Place to Work® Institute* polled all the applicants to its 2009 survey of the 100 Best Companies to Work for in America to find out how they have been affected by the recession and what steps they have taken to support their employees. The responses were gratifying in that they highlighted the various ways these companies were rallying to cut costs and help employees weather the storm. To

reduce head count, furniture maker Herman Miller offered generous early retirement packages, and to encourage employees to bike to work, the company subsidized the purchase of a bike by \$100. At Shared Technologies, a web hosting firm, the CEO's salary was cut by 50 percent and bonuses to senior managers were eliminated. The Four Seasons hotel chain sent a memo to HR managers across the company asking them to specify how they were stopping programs **"not significant to the success of the hotel"** and starting programs **"to reduce labor costs with a minimum impact on the employee."**

Two companies on the US list – grocery chains Whole Foods Market and Publix – expanded in the teeth of the recession. Whole Foods opened 20 new stores last year, and Publix opened 79 in addition to acquiring 49 others from Albertsons. Whole Foods began offering reduced-price coupons to customers, and according to the *Wall Street Journal*, Publix, an employee-owned company, didn't lay off anyone and lowered its prices **"in hopes of keeping its existing customers happy and attracting new ones."**

Perhaps the most spectacular recession-driven action was the one taken by New York law firm Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher, & Flom. The firm offered its 1,300 lawyers an opportunity to take a year off while continuing to get one-third of their salary, which in most cases means between \$60,000 and \$80,000 a year.

Bob Lee, chief executive of the *Great Place to Work® Institute* Ireland, believes that governments could benefit by adopting the same principles that guide the companies on the best workplace lists. **"We Irish are a resilient people,"** said Lee, "and we can get through this current crisis. We've dealt with far worse before. We're each prepared to make sacrifices and play our part. We can deal with the scandals. We can live with the bad news. But we can't live without optimism or hope, and without trust there can be no hope. So what's to be done? The same basic principles that make a company 'great' hold the key to repairing our damaged society. Because 'trust' is a basic human need, our *Great Place to Work® Model®* can just as easily serve as a blueprint for creating a great country by thinking of 'government' as 'management' and 'citizens' instead of 'employees.'"

To determine how European companies are dealing with the European crisis, *Great Place to Work®* affiliates surveyed applicant com-

panies, and results reinforced the responses of companies in the United States. Optimum, a Norwegian financial advisor, reported that last year it anticipated the need to downsize and it closed two branches and laid off 12 employees. In addition, salaries were cut by 20 percent and everyday expenses by 40 percent. Such actions enabled the company to go from losing money in Q4 2008 to **"significant earnings in Q1 2009."** Heidi Nygjelten, HR director at Optimum, emphasized the importance of communicating to employees with **"clear and honest information."** She said: "We communicated both individually to groups as well as to the whole company before, during, and after the cost cuts. The result was an organization that understood why we did these measures, at the same time they were aware and ready to work harder to help save the company... We strongly believe that the best way to make people act responsibly is to involve all employees both in good and challenging times."

Worthington Cylinders, an Austrian maker of propane tanks and other types of pressure cylinders, is another company highly conscious of the importance of communications. Before the economic crisis erupted last year, it had been holding monthly meetings with employees; in February it moved the frequency up to every two weeks; and now it's on a weekly basis. And in response to slowing sales, the company reduced its manufacturing schedule from seven to five days a week.

SimCorp, a Copenhagen-based company that has more than 1,000 employees in 14 countries, supplies specialized software to financial services companies. Now on the German list of Best Workplaces, SimCorp told us that its sales have held up well but the economic crisis prompted it to postpone an international seminar it had planned for this year. This seminar was to bring together people from SimCorp offices in 14 countries. Their latest office was opened in Ukraine last year. The German office of SimCorp holds an **"info breakfast"** every Friday morning to bring employees up to date on all new developments. "We aim at giving the employees a realistic picture where they can have confidence in the future while not disguising that we are facing a difficult economic condition."

Four American companies with operations in Europe have had hiring freezes and layoffs since the start of the economic crisis. They are: Microsoft, Cisco, Adobe, and Cushman & Wakefield. Reporting from Portugal, commercial real estate broker Cushman & Wakefield said the firm had cut back on fringe benefits and reduced salaries by 7.5 percent in exchange for employees working three hours less a week. Graphics software supplier Adobe announced worldwide staff reductions of 600 people. The German office of Adobe imposed a freeze on travel and cuts in variable pay. In an interview with the *Financial Times*, Shantanu Narayen, CEO of Adobe, said the economic crisis presented an opportunity **"because the strong companies are going to get stronger."** Narayen added that the restructuring was

"painful" for Adobe but it helped to be transparent with employees. "We wanted to be in front with them and we outlined the measures we were taking. But, more importantly, we talked about the vision we still had for ourselves as a company to get people focused on the future and the vision we had for ourselves. And people responded magnificently."

Cisco Systems has used its video-conference capabilities throughout the economic crisis to communicate to employees across the world. Mark Hamberlin, European HR director for Cisco, disclosed that the company has begun charging for snacks and drinks formerly offered free of charge. Employees were told that cost reductions of this kind would help Cisco to avoid layoffs and there has been a strong understanding and support of this change. Finally, there is the global software giant, Microsoft, whose outposts made the European lists in all 16 countries this year. An interview with Frank Abbenhuijs, Microsoft's Senior HR Director for Western Europe, notes that the economic crisis caused the company to lay off 1,400 employees worldwide. "It takes leadership to deal with this crisis – visible and listening leaders open for dialogue," said Abbenhuijs. "We are very aware about not cutting down too much on the face-to-face meetings because these are the long-term investments in building trust."

In short, it can be said that the companies on the list of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe have been affected far less than other companies, particularly in the financial services sectors, but they have not escaped unscathed. What is perhaps different is that they are generally doing as much as possible to stave off layoffs and help their employees deal with the economic problems. And most importantly, they have stepped up their communications to their employees to retain their trust and insure that they retain the people they need to advance in the future.

A CORRELATION STUDY of the more than 250,000 surveys received in the 2008-09 Best Workplaces process in Europe shows that the strongest correlation between any individual statements and people's perception of a great workplace is to be found with the two statements showing reliability: **"management's actions match its words"** and **"management delivers on its promises"**. Also collaboration is in the top 3: **"Management genuinely seeks and responds to suggestions and ideas"**. Not surprising that people especially appreciate reliability in these times of crisis.



THE BUSINESS CASE

— by Palle Ellemann Knudsen —
 Managing Director, Great Place to Work® Institute Europe

Studies by the Great Place to Work® Institute and other researchers have shown what many of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe have known all along: being a great workplace can be great for a company's bottom line.

Human resource development is quickly becoming a key business driver in many companies. The HR Director is now often a member of the board and HR is getting more attention from business leaders across the organisation. It is no longer a surprise when a company's CEO places workplace issues on the same level as financial metrics.

The reason for this shift is easy to understand by looking at the list of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe, which includes such successful global companies as Microsoft, Google, Cisco, and Coca Cola. The link between the workplace and business performance seems obvious. But what exactly makes great workplaces perform well as businesses?

The Great Place to Work® Institute has analyzed a number of key metrics for the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe and compared them with the 100 companies in the study that had the lowest overall results in the Trust Index® Survey. ¹ A benchmark shows that the 100 Best consistently outperform the companies with the lower survey results in a number of areas: the 100 Best have grown at nearly twice the pace of the 100 Lowest; absenteeism is 70% higher at the 100 Lowest; and the 100 Best receive twice as many job applications than the 100 Lowest. The 100 Best also develop more new products, offer more training to employees, and experience lower voluntary employee turnover (only a small difference).

The 100 Best Workplaces in Europe managed to increase revenues in the past fiscal year by 23%, while only increasing their staff size by 11% on average. This means that the revenues per staff member during the past 12 months have increased by more than 10%.

In other words, a number of business benefits are realized by organisations where employees experience a high level of trust, pride, and camaraderie. These benefits include both enhanced value (i.e. growth in revenues) as well as cost savings (i.e. decreased absenteeism); all have the potential to lead to faster growth, improved productivity, and increased profitability. Indeed, while the European Best Workplaces study has not tracked profitability, other studies carried out by the Great Place to Work® Institute in the US, Germany, the UK, and Denmark consistently show that the Best Workplaces are more profitable than the market average. This is not rocket science, but simple logic: organisations perform better when management focuses on treating employees as people, offers them opportunities to grow, and gives them space to balance their work and private lives.

¹ The 100 companies with the lowest survey results do not represent the worst workplaces in Europe, as not all companies participate in this process; rather they merely represent opposite poles among the 1,350 European companies that took place in this study this year.

Key metrics comparison	100 Best	100 Lowest
Taking everything into account, I would say this is a great place to work	93%	54%
You can count on people to cooperate	89%	52%
Absenteeism per year	2.3%	3.9%
Hours of formal training per employee per year	68	35
Job applications per year per current staff member	6.2	3.2
Average Voluntary Employee Turnover	9.0%	9.2%
Introduced a new product within the past three years		
Average growth in staff (12 months before participating in list-process)	95%	89%
Growth in revenues (in latest reported fiscal year)	11.4%	4.1%
	23%	13%



VALUE-ADDED

- Improved productivity
- Faster growth
- More innovation
- More and better job applications
- Better reputation
- Better cooperation

COST REDUCTIONS

- Lower absenteeism
- Lower employee turnover
- Lower costs for hiring, induction, and training of new employees

According to the **Great Place to Work® Model®**, trust is the key driver for people's perception of their workplace and the commitment and engagement that they put into their work. When people trust the people they work for and with, they cooperate better with their colleagues, they walk the "extra mile" to provide excellent customer service, they recommend the company to their friends and family, and they share their best ideas to improve their company. When people feel pride in what they do and enjoy the people they work with, they are less likely to stay home pretending they are sick, and they stay with the company longer, which saves the company money for hiring and training new employees.

50 Best Small and Medium-Sized Workplaces in Europe 2009

(50-500 employees)



- 1 **Piscines Ideales** | Greece | 135 employees | growth 5.5%
www.piscinesideales.gr | Production and design of swimming pools | 2006, 2007, 2008
- 2 **Reaktor Innovations** | Finland | 100 employees | growth 15.7%
www.ri.fi | IT Consulting | 2008
- 3 **ConSol* Software** | Germany | 179 employees | growth 15.0%
www.ConSol.de | Software | 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008
- 4 **noventum consulting** | Germany | 71 employees | growth 15.8%
www.noventum.de | IT Consulting | 2008
- 5 **Middelfart Sparekasse** | Denmark | 174 employees | growth 2.2%
www.midspar.dk | Banking | 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008
- 6 **Creativ Company** | Denmark | 86 employees | 13.9%
www.cchobby.dk | Supplier for schools and daycare centres | 2008
- 7 **Roche Pharmaceuticals** | Denmark | 110 employees | growth 0.9%
www.roche.dk | Biotechnology & Pharmaceuticals | 2007, 2008
- 8 **&Samhoud** | The Netherlands | 66 employees | growth 21.9%
www.samhoud.nl | Management Consulting | 2008
- 9 **PentasyS** | Germany | 136 employees | growth -5.0%
www.pentasyS.de | IT Consulting | 2008
- 10 **Bristol-Myers Squibb** | Greece | 166 employees | growth -20.5%
www.bms-greece.gr | Pharmaceuticals
- 11 **Frøs Herreds Sparekasse** | Denmark | 127 employees | growth 1.6%
www.froes.dk | Banking | 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008
- 12 **Unimerco** | Denmark | 396 employees | growth 2.8%
www.unimerco.com | Production of tools | 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008
- 13 **Danone** | UK | 93 employees | growth 2.9%
www.danone.co.uk | Production of Food products
- 14 **Mjølner Informatics** | Denmark | 77 employees | growth 6.4%
www.mjolner.dk | IT Consulting | 2008
- 15 **Cultivator** | Denmark | 60 employees | growth -19.5%
www.cultivator.dk | Consultancy | 2005, 2006, 2007
- 16 **SimCorp** | Germany | 143 employees | growth 17.7%
www.simcorp.de | Software

50 Best Small and Medium-Sized Workplaces in Europe 2009

(50-500 employees)



- 17 **Jones Lang LaSalle** | Ireland | 71 employees | -6.5%
www.joneslanglasalle.ie | Real Estate services
- 18 **GlaxoSmithKline Pharma** | Denmark | 137 employees | growth -1.9%
www.glaxosmithkline.dk | Health Care and pharmaceuticals
- 19 **Baringa Partners** | UK | 97 employees | growth 51.9%
www.baringa.com | Management Consulting
- 20 **Sigmar Recruitment** | Ireland | 97 employees | growth 6.6%
www.sigmar.ie | Staffing & Recruitment | 2007, 2008
- 21 **Premier Group** | Ireland | 219 employees | growth 25.4%
www.premiergroup.ie | Staffing & Recruitment | 2007
- 22 **Impact International** | UK | 108 employees | growth 4.1%
www.impact-dtg.com | Consultancy | 2006, 2008
- 23 **Adobe Systems** | Germany | 254 employees | growth 12.4%
www.adobe.com/de | Software
- 24 **Autisme Center Vestsjælland** | Denmark | 250 employees | growth 39.1%
www.a-c-v.dk | Social Services for autistic people | 2006, 2007
- 25 **Softonic.com** | Spain | 130 employees | growth 25.8%
www.softonic.com | Information Technology
- 26 **Liberty Seguros** | Portugal | 413 employees | growth 1.3%
www.libertyseguros.pt | Insurance | 2007, 2008
- 27 **Cushman & Wakefield** | Portugal | 65 employees | growth 12.1%
www.cushmanwakefield.com | Real Estate | 2007, 2008
- 28 **Grupo Visual MS** | Spain | 58 employees | growth 8.3%
www.visualms.com | Information Technology
- 29 **QlikTech** | Germany | 71 employees | growth 19.4%
www.qliktech.de | Software
- 30 **Webstep** | Norway | 184 employees | growth 33.3%
www.webstep.no/dnn3 | IT Consulting
- 31 **Bain & Company** | Spain | 73 employees | growth 102.5%
www.bain.com | Management Consulting | 2005, 2008
- 32 **Kellogg's** | Spain | 200 employees | growth 5.0%
www.kelloggcompany.com | Production of Food products
- 33 **3 Step IT** | Finland | 86 employees | growth 22.9%
www.3stepit.com | IT Consulting | 2008

50 Best Small and Medium-Sized Workplaces in Europe 2009 (50-500 employees)



34 **National Instruments Corp** | UK | 80 employees | growth 5.2%
digital.ni.com/worldwide/uk.nsf/main?ReadForm | Test, measurement and control solutions



35 **TomTec Imaging Systems** | Germany | 114 employees | growth 8.6%
www.tomtec.de | Analytical tools for health care | 2007



36 **Optimum** | Norway | 64 employees | growth -13.5%
www.optimum.no | Financial consulting



37 **Schindlerhof, Klaus Kobjoll** | Germany | 73 employees | growth 2.0%
www.schindlerhof.de | Hotel | 2007, 2008



38 **Umoe Consulting** | Norway | 73 employees | growth 10.6%
www.umoeconsulting.no | IT Consulting



39 **Grundfos** | Germany | 459 employees | growth 1.4%
www.grundfos.com | Production of pumps | 2006, 2008



40 **TANDBERG** | Norway | 460 employees | growth 17.6%
www.tandberg.no | Video technology



41 **Euro Car Parks** | Ireland | 224 employees | growth 13.6%
www.eurocarparks.com | Parking company



42 **Plus Uitzendkrachten** | Belgium | 80 employees | growth 6.1%
www.plusuitzendkrachten.be | Staffing & Recruitment



43 **Mars Belgium** | Belgium | 325 employees | growth 4.9%
www.mars.be | Production of Food products



44 **Accent Jobs for People** | Belgium | 469 employees | growth 35.9%
www.accent.be | Staffing & Recruitment



45 **Stretch** | Sweden | 95 employees | growth 33.3%
www.stretch.se | IT Consulting



46 **ORMIT** | The Netherlands | 259 employees | growth 1.1%
www.ormit.nl | Staffing & Recruitment



47 **Worthington Cylinders** | Austria | 442 employees | growth 1.4%
www.worthingtoncylinders.com | Production of pressure cylinders



48 **Boer & Croon** | The Netherlands | 264 employees | growth 8.4%
www.boercroon.nl | Consultancy



49 **Everis Portugal** | Portugal | 154 employees | growth 37.2%
www.everis.com | IT Consulting



50 **Danube Hotel-Betriebsgesellschaft/Hotel Intercontinental**
Austria | 332 employees | growth -6.4%
www.ihg.com | Hotel

SME WINNER CASE STUDIES

#1: Piscines Ideales (Greece)

A Greek swimming pool company takes family spirit to the extreme.

Last year, Stelios Stavridis, the CEO of **Piscines Ideales**, a Greek business that designs, constructs, and maintains swimming pools, was scheduled to return from a business trip on the night before his birthday. When he arrived at his house late at night, he found a group of his company's employees, with birthday hats, whistles, and a poster, waiting to sing him the birthday song for him – at midnight.

What would compel such dedication to an organisation's leader? Take one look at the **Trust Index® Survey** of employees Piscines Ideales, and the answer is obvious: it's all about family [see sidebar].

"I think our team spirit and enthusiasm proves that we are a happy family with strong bonds!" wrote one employee on the Trust Index®. "I really feel that I have a second family and I am more than proud and happy to be a member of Piscines Ideales!!!"

While many small companies benefit from a sense of closeness, the 135 employees of Piscines Ideales take the "extended family" spirit to a new extreme. The company's annual conference is called the "Family Gathering." And CEO Stavridis – whom employees refer to as "Captain" – serves as a doting father figure for all his company's people.

Of course, as any good family does, Piscines Ideales helps its members to grow and thrive, by providing training that allows them to advance their careers. Through an annual "job rotation" program, employees are able to spend few weeks each year in different departments to gain a more holistic understanding of the company, and the company pays for master's degrees for employees who seek further education.

And because all children must eventually "leave the nest," Piscines Ideales has a structured process for helping employees take wing as entrepreneurs by opening their own franchises. Through a formal program open to everyone, employees who want to launch their own Piscines franchise businesses can receive training, funding, public relations support, and other resources.



"I really feel that we are a family," wrote another employee on the Trust Index® Survey. "In difficult times there are people to help you and to be there for you. When you need encouragement they encourage you. When you need comfort, there is always someone to comfort you. When you celebrate your success, again there is always someone celebrating with you. And when you feel lost, someone is there to give you directions. I guess it is a Great Place to Work® because our team consists of exceptional and special people."

See also interview with the CEO at Piscines Ideales on page 55



#2: Reaktor Innovations

(Finland)

Reaktor Innovations is a privately owned software and technology consulting company based in Helsinki, Finland. The company's employees are primarily engineers and consultants, who develop software for large public and private organisations. Reaktor holds as its mission a desire "to combine cutting-edge technology with an uncomplicated, human approach".

Reaktor has a variety of innovative approaches to training people. For example, the company facilitates "internal coaching," by which teams can request that a specialist from another team come in to work with them to build their skills. And the firm also sponsors training camps on such topics as sales skills and coding languages; about two-thirds of employees participate in these camps. Reaktor also actively supports its employees to get involved in the broader industry, by encouraging them to attend conferences and events both as guests and speakers, and to contribute to outside blogs and publications. Not surprisingly, the company is considered a leader in software development in Finland and Europe, in part for its contributions to standards for the industry. To learn more about what kind of leadership is required to develop such a workplace, we interviewed **Vesa Lauronen**, CEO of Reaktor Innovations:

1. How did your company become a great workplace?

When we founded Reaktor in 2000, we decided to make it the best possible workplace for both ourselves and our employees. We want to provide our experts with the best possible conditions for development at work, and enable them to constantly learn new things. We take care of employee satisfaction by always putting people first. We never work overtime, we respect people's individuality, and we support our employees through life's changing situations. Employee well-being and company success go hand in hand. In a successful company, the employees are happy and, by investing in people, the company will succeed. Our success in the Great Place to Work® studies has proved that we are headed in the right direction. We are aiming at continuous improvement – Reaktor will never rest on its laurels. Our objective is to become the best expert organisation in the world.



2. How do you see your own role in the organisation? What is the essence of leadership for you?

A manager is in the service trade – it's up to the manager to ensure that our experts have the best possible working conditions. First and foremost, a manager provides possibilities and clears away barriers. Reaktor is an organisation in constant development, the only permanent element is change. Therefore, the role of the manager must also evolve constantly.

3. How do you make sure that you know what is happening "below the surface" in the organisation?

Our most important medium of internal communication is personal face-to-face discussion. We spend a great deal of time each day talking to our employees. We believe that the same rules of social interaction apply at the office as, for example, with friends after work.

4. How are you responding to people's anxiety and concerns about the current economic crisis?

We constantly and openly inform Reaktor employees about the ways the global economic situation is affecting us. Also, we let people know how they can all have an effect on the company's success.

5. What are your top three personal goals for the year in your role as CEO?

My aim is to develop constantly and do things a little bit better each day.

#3: ConSol Software GmbH

(Germany)

ConSol, a Munich, Germany-based IT consulting and software firm, has a unique open culture in which employees are empowered to participate in the company's business affairs. Three employees are invited to attend each meeting of the Board of Directors, for example, and are treated as equals in discussion and voting. The minutes of the board meetings are posted on the company intranet for other employees to see, and board members make themselves accessible to workers at all levels through telephone, e-mail, and informal visits. ConSol was founded in 1984 by Dr. Ulrich Schwanengel, who remains chairman of the company today. Great Place to Work® Institute interviewed **Dr. Schwanengel** to learn more about this unique workplace:

1. How did your company become a great workplace?

ConSol has developed organically into an organisation with 180 employees. New concepts have been part of the innovative culture, but we also have structures to include employees in the decision making process. Last but not least, we have a profit sharing model that allows everyone to receive a larger share of profits than at other companies. Our business objective is to successfully process complex software projects. In order to achieve this purpose, we have – from the very beginning – put the people in the centre of our strategic thinking. As a result, employees perceive the company as a great workplace.

2. How do you see your own role in the organisation? What is the essence of leadership for you?

Internally, I play a central role in coordinating people and departments to work together efficiently and organically. I am focused on making the structures for leadership grow along with the growth of the enterprise, and if necessary, I swim against the tide. Externally, I represent the company in all kinds of occasions. My main task is to get the organisation and the employees in a position where they are able to deliver high performance and to deliver the quality that is necessary for the success of the organisation and our clients. Our employees perceive delivering a high performance as fun, and as a personal success.

3. How do you make sure that you know what is happening "below the surface" in the organisation?

Our communication culture is focused on not staying at the surface but at going below the surface. We have guidelines like "arguments rather than directives", and we encourage employees to speak out loud and share their opinions. We allow employees to attend the "council of elders" (i.e. board) meetings, and we have town hall meetings with question and answer sessions. Our participation in the Great Place to Work® competition, as well as our own internal surveys (on which anonymity is guaranteed), are ideal measures for collecting employees perspectives on where the organisation should improve.

4. How are you responding to people's anxiety and concerns about the current economic crisis?

Most importantly, we put names on our problems and we do not try to hide or play something down. Facing the challenging times we are currently in, openness and transparency are the leading principles in our organisation. We respond to questions from employees and we come up with a solution prepared in the council of the elders. Going through this process, decisions taken by the board of directors generally find high acceptance among employees.

5. What are your top three personal goals for the year in your role as CEO?

1. To come through the crisis with as little damage as possible; 2) to continue with our intensive acquisition and to further expand to achieve an even stronger diversification in future; and 3) to strengthen inner cohesion among employees. We want to show employees that a business can be successful in a time of crisis, and that crisis always presents opportunities. By the way, our company successfully overcame the crisis that hit our industry back in 2000, though I must admit that the current crisis includes significant risks for all players.

STEADY AS A ROCK

An elite group of three companies has earned a spot among the **100 Best Workplaces** in Europe every year since the list's inception.

It is one thing to create a **great workplace**, but another to sustain a high standard over time. Among the hundreds of companies who have participated in the **Great Place to Work®** Europe evaluation process, only three companies have been among the **Best Workplaces** in Europe since the first list in 2003: **Admiral Group** based in the UK and two Danish firms, **Middelfart Sparekasse** and **Unimerco**.

So what do these three companies have in common? On the surface, not much as they are a car insurance company, a bank, and a maker of tools. Yet look closer, and it's clear that all three companies have strong people-oriented cultures that are unique to the organisation. And they all have consistent leadership: the CEO's at these three companies have been leading the organisations for more than 15 years.

ADMIRAL GROUP

Admiral Group, a British car insurance company, has managed to sustain a place on the list of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe by developing an open and inclusive culture that embraces employees from their first day on the job.

New hires receive a "welcome pack" about the company, and they are asked to fill out a form asking what kind of company they want to work for. These forms are then read by the company's People Services (H.R.) division and by the employee's future manager. They are also passed along to Henry Engelhardt, the company's founder and CEO, who meets with all new hires to discuss the company values and history. During this meeting, Engelhardt presents everyone with a piece of jigsaw puzzle, a symbol to remind them that "to complete the picture you need all the parts, and every part is as important as the next." People who have been at Admiral for many years still have their piece of jigsaw.

Admiral Group has approximately 2,700 people – a number that has been growing consistently for the past years – and the company remains focused on improving its culture. The People Services team conducts exit interviews with everyone who leaves the company, and compiles them into a 'MIS-SILE Report' (Management Information on Starters, Salaries Including Leavers and Exits). The report is produced each quarter and is sent to managing directors and departmental managers.

Henry Engelhardt described the vision he had ten years earlier when he began writing Admiral's business plan: "I wanted to build a successful business while at the same time having a happy family life." Engelhardt asks managers to lead by example; demonstrating work-life balance, some of the company's senior managers manage to carry out their jobs on a part-time basis.

MIDDELFART SPAREKASSE

A regional bank in Denmark with 180 employees, Middelfart Sparekasse has managed to keep its spot on the list of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe since the initial list in 2003. How? The company is most distinguished for its "self-management" culture, which states that it is up to employees themselves to make business decisions, with managers providing a coordinating role exclusively.

Of course, self-management makes it somewhat difficult for new hires, as the company lacks many of the policies and structures that typically provide people with a reference

point. Instead, the company trains new hires with a variety of courses including two key courses, one in self-management itself, and the other in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), which aims to help people feel confident and aware. All managers at the company are also trained in NLP.

Middelfart Sparekasse has also managed to sustain a prominent rank for its strong dedication to the community. Along with its regular financial statements, the company publishes a report on its "social-ethical balance," detailing its philanthropic efforts; an average 20% of the bank's profits are allocated for supporting social causes.

This consistency has helped the company's business immensely. Middelfart Sparekasse rarely has to announce new job openings because they receive so many unsolicited applications, along with referrals from existing employees. And despite being a small player in the Danish financial sector, Middelfart Sparekasse is beating most other financial companies on key indicators and the bank has had no layoffs or any turmoil during the ongoing financial crisis.

UNIMERCO

Of the 440 people who work at Unimerco, a 100% employee owned Danish company that manufactures cutting and measuring tools and fastening systems, 96% are co-owners. Employee ownership is just one of the qualities that has helped Unimerco sustain its position on the 100 Best list.

A sense of openness is another key factor. All the employees at the Danish headquarters – production as well as administration – work in the same large room, the so-called "roofed village." The CEO has his desk there, right along with everyone else.

The inspiration for the egalitarian business model at UNIMERCO came from CEO Kenneth Iversen's childhood. Iversen grew up in a Danish village in which the crews of fishing boats split their catch 50/50, with half allocated to expenses, and the remaining 50% split equally among everyone on the boat.

The result of this ownership model is an open communication culture, in which all employees receive complete, real-time updates on the company's revenues, and a high level of employee engagement; people have reason to pay attention, as they are entitled to a share of profits on top of their salaries.

STEADY AS A ROCK

CULTURAL CHAMPIONS

While a select few companies have shown consistency over time, other companies are just as impressive for how they manage to create great workplaces in all the nations in which they operate. This table shows those companies that appeared on the national lists of Best Workplaces, out of 16 possible in the European region in 2008-09.

NATIONAL LIST-RECOGNITIONS IN EUROPE

Company	Countries
Microsoft	16
Cisco	15
Mars	9
Federal Express	9
Abbott	8
SAS Institute	7
Danone	6
McDonald's	6
Coca Cola	5
Diageo	5
Medtronic	5
Accenture	4
American Express	4
Innovex	4
National Instruments	4
NetApp	4
PepsiCo	4
Procter & Gamble	4
SAP	4

We have interviewed the European Senior HR Directors for Microsoft and Cisco to learn how they balance global direction with local cultures.

INTERVIEW WITH FRANK ABbenhuijs

Senior HR Director for Western Europe, Microsoft

The employees of Microsoft Netherlands refer to their office in Amsterdam as a "meeting place"; after all, following their company's "New World of Work" philosophy, they can work wherever they want, and the new facility, located at the centre of Schiphol Airport, is used mainly when face-to-face meetings are necessary. As a result, no one, including the General Manager of Microsoft Netherlands, has a fixed office within the building, and it has reduced the need for space per employee by 30% compared to the prior office. The architect spent a couple of weeks studying how the Microsoft employees worked and interacted with each other before designing the new office.

It was in this "meeting space" that the **Great Place to Work® Institute** sat down with **Frank Abbenhuijs**, Senior HR Director for Western Europe, Microsoft, who works out of this office himself when he is not travelling. He says it makes him feel free to meet with others in new ways – relaxed on a couch, writing on a screen, or sharing food or coffee. "It's all about people and releasing the passion that everyone has – just like the Microsoft vision, To enable people and businesses throughout the world to realize their full potential," he explains.

"TRUST IS A WORLDWIDE LANGUAGE"

Microsoft has earned the top spot on the list of the Best Large Workplaces in Europe list for the second time in a row; the company excels in maintaining high scores across borders, as 16 out of 16 Microsoft branches participating in **the Trust Index® and Culture Audit®** process in Europe made the European list.

This consistency speaks to how well Microsoft balances its offices' local needs while providing global direction. Regardless of nation, Abbenhuijs says, Microsoft's culture all comes down to a consistent focus on people and trust. "Trust is not connected to one culture, but rather it is a worldwide language that makes people work together", he says. "But trust is not automatically there, you need to invest in it."



The Western European Leadership Team for HR Directors meets in person about 2-3 times a year, typically for three-day meetings, where they spend time together both in meetings and teambuilding activities. They also use a kind of "speed dating", where people sit together one-to-one and discuss specific topics or get to know each other better. After thirty minutes, people switch and have discussions with someone else, a process that is repeated six times over a three hour period.

A GLOBAL ORGANISATION WITH A LOCAL DRIVE

In fact there are a few practices that all global Microsoft offices are required to follow. One is the principle of setting objectives and using mid-year personal development discussions between employees and their superiors. And some practices are used in all Western Europe offices because they have proved effective: for example, Microsoft offices in Belgium and France are re-developing their own "meeting places" based on the Netherlands model. And Microsoft Sweden has developed a program called "Digigirlz," which aims to introduce girls between 10 and 13 years to information technology to grow the future talent pool. Based on the success of this program in Sweden, the HR team has decided to implement Digigirlz throughout the Western European countries.

The company has also been developing programs to address the fact that its employees are aging (the average age of Western Europe employees is currently 37 years). Succession planning is also a hot issue in Microsoft Europe, where the goal is to obtain a better balance between internal recruitment and external hiring. Abbenhuijs and his team are currently setting up a workgroup with HR directors from different countries to further develop a European initiative in this area.

"IT TAKES LEADERSHIP TO DEAL WITH THIS CRISIS"

As a software company constantly developing new products

and services, Microsoft has grown used to the market's developing and changing. The economic crisis has led to 1,400 layoffs worldwide at the company. Like other companies it has been aware of the changing economic situation since the fall of 2008, and started implementing a more conservative hiring strategy in order to make sure it could continue hiring the best talents from the industry.

Meanwhile, HR has worked closely with the business leaders to guide them through these challenging times. As Abbenhuijs emphasizes, "it takes leadership to deal with this crisis, leaders who are visible and listening and open for dialogue. Developing you people becomes even more crucial to address the challenges of the market."

Travel budgets have been cut down and people are trying to use technology that much more to carry out meetings. "We are very aware that we cannot cut down too much on face-to-face meetings, because these are long-term investments in building trust," Abbenhuijs says. "But of course we have the technology in house that can help us stay connected".

STEADY AS A ROCK



INTERVIEW WITH MARK HAMBERLIN
Senior Director, HR for European Markets

Mark Hamberlin serves as Cisco's Senior Director for Human Resources for European Markets. He has been with the company for more than eight years, working in both finance and HR, and has held his current position for the past two and a half years. The **Great Place to Work® Institute** interviewed **Mr. Hamberlin** on how 15 European Cisco branches all found a spot on this year's national Best Workplaces lists and 12 of them made the European list.

GPTW: How did your company become a great workplace?

MH: Cisco has a very strong vision of "Changing the Way We Work" – and how we play, learn, and communicate. Many companies have similar ambitious visions, but our people actually believe in it and we help them see how they are changing people's lives. We have outstanding people who work hard to live up to this vision and who are very committed members of the Cisco family.

I myself have been offered so many opportunities within Cisco to learn and build a career, and I think that everyone in Cisco has the same opportunities, if they take the initiative. At the same time, there is a very strong tradition of having high ethical standards and always doing the right thing. Our CEO John Chambers often mentions how important this is and the entire organisation tries to live up to these values every day.

Also, the use of technology has been very important for us as a workplace. We make sure that all employees have access to the best technology and are connected to each other no matter where they are – in the office, at home, or mobile. Like John Chambers says: "we eat our own dog food" (use the technology they sell), which creates a lot of pride in what we do and helps us connect as a global organisation.

GPTW: How do you manage to create great workplaces across so many different countries? How would you characterize the level of similarities and differences in the culture at the European Cisco branches?

MH: There are certain aspects about the Cisco culture that you will find everywhere. We print the values and core cultural aspects on the badges that all Cisco employees carry in order to keep them close to everyone. When I interact with people in different offices, I always get a sense of the strong commitment to collaboration and teamwork and people are just so used to working together across different departments or offices.

Additionally, it is a key part of the global Cisco culture to "go the extra mile" and a strong belief that we can actually achieve everything we set our minds to.

Another thing that really characterizes Cisco's culture globally is the willingness and focus on giving back to the community. All our offices have lots of initiatives in this area and people are very committed to be actively involved – raising money for poor people, training uneducated people, donating technology, etc. Recently, our people in the UK raised more than 150,000£ for poor people in the so-called "Red Nose Day": employees created humorous videos and acts, carried out service projects, did a virtual auction across several countries and locations, all to raise money for the poor in the UK and Africa.

The specific initiatives or practices within these core elements of our culture might look different from country to country, but there is the same level of commitment to the philosophy behind them. And because our people in general are competitive it creates a healthy internal competition to see who can come up with the best initiatives, for example for giving back to the community.

GPTW: From a management perspective, what tools do you have to promote and nurture a global corporate culture?

MH: When I took my current role, I spent some time developing an understanding of what is driving people's engagement and how we can provide a common structure for the development of the business and the workplace. After studying this in-depth, we came up with a five pillar structure, which is a people-driven, but also business-integrated approach to how we want to lead and develop our company.

People are at the centre, through the notion of, "I count @ Cisco". Inclusion and diversity are strategic priorities that go across the five pillars. Based on this structure we launch a few, but important common projects within each of the five pillars and we make sure to assign leaders from different countries to drive these projects. In this way we ensure consistency in a few strategically important areas and we achieve a broad commitment by involving people internationally in teams. Additionally, I spend a lot of time with our management group to discuss principles on how we treat our people, which helps us getting a common understanding of what "doing the right thing" means.

GPTW: Can you share a story or an anecdote about something that happened at Cisco that really shows what your culture is all about?

MH: We have many people working abroad or people with relatives involved in military operations or working in development projects somewhere far away from their families. During the holidays we always offer our technology for these employees to connect with their relatives using our best video technology –Telepresence. This makes a huge difference for these people not to have to speak through a normal scratchy phone line.

Another story is that Cisco Europe wanted to drive innovative business ideas, and in a matter of weeks launched "Innovation Europe," an online forum for posting and building out ideas. Within 3-4 months, 1,600 users registered, 160 new ideas were built out virtually (with an original author posting and others adding on to improve it). A group of high-potential managers in a development program filtered a list of the top three for presentation to the European Board. All three ideas are now sponsored business projects to drive new revenue streams.

In effect, in a four-month period, a process was launched, thousands of employees got involved, hundreds of ideas were generated, and three significant business opportunities were launched.



– Special Award –

'I am told the truth'

BUILDING CREDIBILITY BY TELLING THE TRUTH

GREAT PLACE TO WORK® INSTITUTE EUROPE SPECIAL AWARDS

Each year, the Great Place to Work® Institute gives out special awards to companies that exemplify excellence in one of five selected areas in the Great Place to Work® Model.

In this section, we look at companies that were nominated by the national affiliate offices of the Great Place to Work® Institute for the "I Am Told the Truth Award," which is given to the company with outstanding practices and programs for demonstrating a high level of honesty and keeping employees informed with accurate, meaningful information.



Winner: **Bristol-Myers Squibb Greece**

The 2009 winner of the "I Am Told the Truth" award is the Greek office of **Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS)**, the global pharmaceutical company. These scores reflect the high level of honesty and openness that the company's management maintained while handling this event. The managers held frequent meetings, and communicated clearly the business rationale for the layoffs. The General Manager answered employees' questions honestly, and there were few if any unfounded rumours circulating among BMS people. The GM's actions "**succeeded in maintaining the high morale and winning attitude**" of BMS Greece employees, the company explained in their *Culture Audit*®.

These strong communications during the layoffs were just part of the company's ongoing efforts at keeping people informed. BMS Greece has an extensive internal communication program that is closely coordinated with the global communications efforts. For example, the company uses global and local teleconferences, video conferences, and an internal newsletter, as well as message boards, a web site, e-mail, an intranet, and town hall meetings to keep people informed. Employees can also participate in lunches with their department heads, or with the General Manager. Twice each year, the company holds "**Brand Days**," week-long meetings for managers, as well as select non-manager employees, to re-examine the company's business and product strategy from the ground up. And the company uses cross-divisional teams to get everyone involved: when the company moved to a new office last year, BMS put together a 13-person "**Kallisto**" team to establish guidelines for the layout of the new work space. Together, these channels allow leaders to continually communicate a clear sense of the vision, values, and culture, while also providing direction and generating enthusiasm.

"The fact that you can easily and directly contact the management team gives you the opportunity to develop your personal competencies to the maximum level," wrote one employee on this year's Trust Index® Survey. "The top-down information flow about the company is excellent, as is the communication of any problems and their potential solutions."

Employee comments from BMS Greece's 2009 Trust Index® Survey:

"Top management communicates the corporate objectives clearly to all employees and has a clear vision."

"There is easy and quick access to the management team."

"There is a clear view who we are, where we want to go, and how we will manage that. This is one of the most important things for a multinational subsidiary."

"The freedom of speech and free will in the company is very important. The employees can take initiatives in order to improve their work. They can suggest new ideas that are usually accepted."



Runner Up: Cisco

Every year, all Cisco employees working in Europe get to have breakfast with CEO John Chambers, who is based in Silicon Valley. No, they don't meet him in person, but rather they attend the breakfast via teleconference over the internet, where they can ask questions and hear responses just like those attending in person. Of course, as a leading provider of the "backbone" network of the Internet, it's not surprising that the company uses technology extensively to keep people informed. This innovative practice is just one reason why Cisco is one of this year's runners up for the "I Am Told the Truth" award. When Cisco's Operating Committee came up with 22 priorities to guide the company, they set up an online discussion board so employees could offer their input and explore what they could do to offer support. The company also uses one of its own products, Telepresence, a tele-conferencing tool that allows employees to organise meetings with colleagues from all over the world. They also use pulse surveys, wikis, and other tools. And the corporate



intranet includes feature stories, Q&A interviews, and multi-media formats, such as webcasts and podcasts. Open and honest two-way communication is one of Cisco culture's cornerstones: "Cisco was founded in an environment of open communication, empowerment, integrity, and trust," the company wrote in their Great Place to Work® Culture Audit®. "These values remain at the forefront of our culture and our business decisions."

Employee comments from Cisco's Trust Index®:

"The CEO has a great ability to relate with every employee. He makes you feel at home always. As a consequence, you can have a sincere relationship with every colleague."

"The communication is very open, you don't have to guess what people think."

"At Cisco you can contact everyone at any time (no matter on which level) and ask for help or advice."

"Due to regular feedback meetings with colleagues and supervisors I know where I stand."

Runner Up: 3M Deutschland, 3M ESPE

At the 3M factory in Hilden, Germany, employees gather for a five- to 15minute meeting. All the individuals involved in each manufacturing division attend this meeting, including not only managers, foremen, and planners, but also mechanical and electrical maintenance workers. The open discussion covers the day's plans, noteworthy events, and any problems; items requiring action are recorded on Post-it® notes – one of the 3M's trademark products – and posted on a communications wall for follow-up. These daily meetings ensure that managers are on site every day, dealing with events directly rather than calling the shots from afar. It allows them to hear about issues and make adjustments to their plans quickly.

This practice is one of many that have helped to make 3M a runner-up for the Great Place to Work® Institute's "I Am Told the Truth" award. As is often the case, 3M's open culture starts at the top. Kurt-Henning Wiethoff, who has served as Managing Director of 3M Deutschland GmbH since April 2005, places strong emphasis on communications. For special occasions, he writes letters or electronic notes directly to each employee, and he and other leaders also practice management by "walking around": they go to employees'

work stations and encourage the people there to give spontaneous feedback. 3M managers also frequently strike up conversations with employees in the company cafeteria and in other casual settings.

Because the company has a large number of field employees, 3M also holds a regular "Onsite Dialogue" event, at which managers share the company's results, goals, and strategies and respond to questions from employees. 3M employees can also give anonymous feedback on issues through opinion surveys; all critical comments are broken down by department and discussed in departmental meetings. Another important component of the overall perception of credibility of 3M's managers is that they allow employees to operate with a high degree of freedom. Through the company's "15% Rule," 3M researchers and developers are allowed to use fifteen percent of their time to pursue any project on their own initiative. The company also generates new ideas through Think Tank Teams, interdisciplinary groups of representatives from the customer service and marketing departments who brainstorm and coordinate ideas from across divisions.

3M Employee Quotes from the GPTW Trust Index® Survey:

"There is harmony and honesty within the department in people's interactions with one another."

"Each person's opinion is important and is taken into consideration. My supervisor always lends me a 'sympathetic ear.'"

"You can always go to the management with your problems, and they listen to you.

No matter whether they're personal or professional problems!"

"In my opinion, the communication between supervisors and employees (operators) works very well."



STAYING IN TOUCH

How the Best Workplaces create a culture of communication

According to the Great Place to Work® Institute's model, the primary ingredient needed to build credibility within an organisation is frequent, meaningful two-way communication between managers and employees. Companies with high levels of credibility tend to be highly open cultures, in which people feel free to share their ideas and offer feedback honestly. Promoting communication has business benefits, as well. By keeping people informed, companies can not only promote trust and help people feel connected to the "big picture," but they also ensure that everyone's work is aligned toward a common goal.

So what does it take for a company to create a "culture of communication"? The 100 Best Workplaces in Europe present a wide range of examples to learn from.

Total Transparency

An organisation's internal communication is only effective if it is open and honest; no number of newsletters from the headquarters will boost trust if the messages are perceived by employees to be "sugarcoated" or sent from "on high." Everis Portugal, a consulting firm that helps other organisations improve their business processes, emphasizes "total transparency" among its employees and managers, which means that all information is shared, whether positive or negative, and employees can send their questions or complaints directly to the General Manager, who promises to respond within 24 hours. As an Everis Portugal employee wrote on this year's Trust Index® Survey, "Since my first day, I have been encouraged to speak openly about any issue. About one week

ago I had a half-hour talk with our General Manager in which I exposed in a completely honest way (and without any fear of reprisal) my opinion about some internal issues. I felt like my opinion was heard and will be considered." Ninety-nine percent of Everis employees surveyed on this year's Trust Index® Survey agreed with the statement, "Management is competent at running the business" and 97% agreed that "management is approachable and easy to talk with".

A Direct Line to the Top

Many of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe have established programs to empower employees to engage directly with senior leaders.

For example, Faber Maunsell, a building, transportation and environmental engineering consulting firm, has launched a program called "Tell Ken," a suggestion program in which employees email the CEO directly with any suggestions for improvement; the best suggestion made each year is rewarded with a generous prize (in past years it was a weekend in Paris). And Worthington Cylinders Austria, a leading maker of pressure cylinders, has a program called "Thank God It's Monday," at which the CEO and HR Director serve coffee and cookies and ask groups of around 10 employees what's on their mind.

Senior leaders at Beaverbrooks, a UK-based jeweller, take a different approach. Last year, the company convened 15 different formal focus groups so that leaders could sit down with randomly selected groups of employees and allow them to discuss whatever was on their mind.

TOGETHER ONLINE

Of course, the most direct method of promoting dialogue between managers and employees is to use what National Instruments (NI) calls "sneaker management," which emphasizes that managers need to walk around and talk to people face-to-face.

Noventum, an IT consulting firm based in Germany, has an open book philosophy. All the board's decisions are documented on the intranet and accessible to everyone, and anyone can see the company's financial data at any time. Noventum also sends its newsletter to the homes of its 71 employees so their families can stay up to speed on the company's activities.

At many of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe, the "lines" between managers and employees are difficult to discern, as managers engage with employees on a continual basis, and come to be seen as "one of the troops". At Jones Lang LaSalle, a financial and professional services firm specializing in real estate services and investment management, all senior managers, including the Managing Director, sit within an open plan environment, working under one roof (and on one floor) with every other employee in the company.

Bridges Across Divisions

A true culture of openness must extend across an entire organization, not just within teams. Several of the 100 Best Workplaces have programs explicitly designed to foster dialogue across division lines.

For example, Sigmar Recruiting, a recruiting firm based in Ireland, uses a program called "Buddy Circles," groups of individuals from different divisions who meet regularly and share practices and business ideas. This type of team-based approach is especially unusual in the recruiting industry, where recruiters tend to work on an individual basis.

And at the Belgian office of MARS, the global confectioner and food maker, employees are allowed to take a co-worker out to lunch on the company's tab, as long as the person is a colleague from another department. The goal is to encourage people to get to know the people in other divisions and learn about each other's jobs.

Everyone Participates

Another effective method that companies use to ensure that everyone's voice is heard is to establish groups of employees to serve as advocates.

Accenture, the global business consulting firm, has an Employee Advisory Forum (EAF) that includes a member of each department in its European Services Centre. These individuals meet on a quarterly basis to discuss or highlight any issues that may have been raised by individuals on their team.

In addition to "buddy circles," Irish recruiting firm Sigmar uses what it calls "project circles"; these teams include representatives from all levels who work together to lead major initiatives from inception to fruition, with all contributions given equal weight. Representatives from each team provide input and share information with their co-workers.

Building Trust Through Empowerment

Webstep, an IT consulting firm based in Norway (founded in 2000), follows a philosophy of the "inverted pyramid," by which managers work to support "ground staff" (consultants). Each of the company's departments has responsibility and control over its own work processes, with senior-level managers offering support as needed. This philosophy conveys a sense that people are trusted to get their work done without excessive supervision. As Webstep's employees wrote in their Trust Index® Survey:

"From day one you are given great responsibility and you feel confidence and trust – which makes you feel even better."

"Webstep is unique because each person can be and feels self driven, and at the same time we take part in this great camaraderie and Webstep community."

Bringing Mistakes into the Open

Open business cultures have few restrictions on what can be said – and they do not cover up mistakes, but rather speak about them freely – ideally with a sense of humor. Impact, a UK-based firm that delivers outdoor leadership training and other services, gives out the "Silver Screw" award for the most conspicuous mistake of the year. The award was created more than 25 years ago after a consultant broke the propeller of a boat; the 2008 winner won for nearly getting arrested at German customs for carrying fake bullets used as a prop on a teambuilding project.

Open Feedback Encouraged

A culture of openness can also include frank discussion about workplace performance. At PricewaterhouseCoopers Ireland, employees are encouraged to write down constructive thoughts about their peers and managers, using the statement, "Things I would like X to start, continue, or stop doing". When Danone UK, part of the French food products company, wants to make change in any of its policies, managers use questionnaires and workshops to solicit employees' opinion. "We put charts on the walls detailing what we are looking at and we ask for feedback by asking employees to put up 'Post-its' to express their views," the company says. Gathering input can be as simple as setting aside some time for employee questions at company meetings – and encouraging honesty and openness. National Instruments UK recently added a "Question Time" component to its company meetings, at which questions posed by employees up to four weeks in advance of the meeting are answered by a panel of senior leaders. This program was seen to have practical benefit: "NI continually endorses the idea of 'no surprises,'" the company wrote in their Culture Audit®.

THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY

With employees who telecommute or who work in offices across geographic regions, today's corporations are often so widely dispersed that team members rarely see each other in person. For these companies, maintaining a strong sense of unity among associates can be especially difficult. But as the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe show, innovative uses of digital technology can go far to maintain a strong sense of unity. Indeed, digital technologies have given today's companies a powerful toolset for sharing information from employees – and gathering ideas and input. Here are some examples:

PricewaterhouseCoopers Ireland is piloting a program called "Brainwaves," an innovation database and forum that allows the company's employees to suggest ideas or recommendations on all aspects of the business. Dedicated employees called "Brainwaves champions" have been assigned from each business unit to follow up on suggestions.

Capgemini SD&M Germany has established a "Dialogue Center" on its dialogue, which features intranet and chats between the CEO and employees. To enhance the learning value, his responses are accompanied by bulleted summaries, graphs, and more.

SAP Germany, the headquarters of the global business software maker, has introduced a "Pre-Start-Portal," an interactive web site that provides new employees with an overview of the company culture, as well as helpful tips for settling in. The company also uses online video to broadcast worldwide company-related news, including the latest news, meetings, events, product releases, and more.

Grundfos Germany, one of the world's leading pump manufacturers, has set up an idea database called "iShare," which allows employees to upload their suggestions to a central location. The "Best idea of the Year Award" goes to the most inspired suggestion. Last year Grundfos also introduced a new training database called "My Grundfos," designed to help people align their own training goals directly to the goals of the company.

Grupo Visual MS, a Spanish IT company, has set up a blog as a communication tool. Anyone can put anything they want on the web site, which includes a feature through which people can confirm that they have read a message. The company also has open board meetings that any employee can attend.

NETAPP

The 2009 Best Company to Work For in America keeps its European branches connected through a range of technologies.

One company that excels in using digital technology to keep people "tied together" is NetApp, a data storage firm based in Silicon Valley, California that has 12 offices throughout Europe – and that (for the first time) was this year's top-ranked winner of *Fortune* magazine's list of the 100 Best Companies to Work for in America, which is compiled by *the Great Place to Work® Institute*.

Employees in the European offices can hear what's on the minds of company's CEO, Dan Warmenhoven, by tuning in to his regular podcast, billed as NTAP Radio. A special feature of these talks is "Your Tough Questions", in which Warmenhoven answers questions that employees have submitted. Each programme concludes with "Dan's Closing Thoughts," in which Warmenhoven provides insights about the pertinent business issues of the day.

The company also streams its corporate all-hands meetings and executive speeches, and it produces podcasts for training, including "Knowledge Bytes," "Ask The Experts," and "Tools & Technology," which ensure that everyone in the company is up to speed on the latest products and services. NetApp also has a social networking site that includes threaded discussion bulletin boards for employees to communicate with NetApp executives – and each other.

NetApp also encourages employees to maintain blogs, providing clear guidelines for what and how they should write publicly about NetApp and its products and services.

The NetApp Engineering group developed its own wiki with more than 23,000 pages. And NetApp WorkBench is a web portal that provides managers with a single site in which to find answers to their most common management questions.

INTERVIEW WITH TANDBERG

TANDBERG is Norway's largest IT company and is a world leader in video technology, with 41% of the world market. For the past ten years, the company has grown its revenues by 30% each year, the last two years by 50% year over year. **TANDBERG** has approximately 1,500 employees in 45 countries. The CEO **Fredrik Halvorsen**, has been with the company since 2005, when he joined as CFO. Mr. Halvorsen does not like to focus on himself too much, as he emphasizes that **TANDBERG** is a "we" company and not an "I" company. He did, however, agree to share some insights with the Great Place to Work® Institute.



GPTW: How did your company become a great workplace?

Fredrik Halvorsen: Since the company was established in 1988, TANDBERG has had a strong focus on "hire for attitude and values, train for skills". We've been building a culture where people take personal initiative and responsibility and are given a lot of freedom and trust to do what they believe is necessary to help the company reach its vision. We have a compelling vision to change the way people communicate, and we feel convinced that if everyone knew what video could do, everyone would want it. We think that working in a company with a vision and products as inspiring as ours creates an extra dimension of energy, passion, and pride in what we do and how we contribute.

GPTW: How do you see your own role in the organisation? What is the essence of leadership for you?

FH: Bringing talents together, providing direction, and adding a bit of nervous energy. Ultimately, high-tech companies do not have time for hierarchies. A clear sense of direction that allows for maximum empowerment and on-the-spot decision making by the team member closest to the issue or opportunity is paramount. And I try to help people around me to learn and develop – and make sure they enjoy and have fun with what they do.

GPTW: How do you make sure that you know what is happening "below the surface" in the organisation?

FH: We have a very flat organisation, and a strong non-hierarchical culture, which is good for a start. We have many strong leaders in this company and a culture that encourages open and honest communication. Our 1,500 people make in excess of 100,000 video calls per month. People look each other in the eyes, whether it is for small trivial matters or huge issues that need immediate attention. I truly believe this highly personal and frequent interaction within the organisation helps build trust and avoid misunderstandings, which more often than not is the true cause of 'below the surface' concerns. We have also built a strong feedback culture, where people are expected to address issues they/we may have to whoever can do something about it. As a team rule, no one sends flame e-mails or voice mails. If you have an issue, go see the person or address it over video in real time.

GPTW: What are your top three personal goals for the year in your role as CEO?

FH: Making video and Telepresence accessible for everyone and make it the natural choice for communication; continue to strengthen our culture, organisation and technology lea-

dership; and create long-term shareholder value.

We also spoke with **Annicken Rød**, TANDBERG's Chief Cultural Officer

GPTW: TANDBERG claims to have a culture that has embraced change, rather than resisted it. How do you create and nurture this culture in practical terms?

AR: During the recruitment process, we ensure that the people we hire are not resistant to change, by talking about their history and how they have handled changes in their lives, and by finding out if they make changes themselves or rather are victims of changes others make for them. We change all the time. We don't even have organisational charts, because it would be totally impossible to keep them updated. If you do not enjoy working in a dynamic, agile, and continuously evolving environment, you will not be happy working at TANDBERG. Initiating change is looked upon as a strength and is encouraged across the organisation. So by attracting people who thrive on this kind of environment and not attracting their opposites, you can say that change has become a self-fulfilling part of our culture.

GPTW: Can you share a story or an anecdote about something that happened at TANDBERG that shows what your culture is all about?

AR: Every day I meet with colleagues from all around the world, face to face, without having to leave my office. I can even sit in a café with my coffee and laptop on the table and have a chat with a colleague from the other side of the world.

Last week I had a meeting (over video of course) with some colleagues from our Madrid office when one of our American colleagues called in. I accepted the call so we all could see each other. The American guy had a big smile on his face, an electric guitar in his hands, and he was playing our corporate song "TANDBERG-struck" (based on AC/DC's "Thunderstruck"). He was working from his home-office and had just landed a big deal – and he was looking for someone to celebrate with.

Our Spanish colleagues and I cheered and laughed with him and we called up a number of other offices as well, so we ended up with this big global celebration! These kind of stories happen all the time within TANDBERG; people who instantly connect, face-to-face, with other people across the company; to discuss, share knowledge, make decisions, talk... or simply just to celebrate!

– Special Award –

'I am treated as a person'

A HUMAN

TOUCH

GREAT PLACE TO WORK® INSTITUTE EUROPE SPECIAL AWARDS

Each year, the Great Place to Work® Institute gives out special awards to companies that exemplify excellence in one of five selected areas in the Great Place to Work® Model.

In this section, we look at companies that were nominated by the national affiliate offices of the Great Place to Work® Institute for the "I Am Treated As A Person," which is given to the company that demonstrates a high level of respect to employees by providing professional development, recognizing people's accomplishments, and helping them to maintain work-life balance.



Winner: ATP Denmark

The recipient of this year's Great Place to Work® Institute award for "I Am Treated as a Person" is ATP Denmark, a semi-public non-profit institution that administers labour market pensions and performs related IT-based administration tasks. ATP is one of the largest pension investors in Europe; in 2006 and 2008, it was voted one of the best Public European pension funds by *Investment & Pension Europe Magazine*.

ATP has also been recognized four times as one of the Best Workplaces in Denmark (2003, 2004, 2005, and 2008); it ranked number 12 in 2008, its best result so far. This year represents the first time the company has appeared on the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe list.



Part of the strength of ATP's culture is that it is okay to do quirky things. One day the entire kitchen staff was away at a motivational seminar, so the company's top management and 26 other leaders across the organisation took over the kitchen to make lunch for the entire staff of more than 700 people. The event was named: "the collaborating carrots".

ATP also has a comprehensive program for ensuring that employees maintain balance between their work and personal lives. Called Life Balance, the program "takes its point of departure in the fact that employees in balance have more energy and self-confidence and are more effective," the company explained in their Culture Audit®. Life Balance is based on four pillars: development, health, family/private life, and services.

For example, ATP focuses on helping people reduce their stress, by training managers and providing coaches to employees. The company even tracks the level of stress within the organisation through its annual survey.

Employees can take breaks during work for meditation, and the company's cafeteria serves healthy, organic food. ATP removed soda machines from its cafeteria, and it offers smoking cessation courses

to help employees kick their unhealthy habits. Twice each week, people can bring home a healthy, organic meal from the canteen "as an alternative to the pizzas or burgers from fast food restaurants." Around 150 employees make use of this offer each week.

All of ATP's people can set up flexible schedules, and many work from home. Around 18% of the employees with ATP make use of reduced working hours, and more than 40% of the employees have taken advantage of a program that lets them "buy" a week off.

And ATP also promotes balance by supporting employees' family/private lives. When the kids or grandkids of employees are on break from school, the company holds what it calls "Active Vacation Programmes": the canteen serves up special menus for the kids, and the company provides a range of fun activities through a program called the "Academy of Untamed Creativity".

The Life Balance program was developed because ATP regards the happiness of employees a key component of its business strategy. Managers' bonuses are tied to employee satisfaction scores, and the company measures and reports on "employee satisfaction" along with customer satisfaction and financial results.

"Life balance is not an obstacle for effective performance – it is a prerequisite!" the company's CEO Lars Röhde said when Life Balance was launched. "You may very well be both serious and ambitious even though you take a day off at your children's birthday."

We spoke with Mr. Röhde, who has been CEO of ATP for the past 11 years, about what makes his company a great workplace.



GPTW: How did your company become a great workplace?

LR: We have been working on this for many years. We have set ourselves a very ambitious goal of becoming a world-class pension fund. In order to achieve our business goals, we need outstanding and ambitious people, so it is very important for us to be an attractive employer. The whole organisation supports this mission and there is a deep understanding of the necessity of becoming a top professional organisation in every way. Everybody works toward the same goals and we have a very systematic approach to measuring and analyzing our progress and milestones. And we follow up on everything consistently.

GPTW: How do you see your own role in the organisation?

LR: First of all, we have great teamwork in the management group – and we would not get anywhere without that. My role is to provide direction in the day-to-day work by setting goals for the whole organisation, as well as for individuals. I also need to make sure that people support the goals – and that everyone knows exactly what his/her role is. I communicate through the management group and focus on creating a sense of team play. I like strong individuals, but even more, I like strong individuals who know how to work on teams. We have constant dialogue on the management team. People don't learn from one-way communication, but through dialogue,

which also builds a sense of ownership for the company's visions and policies.

GPTW: How do you make sure that you know what is happening "below the surface" in the organisation?

LR: I hope and believe that our organisation is characterized by a Scandinavian-style flat structure, with little power distance. Everyone knows that they can go directly to the leaders and the door will always be open. But again, I use the management group and make them accountable for being close to all people in the organisation. We have a measurement culture, where everything is measured and analyzed and brought to the light. That way we don't have to talk about how things are, but can focus on doing something about it.

GPTW: How are you responding to people's anxiety and concerns about the current economic crisis?

LR: All our investment people have been very much affected by the crisis, when suddenly the stock market lost half the value. This has had a significant impact on individual employees and we have focused on communicating openly and honestly about the possible consequences to everyone. At ATP, we are also highly influenced

by political changes, and when the Danish government suddenly announced a possible change in one of the pension funds that ATP administers that had an immediate impact for many of our employees. Thousands of Danes contacted us in the days after these changes and we had to reorganise our phone support and try to deal with the pressure on our internet servers. But in the longer term, if these changes are implemented, it will probably have an impact on how many resources ATP would need to support this area. We have discussed this with people in a very open and honest way. I have been amazed with our people's positive spirit in this situation, and how people have given extra to meet the demands. Today, no one can really provide any job security, but we can guarantee lifelong competence development, which is our focus at ATP.

GPTW: What are your top three personal goals for the year in your role as CEO?

LR: My focus for this year is to: continue living up to the vision of providing basic financial security for all of Denmark; ensure continued competence development in the organisation and position ATP as an attractive and evolving workplace; and position ATP as a credible and capable partner with all our stakeholders.



STRIKING A BALANCE

Runner Up: Piscines Ideales

A runner-up for this year's "I Am Treated Like A Person" award is Piscines Ideales, a Greek firm that designs, installs, and maintains swimming pools.

In addition to making employees feel like they are part of one big family, Piscines Ideales also supports people to take care of their other families.

For example, employees who get married receive a month's salary as a bonus. New mothers are equipped with internet connections to help them work out of their house. Every Christmas, Piscines Ideales organises a party for employees' children, along with a Christmas charity bazaar. And the company gives new computers to employees' kids when they begin studies at the university.

Piscines also helps people out with interest-free loans and time off to deal with personal hardships. "They stand by me in all my problems," wrote a Piscines Ideales employee on the Great Place to Work® Trust Index® Survey. "Once I needed money for my child, and although I was new to the company, they gave it to me immediately."

The leaders of Piscines Ideales also ensure that people pursue their personal interests: the company gives € 500 to employees to take courses on painting, art, foreign languages, martial arts, or any other hobby. And the company generously takes every person on an annual trip to a destination such as Thailand, China, or Jordan; people can bring along their spouses at their own expense, and the company facilitates payroll deductions throughout the year to make this possible.

Piscines Ideales also demonstrates a sense of caring to employees by supporting them to improve their health, providing nutritious snacks and rewarding people with a day off or even a trip for two for losing a certain amount of weight. And employees who successfully quit smoking receive a pay bonus. Seven days per week, the company's spa and fitness center are made available not only to employees, but also to their families, and people can take tennis lessons on the company dime.

"I don't believe that there is any other company like this!" wrote an employee on the Trust Index® Survey. "I am very proud to belong in the big family of Piscines Ideales!"



Runner Up: Google

Another runner up for this year's Great Place to Work® "I Am Treated Like A Person" is Google, the search-based software giant. Google has an extensive array of programs and perks designed to make "Googlers" feel supported and cared for at every turn.

Before they start work, "Nooglers" (new Googlers) are assigned a buddy, a teammate who can provide peer support during the on-boarding experience. New people are also formally introduced to the company at TGIF ("Thank Google It's Friday") events, casual celebrations held every Friday, and are given a chance to share some background about themselves with their co-workers.

Googlers can also take advantage of countless perks and programs: free language courses, massage, on-site haircuts,

and on-site amusements like table football, table tennis, air hockey, and video games. Perhaps most famously, Google also provides its employees with three free (high-quality) meals per day, with menus often proposed by employees themselves. Employees often organise book clubs and other activities; at Google Switzerland, there is even a juggling club that meets weekly. The entire company also sponsors an annual ski trip for all employees across the globe.

"The amount and diversity of perks we get for working at Google is huge and well-known worldwide," wrote one employee on the Trust Index® Survey. "From the slick office and its award-winning restaurant to the... hip parties and off-sites... Google is without a doubt the most generous shop I'll ever work at in my entire career."

Employee comments from the Google Trust Index® Survey:

"Flexible working hours mean that you can start work later, or you can start work early and head home early. You are trusted as an employee not to abuse these benefits. The benefit scheme is the best I've ever seen."

"The openness with which the company is run and the high regard for employees are two things that make Google stand out."

The 100 Best Workplaces in Europe make it easy for employees to balance their work and personal lives – and reap business benefits as a result

Helping employees to achieve work-life balance

has become a priority for the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe – and with good reason. Companies that promote work-life balance can not only

attract and retain qualified people, but also enhance productivity, as employees come to work

feeling healthy, relaxed, and energized.

Whether by allowing people the freedom to shape their own schedules, spend time with their

families, or improve their health, the 100 Best

Workplaces offer a wide range of programs designed to support people's physical and mental

well being.

Supporting Health

Promoting wellness in the workplace can be as fun as sponsoring an employee sports teams or as simple as replacing junk food in the company cafeteria with more healthy options.

Dow Corning Belgium has set up an Anti-Addiction Support Group, a group of four employees trained to support co-workers to kick their habits. The company also offers a three-month-long smoking cessation program in partnership with a renowned Belgian hospital.

At the Dublin offices of **Premier Group**, a recruitment firm, employees can take on-site classes in yoga, pilates, or "Gym John's bootcamp," a specialised diet and fitness course.

Randstad Belgium, a staffing agency, launched a program for employees called "Vitality @ Randstad" that includes courses like tai chi, a healthy cooking workshop, bicycling, and more.

At **Danone UK**, a maker of Activa and other dairy products, all new hires receive an Active Health Passport, which they take to the company's nurse to screen their cholesterol, blood pressure, BMI, and blood sugar. Danone also provides sessions for employees on such topics as testicular cancer and safe drinking.

CIBA Vision GmbH Germany, a division of the contact lens maker, has a company medical officer; employees have direct access to physiotherapists, yoga and fitness teachers, and massage therapists, as well as health classes and workshops, vaccination programs, nutrition lectures, fitness programs, and more.

The Norwegian branch of **SAS Institute** offers all employees meditation classes and provides a meditation room for people in the office. People also get health care, healthy food, and other services to encourage their good well-being.

The Danish energy company **EnergiMidt** offers all employees a "personal efficiency program" (PEP), which provides them with tools to organize their work and private lives in an efficient way. The course is created to avoid stress and help people getting a better work-life balance.

Supporting Family

Companies that allow people the flexibility to take care of their families demonstrate a sense of caring that can go far to encourage long-term loyalty. Here are some examples of how the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe "pitch in" on staff members' family duties:

Accenture, a global management consulting firm, has a "Maternity Buddy Scheme" that lets first-time moms going on maternity leave to learn from co-workers who have experienced the "three phases of maternity leave": preparing to leave and dealing with pregnancy, being on maternity leave, and preparing to return to work.

Techniker Krankenkasse, a manager of one of the largest health care funds in Germany, allows employees to prolong their maternity leave up to four years beyond the end of the statutory leave, with a guarantee that their job will still be there for them when they return. And while they are on leave, mothers are free to participate in the company's professional and personal development program. The company also supports families by paying a monthly bonus to people with kids under 18 years.

STRIKING A BALANCE

Employees at Austria's **Danube Hotel-Betriebsgesellschaft/ Hotel Intercontinental** can eat three meals per day for free in a cafeteria, and their friends and family receive discounts in the global Hotel Intercontinental chain.

SBK Siemens-Betriebskrankenkasse, a German health insurance provider, supports employees' children by providing homework mentoring, au-pairs, babysitters, day care centers, and psychological check-ups and counselling for kids.

Back in early 2006, **Deloitte and Touche Ireland**, part of one of the largest professional services firms in the world, launched an initiative called "Women in the Workforce," to identify issues relevant to women's careers to better retain women in the firm. After all, the managers knew, 60% of the firm's new hires were women, and research has showed that gender diversity improves decision making and business performance. But after realizing that all the company's employees could use better work-life balance, including men, the name of the program was changed to 'Career Life'. Since its launch, this program has brought about a new compressed work week option; new work-at-home options; increased paternity leave; and a phased return to work by which mothers can transition from 50% to 100% work schedule over the course of two months. The company has also upped the time off it gives to employees who get married.

SMA Solar Technology AG allows new moms to share hours, maintains partnerships with a local day care, and more. The company also has an internal babysitter service for babysitting the employees' children. Nine out of ten women who have a baby at SMA return to work within a year.

Support in Times of Need

The Trust Index® Survey asks employees, "What is unique or special about your company that makes it a great place to work?" In answering this question, many employees share how their company supported them through accidents, illness, or personal crises. Formal or informal, these practices can have a tremendous impact on employees' sense of respect and trust.

The Danish insurance company **Alka Forsikring** has established a "colleague network," a group of employees who are particularly trusted by everyone, who make themselves available for anyone who needs advice or help from a caring colleague. This group can also serve as a bridge to outside experts who can offer further support.

DIS, a German staffing and recruitment company, recently partnered with an external institute, the Fürstenberg Institut, that consults employees in times of need. The company pays the full cost of this service, which aims to help employees manage their personal, professional or health problems. The service is also available to people's family members.

Fater, an Italian manufacturer of diapers and other sanitary products, allows people facing financial hardship the chance to take out an interest-free loan of €2,000, to be returned in monthly instalments through payroll deduction. Fater's people can also take time off for family-related issues, such as tending to ailing relatives, and there is a "Solidarity Fund" funded by employees (with a company match) to support co-workers' health-related expenses. Ninety-eight percent of the company's employees affirmed **the Trust Index® Survey** statement, "Management shows a sincere interest in me as a person, not just an employee."

Techniker Krankenkasse provides employees in need with a salary advance; people can take a leave of absence of up to six months to care for sick relatives or children; and consultants are available to help people through difficult times.

Supporting Flexibility

A key part of promoting work-life balance is giving people flexibility in their work schedules, benefits, and their work lives.

Tandberg encourages its employees to work at home – and to use the company's own video-conferencing technologies to stay in touch. Telecommuting not only increases people's work-life flexibility, but also supports the company's environmental mission. (Tandberg has also purchased electric cars that employees can use to attend off-site meetings.)



Do you dare to dream?

At **Sigmar**, a recruiting company in Ireland, employees have buddies who are responsible for their work in times of absence; this makes life easier for the employees – and gives clients more than one person they can count on to serve them.

Hewlett-Packard, Austria introduced a benefits calculator that "decodes" the value of non-monetary benefits, allowing them to customize their benefits package to suit their specific needs.

At **SBK Siemens-Betriebskrankenkasse**, once an employee has more than 50 hours of overtime, s/he is forced to take reduced working days or taking holiday. Through this measure, the company can be sure its people are not over-taxing themselves.

Every employee at **SMA Solar Technology** has a "flexitime account" that lets them take extra time off to offset periods of intense work. The company has set up a "Flexitime Task Force" to ensure people take the time they need.

NetApp lets people apply to take up to a full year off for personal reasons. One employee used the time to pursue his dream of taking a three-month sail trip on a historic clipper; another took a year to ski her way around the world. "To date we have never yet refused a request," the company wrote in their **Culture Audit®**.

Danone UK, a subsidiary of the international food products company, has a program called "Do you dare to dream?" The programme is structured around encouraging and rewarding behaviour, split into three areas: "do" "dare" and "dream".

As part of this program, every year, Danone gives every employee a "dream cloud," a piece of paper on which they can write out their dream. The paper is then posted on a "dream board," displayed in the office for everyone to see. After four weeks, everyone votes on which dream they would like to see come true. The person who receives the most votes has their dream fully funded and enabled by the company. "When we were discussing this programme, the natural inclination was to put some parameters to it, like how many days off someone can have, how much money we will donate etc.," the company wrote in their **Culture Audit®**.

"But at the end of the conversation, the General Manager said 'this is nonsense, we can't put a price on people's dreams!' We only ask that it has to be possible for the company to make the dream happen for the individual." Through this program, one person cycled from John O'Groats to Lands End to raise money for a children's hospice; another undertook a two-month pilgrimage from France to Spain; another returned to Vietnam to find her birth mother; and another went to Cape Town, South Africa to build a house in his native township through Habitat for Humanity.

"Without this company initiative it is highly unlikely that any of them would have had the opportunity to achieve their dreams," the company told us.

IN PRAISE OF PRAISE



"Last month our results were not as high as we had hoped, but our manager treated us all to breakfast to thank us for our continued efforts. We had some croissant and muffins and it really lifted our team spirit." Employee at **Sigmar**, an Irish recruiting firm

FOR A BASIC LESSON ABOUT WHY, especially in a tough economy, it makes sense for companies to show appreciation for their employees, look no further than National Instruments, a global maker of digital measurement instruments, which offers a course to managers called "Recognition Is Free and Unlimited".

It's just that simple: giving positive feedback and letting praise flow – in other words, saying "thank you" on a regular basis – takes away nothing from the bottom line, and is probably more likely to result in a more dedicated, enthused staff.

Of course, while "free and unlimited" is a great place to start, most of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe go far beyond that, and invest generously in employee bonuses, incentives, service awards, and other programs designed to recognize people's hard work.

National Instruments itself holds an extensive Employee Appreciation Week, which includes such activities as managers cooking breakfast for employees, free massage, and a Nintendo Wii boxing tournament. There is also an awards ceremony at which employees earn distinctions such as "Rookie of the Year", "Most Friendly Employee" and "We Feel You Deserve an Award" (which also wins our honor for the most nonsense name for an award!)

Another company that understands people need their spirits lifted now more than ever is **Sigmar**, an Irish recruiting firm, which decided to send a team of employees to Galway as a reward for their great performance, despite the difficult economy. As one employee wrote, "Social events are great motivators and encourage team building and co-operation. We really appreciate [our trip] is still going ahead despite the current economic climate."

The 100 Best Workplaces don't reserve recognition for the winners, but rather offer a variety of programs to ensure everyone feels appreciated. **Danone UK** takes people out to lunch to thank them for their work, buys them flowers, takes teams out to play golf for the day, and takes them out for evening events like ten pin bowling. These activities are open to all employees, not just managers, and they send the message that people matter while promoting a sense of camaraderie.

At **3 Step IT**, a Finnish company that leases IT and manages hardware for other companies, managers try not to let any praiseworthy deed go unnoticed. The company's managers are asked to tell the CEO about people's accomplishments so he can deliver a personal "thank you," and an "Employee of the Month" is recognized with a voucher for a spa weekend for his/her family at Naantali Spa, the most luxurious spa in Finland. (The company pays for the family because when people work hard, it has an impact on their family lives.)

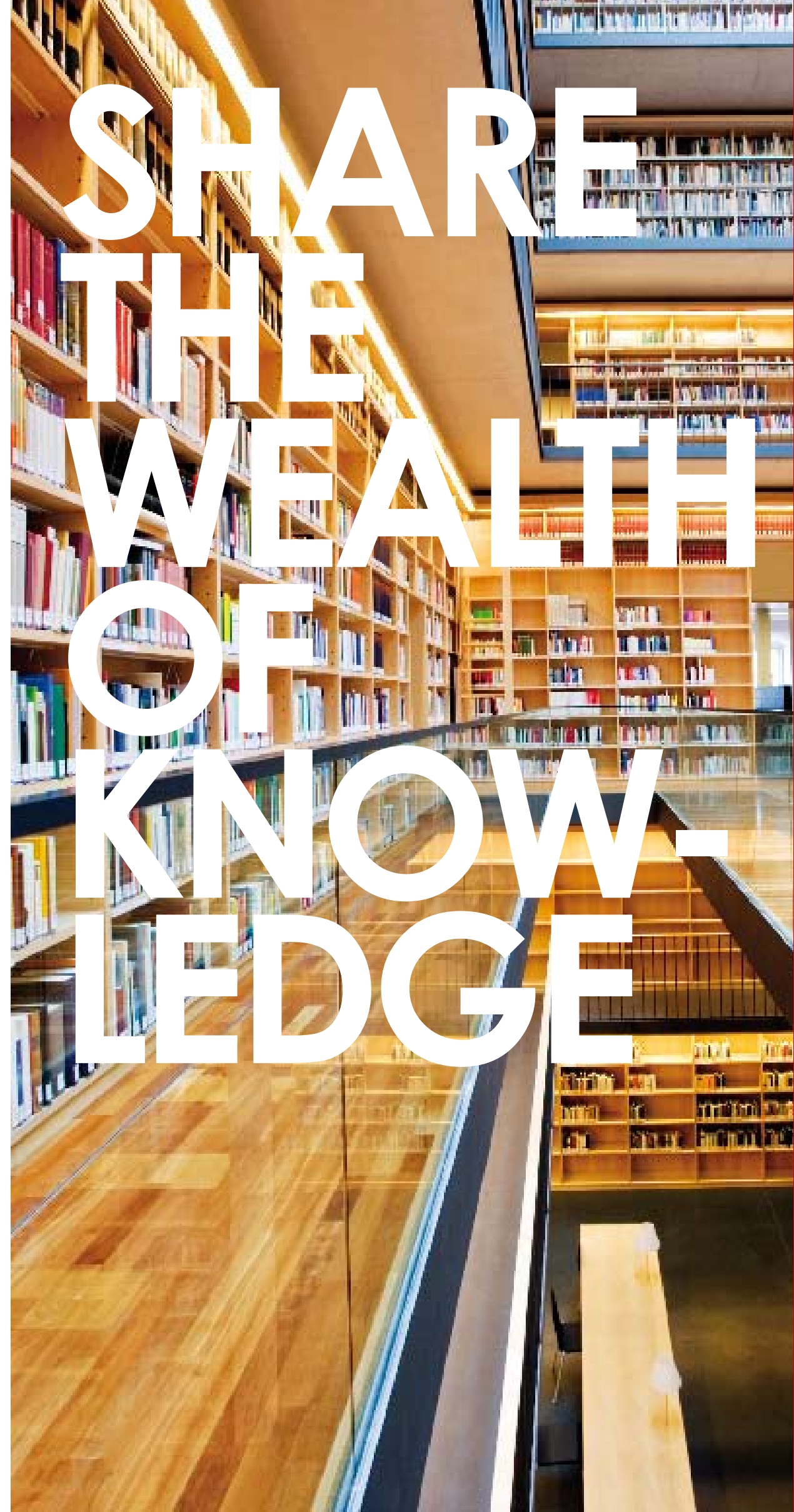
Sometimes recognition can be as simple as sharing the company's profits. **Adobe Systems**, in Germany, has a quarterly global profit sharing program by which people can earn up to 15% of their gross salary; people can then up their equity stake through a stock purchase plan that lets them buy shares at a 15% discount. Or it could be about positive behaviour: **MARS**, for example, offers people a "Good Timekeeping Bonus" that rewards people with up to 10% of their base salary for arriving at work before the official start time.

The right kind of recognition reinforces people's sense of teamwork and shared purpose. **QlikTech** Germany, a maker of analytic software, offers an "Outstanding Achievements Award" to recognize individuals or teams who demonstrate the company's values or who contribute toward its mission. And at **Vector Informatik**, a German networking services firm, the culture is based on team spirit, so the organisation only awards and recognizes teams for their performance, and rarely calls out individuals.

And companies can also encourage innovation by rewarding people for coming up with good ideas. **Magna Powertrain AG & Co KG**, a maker of automotive powertrains based in Austria, has developed a suggestion plan that rewards people for their great ideas with up to 20% of the financial gain or increased efficiency resulting from the suggestion, to a maximum of € 15,000. Magna also sponsors a suggestion competition in which the top prize is a BMW valued at € 45,000.

However a company chooses to recognize its people, they are bound to see more benefits than costs – after all, a genuine expression of gratitude is worth its weight in gold.

&Samhoud, a consulting firm that helps companies to focus on the human side of their businesses, has earned a spot at the top of the best workplaces in the Netherlands for the past two years. Last year, **&Samhoud** sent nearly 90 employees on a trip to see the inauguration of US President Barack Obama, along with a visit to Harvard Business School. The company gives people bonuses not only for achieving their business goals, but also for special achievements like publishing a book, coaching colleagues, or coming up with an innovative idea. One hundred percent of **&Samhoud** employees agreed with the Trust Index® Survey statement, "Everybody has an opportunity to get special recognition".



SHARE THE WEALTH OF KNOW- LEDGE

TIMES ARE TOUGH and everyone knows it – there's not a person in your company who hasn't heard that budgets are being cut and travel reduced, and outside training programs are off the list. In such times, it is more important than ever to keep your employees motivated and engaged in their work, and to encourage them to continue to learn and develop new ideas.

As many of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe have learned, when budgets are tight, using your own people to provide professional growth and development opportunities can be a smart strategy. Initiatives that use a company's own employees and managers as learning resources – such as peer training, cross-functional training, mentoring, and job shadowing – not only allow people to continue to develop in a down economy, but also promote a sense of camaraderie and trust among employees and managers.

The 100 Best Workplaces in Europe use a wide range of programs to support people's personal and professional development. Most of these companies invest significantly in training, through generous tuition reimbursement and other methods. On average, the 100 Best offer their people 68 hours of formal training per employee per year. But just as many have come up with creative ways to support their people that cost little or nothing. Following are some examples:

THE TEACHERS WITHIN

Pentasy, an IT solutions provider based in Munich, invests heavily in employee development: 11% of profits is dedicated to education and training programs. Individual training needs and plans are reviewed twice a year, and everyone is given € 250 to buy books or for other development costs.

Yet one of the most effective training programs at Pentasy is also one of the most cost-effective: twice a year, the company offers a full week of workshops in which employees develop and deliver trainings for their colleagues. All the workshops are proposed by employees themselves, which ensures that a broad range of topics are covered. Those who take these classes learn new skills or knowledge; those who lead them build their skills as trainers and presenters.

Along the same lines, the employees of **Reaktor Innovations**, a Finnish IT software firm, put together training sessions for each other. These courses tend to last between 1-3 days each, and even though they are voluntary and sometimes also take place on weekends, about two-thirds of employees usually participate. Reaktor also frequently holds panel discussions for employees to share their expertise with each other, and they form groups of people from across divisions with similar functions to share best practices, such as a "presentation group," "team leader group," or a "project management group." Internal "on-the-job" training such as cross-function learning or job swaps is another great way to build people's skills while promoting collaboration across divisions.

For example, **ING-DiBa**, Germany, a division of the global savings and investment bank, lets employees take time off to try out different job roles within the company. This not only helps them explore new career possibilities, but also exposes them to the company's "big picture" operations. ING also has a job shadow program through which people work alongside people in other departments to gain insight into what they do.

AN INVESTMENT THAT PAYS OFF

Effective internal training systems can develop a company's "bench strength" and ensure that, when the economy does pick up, people will be ready to move quickly to take on new opportunities. Enhancing the skills of people through the ranks has proved valuable for **Beaverbrooks**, a UK-based jewellery chain: thanks to the company's own management development program, all of the company's current management positions have been filled by people who have been developed from within.

And more than 98 percent of managers have risen up through the ranks at **Dow Corning** Belgium. The company has its own university with 3,100 training courses, and an extensive career development program in which employees identified as having leadership potential maintain a detailed long-term plan for their own development. These future leaders receive coaching from outside consultants and internal senior leaders; every 12 to 18 months, each of these high-potential employees makes a presentation to the executive team and receives feedback.

DRAWING OUT IDEAS

During tough economic times, people are often more willing to reach out and help each other make it through. Leaders can tap into this spirit of cooperation by actively engaging people to share ideas and make suggestions. Employees are often able to come up with creative approaches to solving problems that managers would never have considered.

Many of the 100 Best Workplaces have programs designed to elicit ideas and suggestions from their people. At **Schindlerhof**, Klaus Kobjoll, a hotel based near Nürnberg, Germany, every employee (including senior managers) is required to submit at least one suggestion for improvement each month, a policy implemented to force people to challenge the status quo and continually assess how they do things.

And at **Phillips Austria**, employees form into "Competence Teams," groups of people with high-level of expertise in specific knowledge areas who work together to advance thinking, while also building the competences of their co-workers.

PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

Many of the best companies make an effort to promote a sense of fun, which enhances camaraderie while also building skills. **Sigmar Recruitment**, one of the leading professional recruitment companies in Ireland, trains people around the concept of the television show "The Apprentice." The company brought in an external business leader to judge three employee teams on their skills in negotiation, purchasing, and other basic business skills, such as securing a corporate rate at a hotel or buying six roses at the cheapest price.

And companies also benefit by helping people to develop their personal interests. **Accent Jobs for People**, in Belgium, lets employees spend up to two days per month on training, not just for their own job, but also for personal development. As the company wrote in its **Culture Audit**, "If we want to constantly grow as a company and don't want to stagnate, but continue to evolve, it is vital that we encourage 'lifelong learning.'"

Other great examples of how the 100 best workplaces in Europe develop their people:

Frøs Herreds Sparekasse, a bank chain based in Denmark, helps people to imagine their long-term future by developing five-year development plans. Employees take a so-called "Mastermind" course that helps them determine how they can best apply their talents and skills. This program also includes training to teach the employee's spouse or partner how they can support the employee to achieve his/her goals.

Cultivator is a provider of professional and management training based in Denmark. The company encourages employees to attend its own courses when space is available, which reduces the cost of internal training.

Through a merger, the Danish network company **NetDesign** nearly doubled its number of employees. To ensure that this rapid growth did not result in excessive layers of bureaucracy, the company resisted new policies and instead took all managers through two straight-forward learning modules: "Basic Management" and "The Tough Part of Leading".

E.ON Führungsgesellschaften, an energy distribution firm based in Germany, operates a training academy that teaches more than 90 courses per year, ranging from general management to personal development and conflict resolution. Individuals' learning needs are appraised during an annual review process.

PriceWaterhousecoopers (PWC) Ireland has a "Lunch & Learn" program, in which teams are invited to share a presentation with colleagues about their group, highlighting what they do and what their key opportunities and challenges are. These sessions are recorded and made available on the company's Learning and Development intranet site.

The CEO of **McDonald's** Denmark, Kristian Scheef Madsen, began working in a restaurant 19 years ago and has risen through the ranks to the top spot. The company has a well-honed system for grooming its high-potential front-line employees for the next stage. The McDonald's leadership program is clear and provides very structured support for each step forward in your career toward restaurant manager. Many young people get the first chance to be taken seriously at McDonald's and respond with passion and excitement.

Leroy Merlin, a French home improvement and gardening retail chain, says it has never invested less than 5% of its revenue in the training for the past 15 years. Leroy Merlin also has its own training institute, which trains nearly 12,000 internal trainees per year and offers more than 300 teaching products.

TomTec Imaging Systems, a German maker of ultra-sound and other medical imaging systems, takes the development of its employees very seriously; the company invests up to € 5,000 per year, per employee for training, and offers a wide range of options, including personal development and coaching. This approach is in keeping with two of TomTec's core values: "continuous improvement" and "meaningful work and advancement opportunities for our employees."

– Special Award –

'I Am Paid Fairly For the Work I Do'

FAIR COMPENSATION

GREAT PLACE TO WORK® INSTITUTE EUROPE SPECIAL AWARDS

Each year, the Great Place to Work® Institute gives out special awards to companies that exemplify excellence in one of five selected areas in the Great Place to Work® Model.

In this section, we look at three companies that were nominated by the national affiliate offices of the Great Place to Work® Institute for the "I Am Paid Fairly for the Work I Do" award, which is given to a company that demonstrates exceptional practices or policies related to compensation for employees.



Winner: **SMA Solar Technology**

This year's winner is **SMA Solar Technology**, based in Germany, a global company that makes inverters and other products designed to transform energy from photovoltaic cells into usable electric current. The company has eight international subsidiaries and approximately 2,500 employees globally.

At SMA, employees have an opportunity to be compensated in a variety of ways. Every year since the company was founded in 1981, SMA has paid out an average of 16% of profits to employees through a bonus; all employees receive a share of this bonus, regardless of their job description. Between 2003-2007, each SMA employee received an average of 15% of his/her total annual income as a bonus. And the company also contributes generously to employees' retirement pension plans and provides funding for continuing education.

Employees can also receive an additional percentage of their salary based on an "individual efficiency bonus," which is determined by such factors as a person's flexibility and reliability, commitment, technical skills, know-how, social commitment, and other factors.

"From the beginning, the founders (and today's board) have held the opinion that the company's success essentially is owed to its employees, and that this should be awarded correspondingly," the company wrote in its [Great Place to Work® Culture Audit®](#).

SMA also allocates pay and bonuses with a high level of fairness. Last year, the company absorbed approximately 400 temporary workers as full-time employees. While these employees were not technically entitled to a bonus, the company decided to recognize their efforts anyway, and gave them a full bonus.

As another measure to promote fairness, SMA has a complaints department, where employees can go if they feel their pay is not fair. The company also provides "salary coaching" to help managers determine appropriate pay levels.

When the company went public in June 2008, SMA gave all employees (including temporary employees) the chance to buy stock, and provided a subsidy to do so. Approximately 70% of all employees took advantage of this offer. The company estimates that more than 1,200 employees are now SMA shareholders.

"This is an aspiring company with continuously growing profit," wrote a happy SMA employee in the [Trust Index® Survey](#). "As a result, there is a lot of money and there is no need to fear that the budget will be cut. We are able to afford things that could not easily be implemented in the toughest market."



CULTURE COUNTS!

A study from Germany shows the **business benefits** of being a great workplace

By **Frank Hauser**, CEO of Great Place to Work® Institute Germany



Runner Up: FedEx Express

(Belgium and Italy)

A runner-up for this year's award, **FedEx Express** (Belgium and Italy), goes far to ensure that people's pay is equitable.

It starts with a fair wage. FedEx Express uses an in-house evaluation tool to determine appropriate salaries for all positions, and does not vary starting pay by individual. Pay grades are set between 80%-120% of the median, determined not just by the freight industry, but by a pool of industries that includes banking, airlines, and other sectors. Using this broad range of industries increases the average pay for most positions; manual workers are recruited at 90% of the market rate and reach the full rate after 12 months of service.

FedEx Express also keeps pay fair by getting people at all levels involved in setting the pay structure. The company uses an annual pay review process to define salary increases and benefits for the next fiscal year, in which employees and a works council offer input to executive managers. "The ideas of employees are taken very seriously," wrote an employee on the **Trust Index® Survey**. "Everybody has a chance to promote change."

FedEx Express also uses pay as a way to reward performance. Managers get incentive pay based upon individual and company goals, and employees at all levels can receive bonuses through the "F-Pool," a special budget allocated for managers to reward and retain high-performing people.

The company is also quick to adjust its policies to ensure they are fair. In 2007, FedEx Express launched a profit-sharing plan designed to reward employees when a certain target was met. But the company did not make its goals for the first year in which the plan was implemented. As a result, managers redesigned the plan to provide a percentage of the bonus to be paid out based upon the portion of the goals achieved. "We are recognized in the organisation when we do something good," wrote one employee in the **Trust Index® Survey**.

Optimum, a financial consulting firm in Norway, aims to become one of the leading players in its industry. The company has created a competitive and rewarding environment in which between 34-60% of people's salaries is determined by some sort of bonus. People in sales can see their results updated several times daily, and there is total transparency about the company's results. Employees who outperform their targets can take their bonuses in the form of time off; the top-performing consultant in the company is currently taking a day off every week to be at home."

Runner Up: Microsoft

Global software maker **Microsoft** is not only the #1 Best Large Workplace in Europe for 2009, but it is also a runner-up for this year's "I Am Paid Fairly for the Work I Do" award.

Microsoft provides employees with an equity share in the company through a restricted stock program, for which 100% of the company population is eligible. All new hires are offered shares of Microsoft stock, and everyone has an opportunity to earn more shares each year in the course of their performance review. There is also a company-wide Employee Stock Purchase Plan (ESPP) through which people can buy up to 10% worth of their salary in stocks at 10 percent below market price.

To ensure fair pay across divisions, Microsoft's managers hold "calibration meetings," in which they compare evaluations of employees with those in other areas to make sure bonuses are being given out fairly across the organisation. Microsoft also benchmarks salaries so that they exceed the industry average, and all employees are eligible to receive an incentive based on individual and team results.

Microsoft also strives to go beyond what is required by law when it comes to providing pension pay and other benefits. Microsoft Italy, for example, pays more than is mandated to the national "Trattamento di Fine Rapporto," a pension plan, and also has looser requirements than required for allowing employees to take out advanced payments on this account. More than half of the company's employees participate in the plan.

In addition to straight compensation, Microsoft offers people a range of "fringe" benefits, such as life and health insurance, access to a fitness center, free drinks and lunch vouchers, free internet connections at home, fuel cards, and more. At Microsoft Italy, more than 80% of employees have access to a company car. And Microsoft Greece next year is planning to introduce a childcare subsidy to cover up to 40% of the cost of early education for employees' children. "Microsoft really looks after its employees like no other," wrote one employee.

What is the value of being a great workplace for a company's success?

In 2006, the **Great Place to Work® Institute** Germany partnered with the German Federal Ministry of Labour and with YouGovPsychonomics AG ¹, a research and consulting firm, to conduct research on the value of culture for employee satisfaction – and for a company's financial performance. The project was one of the largest of its kind ever conducted. The project had three main goals:

- 1) to analyse the state of corporate culture, quality of work, and employees' commitment in a range of companies in Germany;
- 2) to assess the impact of organisational culture on corporate success; and
- 3) to develop concepts to support the development of a high-performing culture.

Through this research, 314 companies and organisations from 12 of the largest industrial sectors were randomly chosen, with companies grouped into three size categories. Employees at the participating companies completed a quantitative questionnaire mainly including the **Great Place to Work® Trust Index® Survey** to describe their work experience, while a management representative was interviewed about each company's HR and leadership policies and practices as well as indicators of financial success. In total, 37,151 employees participated in the survey.

The results from the sample companies were then compared with those from the 50 Best Companies to Work for in Germany 2007.

Key findings:

- Among German companies on the whole, only about half of employees regard the various dimensions of employee-orientation in their organisations – including leadership skills, supporting individual development, fairness, and team-orientation – in a positive light. These figures are considerably higher for companies on the list of the 50 Best Companies to Work For in Germany.
- The researchers first looked at how an employees' commitment can be positively influenced. The results showed that the corporate culture experienced by the employees has an exceptionally high impact on their overall engagement ($r=0.86$; $p<0.01$). Such aspects of culture as team spirit, camaraderie, and showing appreciation for and personal interest in employees had the highest impact.
- The researchers also created a "success index" to define companies' financial success, based on the EBIT margin (quantitative criteria) and a rating of profits in the last three years in intra-industry comparison by the management (qualitative criteria). Based on this index, corporate culture and employee commitment were shown to have a strong correlation to a company's financial success, based on a statistically significant correlation ($r=0.32$ ($p<0.01$)) (see chart).

¹ www.psychonomics.de: Research and consulting company, Spin-off of the Department of Economic and Social Psychology of University of Cologne, from 2002 to 2008 licence owner of Great Place to Work® in Germany and Austria



THE VALUE OF DIFFERENCE

A MATTER OF POLICY

Creating a culture of diversity requires the commitment of employees at all levels. Many of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe have specific policies and committees to promote inclusion in the workplace.

W.L. Gore, which manufactures a range of products using its innovative polymer technologies, has a Diversity Council, as well as work-groups focused on gender, family and work, international employees, and "generations," which supports employees of different ages.

Deloitte & Touche has a "Dignity at Work Policy" that dictates that the company will deal directly with complaints of harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, racism and disrespectful behavior.

HIRING THE JOBLESS

Creativ Company, a Danish company that sells art supplies and other goods to individuals, schools, and institutions, decided several years ago that it wanted to open up 10-15% of its staff positions to people who for different reasons cannot hold a normal fulltime job. This initiative resulted in a program through which the company regularly provides job training – and jobs – to unemployed people. Today, 16.7% of the employees in the company are disabled – the highest percentage among the 100 Best.

ING, too, supports unemployed people to re-join the labor market through a program called "Azubi50-Plus." The name comes from the fact that the company hires people who are both unemployed and older than 50 to launch their new careers as apprentices/trainees at ING.

HOW THE 100 BEST SUPPORT DIVERSITY:

Price WaterhouseCoopers Ireland has an on-site prayer room that can be used by employees of any religious faith throughout the work day.

Dow Corning Belgium has established "diversity goals" that are directly linked to executives' incentive pay.

Accenture's "Accent on Women" network offers mentoring and other resources to female employees, and sponsors celebrations such as International Women's Day.

Danone UK partners with Disabled Go, an organisation that working with companies to understand what practical steps they can take to facilitate disabled employees.

Hewlett-Packard Austria has established a women's network that organises workshops and training for women and brings in prominent women as outside speakers.

EMC Ireland, part of a global provider of systems and services for data management, kicked off its 'Diversity at Work' program last year by holding a multi-cultural meal in the company cafeteria, followed by a Diversity Day that showcased dancing from around the world (including salsa, tango, and hip-hop).

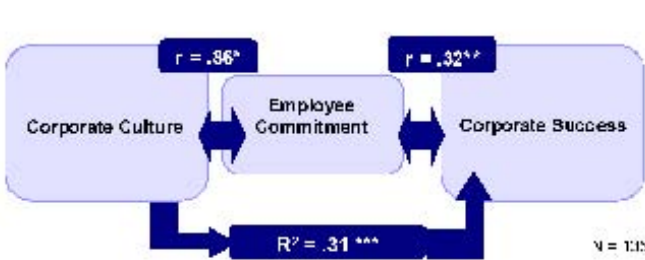
CSU Total Care, a Dutch provider of cleaning and security services, has more than 10,000 employees, 25% of whom are from different cultures and ethnic groups (representing 60 nationalities). The company has developed a range of programs to promote its diverse work force.

Sixty-two percent of employees are women, and the company supports them by offering child care benefits, flexible working hours, and part-time contracts. Flexible schedules and working environments are also provided to older employees (50% of CSU Total Care employees are older than 41). And the company supports handicapped people by adapting the workplace.

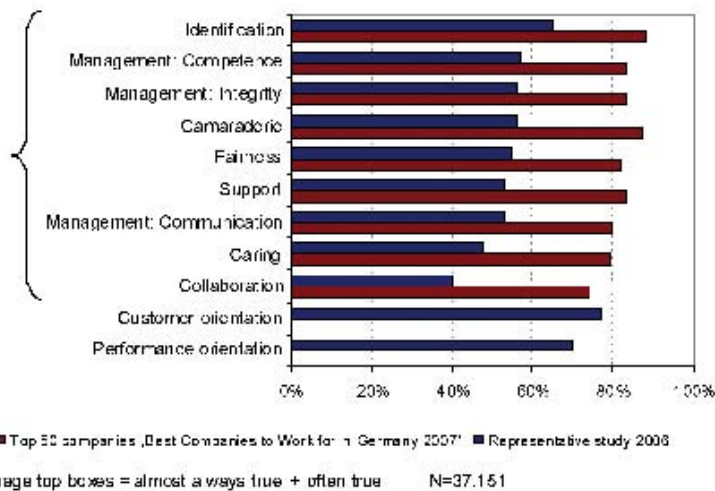
CSU Total Care also shows respect to employees of different faiths by supporting employees to mark the celebration of Ramadan, Lent, or other holidays. CSU Total Care also creates teams of groups of people with similar ethnic backgrounds, and hires translators for when foreign employees need to communicate important information. The company also participates in numerous CSR initiatives focused on illiteracy, disability, habituation of foreign workers, labor equality, and other needs of its work force.

Statkraft, a leading Norwegian energy company, has approximately 3,000 employees working in 20 countries. Because people must continually reach out to company co-workers in other places, the company offers a course on "Cultural Awareness and Cultural Bridge Building".

Corporate Culture, Employee Commitment and Corporate Success



* Pearson Correlation for mean of a 10-item scale of employee commitment (range 0-100) and corporate success index (range 0-100)
 ** Pearson Correlation for commitment index and corporate success index
 *** Percentage of the explained variance (Adjusted R Square) from the regression analysis with corporate success index as dependent variable and corporate culture as predictor



- A regression analysis showed that the combined aspects of corporate culture – including employee orientation and engagement – can account for up to 31 percent of the difference between the financially successful and the not successful companies ($R^2 = 0.31$). Key drivers here include employees' identification with the company, team-orientation, support of professional careers, and fair cooperation, as well as the organisation's capacity to change. Among these areas, engagement has a particularly important mediating function.

- When asked to rate the importance of employee commitment for their company's overall competitiveness, 95 percent of surveyed managers said they consider it to be "very important" or "exceptionally important." But when asked what the most important factor is for competitiveness, those companies classified as "very successful" most frequently ranked employees' commitment as the most important competitive factor, while less successful com-

panies attached less importance to employees' commitment, instead focusing on the price of their products as the primary driver of competitiveness.

- When asked to cite which methods of developing a positive/high-performing culture are most helpful, surveyed managers listed: adoption of best practices (84% indicated "rather helpful" or "very helpful"); company networking (74%); research studies (73%) and seminars (71%).

Overall, the data from this study overwhelmingly showed that developing a more employee-oriented corporate culture constitutes a very important opportunity for increasing the competitiveness of a German company. This applies to companies of all sizes and industries - and most likely also applies to companies in other countries. *Great Place to Work® Institute's* CEO Frank Hauser states: "the question is no longer if it is reasonable to develop a *Great Place to Work®* culture but how to do it within a specific company."

Diversity and Inclusion in the 100 Best Workplaces

Great workplaces strive to treat everybody equally, regardless of their sex, age, race, disability, or sexual orientation, and they encourage people to contribute their unique perspectives, which can be a competitive advantage in a highly diverse global marketplace.

Here are some examples of how the **100 Best Workplaces in Europe** foster a sense of diversity and inclusion among employees:

Gender Equity

Many of the companies on the list have developed innovative programs to address the specific needs and challenges of women in the workplace, and to improve the numbers of women in management positions.

Dow Corning Belgium, for example, has a women's network "to affirm and empower the capabilities and connections of women to advance Dow Corning's mission." Through this program, women provide each other with informal mentoring and networking opportunities, seminars, and a platform to discuss work-life issues. Women now represent 30 percent of all Dow Corning professionals, 31 percent of senior managers, and 46 percent of US corporate executives at the highest levels, including CEO, President, and Chairperson Stephanie Burns, who began her career at Dow as a project chemist in 1983. "With these people at the helm, our company has achieved the best financial results since its creation more than 60 years ago," Dow Corning Belgium wrote in their Culture Audit®.

To ensure fairness for women, **Price Waterhousecoopers Ireland** has set up a Gender Advisory Council, an international group of women who offer company leaders advice on policy related to improving gender equity. The company has a "Women in PwC" network that meets twice per year to share thoughts and ideas on supporting women.

Diversity by Age

Addressing the specific needs and interests of all employees also means taking into account age differences in the employee population, another common practice of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe.

Through an employee survey, for example, **Sparda-Bank München**, a consumer bank based in Germany, learned that employees older than 45 were less content with their workplace than their younger colleagues. The company developed a follow-up survey targeted toward these older employees, and has since launched a fitness program designed specifically for them. Some companies also help older employees by allowing them to cut down their hours to part-time prior to retirement.

Meanwhile, other companies have programs focused on supporting the needs of younger employees. When **Faber-Maunsell**, a division of an engineering consulting firm with more than 3,000 people, learned that many of its younger employees were not signing up for the company pension program because they felt their money was better spent on re-paying their student loans, the company adjusted its policy to allow pension contributions to go directly toward student loans.

Cultural Diversity

Today's European companies often employ people from several nations and cultures. The 100 Best Workplaces in Europe use a range of programs to help foreign staff members integrate.

To assist its international hires, **PriceWaterhousecoopers Ireland** sponsors the entire cost of in-house English classes that last two months and are taught by teachers from the International House Language School. **Philips Austria**, too, pays for international employees – as well as their family members – to take language courses.

Companies celebrate cultural diversity in other ways. **Danube Hotel-Betriebsgesellschaft/Hotel Intercontinental** holds a regular "Celebrate Difference" celebration, in which employees of different countries present their cultural backgrounds to their colleagues, in addition to music, dancing, and other activities. Similarly, Irish recruiting company **Sigmar**, which has staff members from Poland, Lithuania, Australia, and several other countries, holds "Diversity Nights" to celebrate employees' native lands.

Diversity by Sexual Orientation

Several of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe have programs designed to advance the cause of equality for sexual orientation. Global management consulting firm **Accenture**, for example, has a network for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender employees (LGBTs), which aims to provide coaching, recruiting, and sponsorship of LGBT events. This network also serves as a single point of information for managers on issues facing the LGBT community.

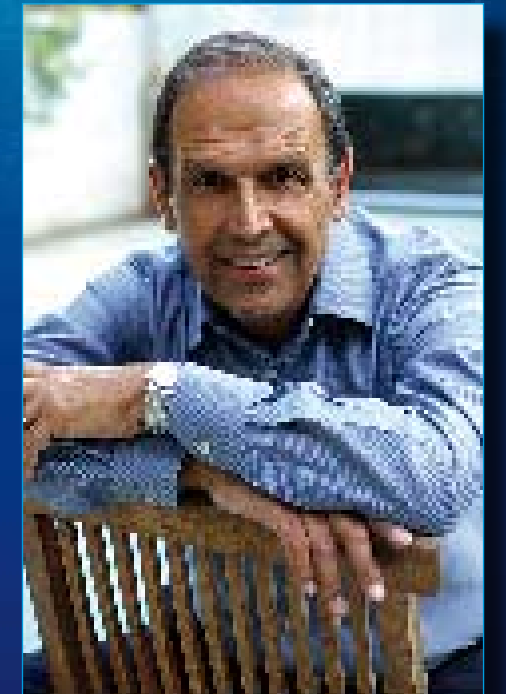
NetApp has developed a community called "Birds of a Feather," designed to help like-minded employees share thoughts, experiences, and support. Currently there are two such groups: LGBT for Gay, Lesbian & Transgender employees and Women Engineers.

Google sponsors a variety of employee clubs and networks, including a group for gay and lesbian employees. Several of the European offices sponsored employees' participation in their local gay pride parades. "Our company is one where people succeed best when they can be themselves," wrote one **Google** employee on the [Trust Index® Survey](#).

Diversity by Physical Ability

Respecting diversity also means welcoming people who may have physical limitations. **Leroy Merlin**, a French home-improvement and gardening retailer, employs more than 600 disabled employees, or around 3.2% of the total workforce. The company also demonstrates an appreciation for inclusion through its philanthropic activities: the company has a special fund set aside for "Handymen Dads," a program aimed at helping families to equip their homes for their handicapped children.

HAPPY FAMILY HAPPY EMPLOYEES



The Great Place to Work® Institute interviewed **Piscines Ideales** CEO Stelios Stavridis about how his company earned the top spot on this year's 50 Best Small and Medium Workplaces in Europe.



Piscines Ideales employees at work – and at play.

– Special Award –

'This is not just a job'

MY WORK AND ROLE HAVE

MEANING

GREAT PLACE TO WORK® INSTITUTE EUROPE SPECIAL AWARDS

Each year, the Great Place to Work® Institute gives out special awards to companies that exemplify excellence in one of five selected areas in the Great Place to Work® Model.

In this section, we look at three companies nominated by the national affiliate offices of the Great Place to Work® Institute for the "This is Not Just a Job" award, which is given to a company that excels in inspiring employees to feel that their work and role in the company have value and meaning.



Winner: Coca-Cola (Greece and Italy)

In the summer of 2007, a series of major forest fires raged across southern Greece. A team of **Coca-Cola** volunteers travelled to the areas surrounding the fires, using company vehicles to deliver 400,000 liters of water, as well as food, medicine, and clothes, to families and emergency services personnel. The company also organised watch patrols and helped the local authorities transport people.

This effort is one of the many reasons why Coca-Cola (represented on this list by the Italy and Greece branch offices) is this year's winner of the "This is Not Just a Job" award.

With one of the most recognized brand names in the world and a dominant market share, Coca-Cola employees already have much to be proud of: "The name of our company is a legacy to us and this makes us try more in order to preserve the trust and the people's love of our products," wrote one employee on the [Trust Index® Survey](#).

Yet the beverage maker's people do not rest on their brand name alone. Indeed, Coca-Cola has received numerous awards for its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Coca-Cola Greece, for example, was honoured by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, for supporting the UN Global Compact, through which companies adhered to a set of ten common principles related to human rights, labour, the environment, corruption, and other areas.

Coca-Cola is also advancing environmental initiatives. The Greece division is one of the few companies in the nation to participate in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, and the Italian division hopes to reduce its consumption of electricity by 8%, in part by installing a co-generated heat and electricity plant at one of its sites; the plant will reduce plant emissions by at least 40% compared to current consumption levels, and any excess energy will be directed into the national grid.

Coca-Cola Italy also launched "Water for Life," an educational program for schools in northeast Italy on water conservation, and sponsored a two-day event at which 400 people joined together to clean up a nearby river.

The company serves other causes, as well. Coca-Cola Italy has purchased pillows for a public theatre in Gaglianico; bought equipment for local soccer and volleyball teams; and donated supplies to a nursery school. The company maintains a charitable foundation for supporting a wide range of causes, including educational, cultural, and arts institutions, as well as Special Olympics and other programs.

The result of these efforts are clear: 100% of Coca-Cola Italy employees surveyed agreed with the [Trust Index® Survey](#) statements "When I look at what we accomplish, I feel a sense of pride" and "I'm proud to tell others I work here."

GPTW: How did your company become a great workplace?

SS: We created an environment of continuous learning that brings out and develops the leader and entrepreneur in each individual. We developed a culture of openness, candor, free expression, and equality. We promote healthy life and fitness for all. We have improved our products and services and increased our sales and market share by becoming more effective, efficient, and highly competitive.

GPTW: How do you see your own role in the organisation? What is the essence of leadership for you?

SS: I want to inspire and motivate people to give each other equal opportunities, believe in their unlimited capabilities, and develop a winner's mentality. When they fail, I want them to persist, stand up, and fight. They should always be optimistic and understand that behind every drawback lies a great opportunity.

Leadership means bringing the leader out of every single individual. Leadership is supporting others and accepting them as valuable colleagues and peers.

People should not be afraid to act as leaders. Leadership is a blessing that everyone deserves. The "serial killers" are mediocrity and mechanistic thinking.

GPTW: How do you make sure that you know what is happening "below the surface" in the organisation?

SS: A leader should never isolate himself or consult with just a few people. Give every single person in the organisation the opportunity to tell you straight to your face what your mistakes are. Right or wrong, everyone's perception matters. This practice is time consuming, but it gives everybody the opportunity to teach and also learn. Above all, it keeps you fully aware and alert of what is happening. Share all the information with everybody. You become much more

knowledgeable and much more responsible. In Piscines Ideales all information is available to all of us.

GPTW: How are you responding to people's anxiety and concerns about the current economic crisis?

SS: I listen to them carefully. I ask them to participate in the decision-making process formally and informally. I keep telling them that a crisis is very beneficial, because it forces us to find our weaknesses and improve in the fields we thought we were doing great. A crisis helps you rationalize further and forces you to improve your products and services. Above all, a crisis brings people in good organisations even closer, thus they commonly find creative new ways to meet the challenges ahead. History has shown that a crisis helps the good become better.

GPTW: What are the top three personal goals for this year in your role as CEO?

a) Take all necessary action in order not to be obliged to lay off people, although our sector (construction) has been badly hit.

b) Develop our people and teach them - especially the younger ones - to take pleasure and pride in their growth and achievements.

c) Influence other CEO's of small and medium companies in Greece to follow Piscines Ideales' example and become better companies with better professionals. Piscines Ideales has for three consecutive years been recognized as Greece's Best Place to Work. Unique achievement? On the contrary! Everybody can do it!

Runner Up: Hilti Deutschland

Hilti Deutschland is a maker of construction tools based in Germany with approximately 1,650 employees. The company is a runner-up for this year's award for its unique program called "Our Culture Journey," which is used to align employees toward a common vision.

"Our Culture Journey" is a series of workshops and activities, primarily for managers, but also involving non-manager employees, aimed at leading people to think about how they can work together to achieve their common goals.

In the first "camp" along the journey, participants focus on such questions as "What is our joint objective?" and "How do we want to cooperate?". The second phase focuses on cooperation and personal development. And the third stop is a "Pit Stop" focused on "going slower in order to accelerate." The "journey" is structured around the company's core values, which include integrity, courage to change, teamwork, and high commitment.

"Our Culture Journey" demands an honesty not often seen in most workplaces. At the start of each new team camp, a half-day is spent on an exercise entitled "Confront the Brutal Facts." During this exercise, teams stand in front of a 2-3-meter mirror and, with the help of a moderator known as a "sherpa," address the obstacles that prevent them from performing successfully.

Another unique dimension of Hilti's approach to organisational development is "Mister C," or "Mister Competition." For this tradition, one of the "sherpas" (or coaches) dresses up as a fox and appears unexpectedly at team meetings, product launches, or other events. "He bursts into these events and communicates very provocatively the perspective of our competition," the company writes. "He does not shy away from confronting employees with questions regarding their strategy and thus creates a healthy portion of curiosity." On other occasions, sherpas dress up as shamans (attempting to embody "team spirit") and appear at "situations in which it is important to strengthen the team on its way."

"Our culture is a journey since we as a company and staff members continuously develop," wrote an employee in the survey. "Company and personal growth are in keeping with one another, which is why my work gives me purpose and satisfaction."

"At Hilti, employees are no longer just a number," wrote another Hilti team member. "You get the feeling that you are important to the company, and that is worth more than its weight in gold!"

Runner Up: Microsoft

Microsoft, ranked one of the Best Large Workplaces in 16 nations this year, is another runner-up for the "My work is more than just a job" award.

Microsoft already creates a sense of meaning for employees through its global mission to help people "realize their full potential". But it is not just by designing software that the company aims to change the world, but also through countless charitable programs.

Microsoft Hellas (Greece) gives people up to three paid days per year to volunteer for a charity or non-profit, and donates \$17 for every hour the person works. It matches employee charitable contributions dollar for dollar up to \$12,000. The company also makes it easy to get involved: Volunteer Connection is an online tool that helps people find opportunities that best match their interests, skills, and availability.

Microsoft has expanded its efforts to "go green". Microsoft Finland, for example, has forged a partnership with the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF), which has developed standards for a Green Office; these standards include reducing waste, cutting down on electricity usage, and carpooling.

In addition to sharing a sense of pride in the charitable work of the Gates Foundation, the world's largest philanthropic foundation, employees are involved with charities of their own. MS Hellas organised a group of 200 volunteers from Microsoft offices across the region to visit the Hatzikiriakio Institute orphanage, where they installed computers and trained children, in addition to painting the walls and planting flowers. The office has also purchased computers for a local school, sponsored student competitions, and more.

As one employee commented in the [Trust Index](#) survey, "[Microsoft] has a unique way of making you feel that it belongs to you, and that the corporate goals and successes are actually your own."



ROLLING OUT

THE RED

CARPET

The 100 Best Workplaces in Europe offer a warm embrace to new hires

Admiral Group, a company that manages eight auto insurance brands in the UK, continually needs to find employees who are "friendly, confident, happy, and helpful," as such people are more likely to deliver high-quality service to customers. To keep a steady supply in the pipeline, the company has a highly developed process for finding (and preparing) new hires.

It all begins with a telephone interview. "The ability to be able to speak and use a phone is vital [for the job]," the company writes. "It also means we are able to build a relationship with potential employees straight away." Once hired, employees spend a few hours in different departments to get a taste of what happens there, and they are paired with a buddy to show them the ropes. Upon completing their training, new recruits go out to a local pub to celebrate with other colleagues.

As a key part of the process, all new employees are asked to describe in writing what kind of company they would like to work for; these forms are passed along to the person's future manager, and to CEO Henry Engelhardt. Within the first three weeks, Engelhardt meets with all new starters to discuss the company values and history. He also presents everyone with a piece of jigsaw puzzle, a symbol to remind people that "to complete the picture you need all the parts and every part is as important as the next." People who have been at Admiral for many years still have their puzzle piece.

Admiral Group is one of many companies that have learned that rolling out the red carpet to new (or potential) employees can have lasting benefits. An effective recruiting, screening, and orientation process ensures that, by the time someone has joined the company, they feel like a full-fledged member, with a high level of trust and comfort from day one.

FINDING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

The first step in getting the right people in the door is to present a consistently welcoming face to everyone, so that even those candidates who don't get the job walk away with a good feeling about the company.

Everyone who interviews at **Danone UK** is given a goody bag as a thank you and to remind them to have "a healthy rest of the day"; the reusable woven bag is filled with Danone products. "We ensure that all candidates are responded to in less than 48 hours, that candidates are not kept waiting in reception when they arrive, and that they get feedback from us in less than 24 hours – including a contract, if they are offered the role," the company told us.

It is also important to know what you're looking for. Danone emphasizes that it hires people with "humanism," as well as openness and enthusiasm. Candidates are sought who demonstrate "respect for others, participation in corporate social responsibility, and understanding that a company is not just a commercial entity but has a responsibility in the community within which it operates."

As an alternative approach, **Alka Forsikring**, in Denmark, often seeks out people who do not necessarily fit into the company's culture, because they like to be challenged by new people and new thoughts.

BUILDING

A MUTUAL EXAMINATION

Great recruiting practices work in two directions, providing both the company and the candidate with an opportunity to get a sense of whether they are a good match.

The interview process, for example, can be a valuable way for companies and potential employees to feel each other out. At **Baring Partners**, candidates are offered an opportunity to talk candidly with those who would be their peers on the job, to get insights from outside the "chain of command". The company has also introduced a process through which all female candidates are assured of meeting at least one other female during the recruitment process.

And at **Vitae**, a staffing and recruitment company in the Netherlands, job applicants are treated as equals from day one. Job interviews are called "course talks", as they are focused on the direction the candidate hopes to take. The company uses its own custom-built web community called Snipp'r, in which job applicants can create a "personal passion profile," where they answer such questions as "Who am I?" "What do I want?" and "What am I able to do?"

It is also important to get peers involved in the interviewing process. When **Worthington Cylinders** hires new people, at least three colleagues are involved in the interviews and selection process. After the first month, it is the colleagues that give the final ok for the new hire, because it is they who can best evaluate how the trainee will fit in.

EARLY OUTREACH

Great workplaces often reach out to welcome new hires before they start their first day. For example, at **QlikTech**, a software company in Germany, new hires are invited to town hall meetings and other company events to get to know their colleagues before they begin their jobs. The company also provides mentors to take the new hire under their wing.

SAP in Germany welcomes new employees with a "Pre-Start-Portal," an interactive web site established for new hires to connect with their co-workers before the first day on the job, and to become familiar with policies such as the dress code. And employees at **Reaktor**, in Finland, are also given access to the company intranet, where they can participate in internal chats and discussions.

A WARM WELCOME

Once on the job, new hires are given a hero's welcome at the Best Workplaces. At **Schindlerhof, Klaus Kobjoll**, once a trainee has been hired, the company throws a welcome party to which family members and friends are also invited. And every time a group of new hires comes into **PricewaterhouseCoopers Ireland**, the company produces a brochure with pictures and biographical information about them, and their photos are posted on an internal database to help people put a name to a face.

New hires at **Danone UK** have to run around the office trying to solve clues, while meeting new people and breaking down barriers. "We like to encourage our employees to know that it is ok to have fun, so directors and senior managers always get involved in the events," the company writes.

And because starting a new job is often full of stressful questions, many of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe assign mentors or buddies to shepherd each new person through the early stages. For example, **Mjølner Informatics**, a custom developer of business software based in Denmark, assigns mentors to introduce each new hire to the company's safety procedures, show them office basics like how the coffee machine works and where the table football is, and generally help them to get acclimated to their work.

LEARNING FROM FRESH PERSPECTIVES

A final important step in a great hiring and welcoming process is to seize the opportunity to learn what a new hire thinks about the company.

At **Mjølner Informatics**, all new employees are invited to an evaluation seminar quarterly, where they are asked to come up with suggestions for changes in the company. **Jones Lang LaSalle** also takes advantage of the fact that new people have fresh perspectives. The company holds "Bright Eyes" meetings, at which the HR team meets with new employees during their first three to six months to see how they are doing and hear their initial impressions. And **SAS Institute** welcomes every new employee with a "morning coffee" with the CEO. The purpose is to collect ideas and initiatives from new employees.

Last year a musician visited **Liberty Seguros**, The Portuguese branch of Liberty Insurance, and taught employees on each floor to play part of a melody on an instrument. Although most had never played the instrument before, the employees rehearsed their parts for an hour, not knowing that the same thing was happening on the other floors. Eventually, all the employees were invited to the auditorium, where they each played their melody as part of a full orchestra. The company's CEO had arranged this project to show people the value of taking a risk and learning new skills – and to demonstrate that through effective teamwork, everyone's part contributes to a greater whole.

Liberty's symphony represents just one of many unique and creative ways in which the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe foster a sense of meaning and purpose for their employees. Following are other examples:

Every month **Boer & Croon**, a corporate finance and consulting firm in the Netherlands, holds an Inspiration Day, where people stimulate each other by talking about ongoing projects, personal stories, and positive client evaluations. At the end of the year, the company gives employees a photo album of Inspiration Days and other company events. The company also uses the "compass rose" – showing the directions north, south, east, and west – as a symbol for inspiration and personal development. Every employee defines his/her own Personal Passion Plan based on this icon. They begin in the East by defining "what they really want to be. It is about wisdom, creation, reflection and authenticity," the company wrote in their Culture Audit®. Next, they look to the South, which is said to represent collaboration and personal leadership. The North represents the "optimal path," including systems and execution. And finally they arrive at the west, which symbolizes impact and results. The Personal Passion Plan serves as a starting point for every coaching session, appraisal, review, assessment, celebration, and development activity.

Diageo, which produces and distributes many of the world's best-known alcoholic beverages (Guinness, Smirnoff, Cuervo, Johnnie Walker, Tanqueray), has a stated purpose to "celebrate life every day, everywhere" – a clear message to employees that their work is about more than just selling drinks. As Managing Director Benet Slay has said, "In its narrowest sense, 'Celebrating life every day, everywhere' conjures up pictures of popping champagne corks, chinking glasses, or a special celebration. But it is more profound than that. The most important word in there is life.'" Diageo also ensures employees stay proud of their company's work by sponsoring a range of programs to promote responsible drinking, including "Know What's In It," a campaign that has reached 750,000 students in England, Scotland and Wales, and a theatre-based educational program about alcohol abuse called "Wasted" that has reached more than 120,000 pupils between the ages of 10-14 years.

Mars, Incorporated was founded in 1911, when Frank C. Mars started making and selling butter candies in Minneapolis. Today, the company has become a global producer of everything from beverages to pet food; it operates in more than 79 countries, and is still managed by members of the Mars family through a "Family Council" that includes the descendants of Frank Mars. Back in the mid-1970s, managers at Mars developed five principles; while they were not written down until the 1980s, they have become a central part of the company's culture. "These very special sets of values are part of our heritage, and are shared by all Mars associates," the company writes. "They are the cornerstone of our culture and provide a link with our traditions and a bridge into the future." The principles – quality, responsibility, mutuality, efficiency, and freedom – are woven throughout the organisation; for example, the company ties its social engagement initiatives and "green" policy directly to the concepts "mutuality" and "responsibility."

LET YOUR PEOPLE DECIDE

One easy way of building camaraderie is to ask employees for their referrals. The Norwegian IT-consulting company **Umoe Consulting** actively encourages employees to refer new hires, either from people they know or the professional online network LinkedIn. Most of the company's new hires have been found through these networks. And at **Roche Pharmaceuticals**, in Denmark, an employee who refers a new hire receives an exclusive dinner for two. If the new employee is still with Roche after six months, the referring employee receives a bonus of € 4,000.

MEANING

BUILDING MEANING

VALUES, VISION, AND MISSION

Formal statements of a company's values, vision, or mission can provide "common ground" to unite an organisation's members. At the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe, such statements tend to be more than just words on the wall.

Autisme Center Vestsjælland, a Danish treatment center for autistic patients, has developed a "Values Game" similar to Trivial Pursuit, with about 600 questions designed to generate discussions about the company's values. Every employee in the company has played the game at some point during 2008.

Impact International, a UK-based company that provides teambuilding and leadership training, has a vision that is simple and to the point: "To be the best experiential learning business on the planet; to be a great place to work; and to be a model of sustainable enterprise." This vision is extended to a set of goals that are even more succinct: "Planet, People and Profit." Perhaps this sense of a "larger purpose" accounts for the company's long-term loyalty: more than 34% of Impact's people have been with the company for more than 10 years.

Plus Uitzendkrachten, a staffing agency based in Belgium, has developed a set of values for its temporary employees called "Temporary Plus." These values include solidarity, trust, integrity, commitment, and positivism. The long term goal of the company is to improve the status and working conditions of temporary workers on the labour market.

SAS Institute, the world's largest privately owned software company (represented on this list by its offices in Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Germany, and Finland) employs 11,000 people worldwide. When the company updated its brand in 2008, branch offices like SAS Norway marked the occasion with a "brand breakfast," staging games of "values bingo" to reinforce the newly developed values. SAS managers are encouraged to discuss the company's values, mission, and vision at every meeting.

Kellogg's Spain also has a clear, simple set of values: people, passion, pride. For this global maker of breakfast cereals and other products, pride comes in part by tapping into the company's rich history: the founder of Kellogg's stressed back in 1914 that employees' well being was key to a company's success. "Kellogg's values are practiced by every individual," wrote one employee on the survey. "They guarantee diversity, respect, equality, and transparency." The company scored 94% on the [Trust Index® Survey](#) in response to the question, "When I look at what we accomplish, I feel a sense of pride."

National Instruments (NI), a leading maker of devices and software for measuring and testing equipment in a wide range of technical industries, is in it for the long haul. Not only does it have one-, five-, and 10-year business goals, but a 100-year plan, which sends a clear message that they intend to be around into the next century.

Coca-Cola has developed an interactive intranet quiz focused on its company culture. Called "Passion to Lead," competition in this game has become a popular pastime among different divisions.

MAKING WORK MEANINGFUL

Many of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe help their people to find greater meaning in the work they do.

hulp in huis, a Belgian housecleaning company, continually reminds employees that they are not only cleaning clients' homes, but also providing elderly clients with someone to talk to and offering a sounding board for those in need. "We want them to understand that their job is far more than household tasks," the company wrote in the [Culture Audit®](#). "This way they can gain more of an appreciation for what they do, and their work becomes more meaningful than just their job."

Employees at **IRMA**, a Danish supermarket chain, can take pride in their company's approach to health: Irma aims to be the largest retailer of organic products in Denmark and publicly states that its mission is to provide quality food for Danes – and to beat the trend toward cheaper, lower quality foods. The company has removed all the candy at the check-out stands and replaced it with fruit.

At **Baringa Partners**, a UK-based business and IT consultancy for the energy, utility, and financial services industries, more than 90% of the company's work is repeat business, and the company does not advertise, instead preferring to let its reputation speak for itself. The company connects employees to the company's past as a way to inspire their future: during a retreat in 2007, the founder of the company shared anecdotes with employees about the company's history – directly from the original 'shed' where the business started.

Giving back

The 100 Best Workplaces in Europe are models of **corporate social responsibility (CSR)**.

Park your car in one of the many parking lots managed by **Euro Car Parks Ireland**, and you may not realize that a portion of your payment will find its way to Bombolulu School of Promise, in Kenya. Euro Car Parks has forged a strong tie to this school: employees make monthly contributions, which are matched by the company and used to supply textbooks, pay and train teachers, provide food to students, and more. The company will be sending two staff members to Kenya to visit the school to meet with children and teachers; these employees write up a report on the progress of the school for their co-workers. "Every penny donated goes toward the school," the company says.

Whether by "going green" and promoting environmental practices or reaching out to support charities around the world, the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe give back in countless meaningful ways (and generate pride and camaraderie among employees at the same time).

Admiral Group (UK) switched its Cardiff office to renewable sources of electricity. During the year the company also started purchasing re-cycled paper for all internal use and is investigating sources for recycled paper for communications with customers.

As part of its contribution to helping the environment, **National Instruments** offers up to £360 per year (paid £30 monthly) to employees who car share, cycle, or walk to work. In 2008, nearly half of all office-based staff participated in this program.

Last year, **NetApp** launched an online forum for customers, employees, and supporters to discuss environmental ideas and propose solutions. Plans are in the works for an employee-only site along these lines.

Sigmar, an Ireland-based recruiting company, has formed a "carbon neutral committee" to address reducing the company's environmental impact. This group had energy-saving lighting and hand dryers installed to remove waste, and they set up a "bike shed" in the staff garden area to encourage people to bike to work.

REACHING AROUND THE WORLD

🌍 **Accenture Ireland** supports a program called Outreach Moldova, which began when an employee volunteered to work in an orphanage in Moldova during the summer of 2005. Since then, the company has contributed money to the orphanage, and also gives time off to people to visit the site on their own (last year six employees made this trip).

🌍 **GlaxoSmithKline Pharma Denmark** has been recognized by the independent Access to Medicine Foundation as the world's leading pharmaceutical company in providing third world countries with low-cost medicine and vaccinations. The company's employees are offered an annual day off with pay to spend on voluntary work, and they can apply for paid grants to carry out humanitarian work.

🌍 At **Danone UK**, employees can take up to 12 weeks off to volunteer in a developing country. The company provides £1,000 toward the costs and offers fully paid leave for half the time. The company sees business benefits in this program: "[The participants] develop skills that they bring back into the workplace," the company wrote in its *Culture Audit*®.

VOLUNTEERING LOCALLY

🌍 **Liberty Seguros**, Portuguese division of a global insurance firm, supports such programs as "Rita's Pink Dream," focused on helping Rita, a five-year-old handicapped girl, to collect funds to build a new home adapted to her special needs. The company also donated 70 computers to schools and institutions in Portugal, and organised activities for children in a rehabilitation center for handicapped children.

🌍 **Wolters Kluwer España**, a software and IT consulting company based in Spain, carries out a variety of community service campaigns. The company's employees recently filled up a truck with food and other products that was delivered to a home for the elderly and poor. The company also celebrates "The Day of the Tree," in which all employees and their relatives can plant a tree. So far, the company has planted more than 6,200 trees.

🌍 Among other charities, **Accenture Ireland** supports the Special Olympics Athlete Leadership Programme (ALP), enabling Special Olympics athletes to become more involved in leadership roles, through public speaking, serving on com-

mittees, volunteering, or coaching. In addition to mentoring athletes, Accenture provides access to its offices for meetings and events.

🌍 **Faber-Maunsell** each year lets employees vote on 10 charities to receive £1,000 each. The company has set up grants of up to £600 for people who help with community groups in their own time, and subsidizes payroll donations so that 100% of employees' donations goes directly to the charities of their choice. Currently, 14% of employees donate in this way and annual donations are in excess of £100,000.

🌍 **Dow Corning Belgium** supports students in area schools (and builds its own pipeline for future talent) by focusing on helping kids with science, math, and technology. In addition to visiting schools and donating books, the company welcomes groups of students to visit Dow Corning's offices, where they learn through hands-on activities.

🌍 **Impact International**, a leadership training firm, provides its clients with business education through community engagement. To ensure the company's own employees are in touch with the goals of this service, the company has a "Learning in the Community (LITC)" initiative encouraging every employee to take a minimum of three working days each year to participate in a community project of their choice.

🌍 **Deloitte & Touche** has more than 165,000 professionals in nearly 150 countries. Every year, the entire company, regardless of their location, sets aside meetings and e-mails to dedicate a single "Impact Day" to carry out service to benefit their local communities. Last year nearly 150 Deloitte staff members at Deloitte Ireland helped out at centers for the homeless and disabled.

🌍 **Beaverbrooks**, a UK-based retailer of jewellery, diamonds, and watches, gives 20% of its total post-tax profits to charity. This year it also gave each employee £100 to donate to the charity of his/her choice. Beaverbrooks allocates 10% of its charity fund to employees every year to distribute as they see fit. "Our goal is that by 2012 it will be a part of every single colleague's job description that they will give 5 working days to work in the community or with a charity," the company wrote in their *Culture Audit*®.

– Special Award –

'We have fun'

ALWAYS IN FOR A GOOD

LAUGH

GREAT PLACE TO WORK® INSTITUTE EUROPE SPECIAL AWARDS

Each year, the Great Place to Work® Institute gives out special awards to companies that exemplify excellence in one of five selected areas in the Great Place to Work® Model.

In this section, we look at three companies that were nominated by the national affiliate offices of Institute for the "We Have Fun" award, which is given to a company that maintains a high level of fun and camaraderie.



Winner: SimCorp (Germany)

When a team of employees at **SimCorp Germany** participated in the JP Morgan Chase Corporate Challenge Cup in Frankfurt, they did it with characteristic style, dressing up in Viking helmets as tribute to their company's Scandinavian roots.

That kind of fun touch is built into the culture at SimCorp, German division of a global maker of software for investment management. One of the company's value statements is: "We are determined, enthusiastic, and perform with integrity – together." Employees make sure the "together" part holds true by staging celebrations and team-oriented activities all the time.

Senior managers are given freedom to celebrate team successes through whatever activities they want; teams last year went hiking, rafting, sushi making, cocktail mixing, bowling, go-cart racing, and more. The company's annual ski trip (open to everyone) includes a ritual "tour de chambers," at which everyone visits each other's chalet for snacks and drinks.

The work environment at SimCorp is also designed for having fun. The company's new offices feature a large staff lounge with adjacent roof terrace, with table soccer, video games, music and CD players, and comfortable seating. Every Friday, employees gather in the staff lounge for "Beer at Four," to share a few laughs and celebrate that week's successes.

Fun activities are also built in as a way to reinforce business goals. Halfway through a year-long project last year, a SimCorp team held a "Summit Meeting," at which team members went rock climbing to show they could "conquer a peak," with the goal of getting motivated for the second part of the project.

When the company hired its 1,000th employee recently, the person received a surprise celebration and a gift from the Chairman of the Board. When SimCorp Germany employees leave to take a job in another division, they are celebrated with a champagne toast or a farewell dinner.

The sense of fun crosses international lines. Each May, the German branch challenges the Belgium branch to a football game. Managing Directors from both firms get involved, as do players and fans. SimCorp Belgium and Germany also occasionally meet up for a go-kart race that doubles as a training session.

People's families also get into the mix. During last year's European Football Cup, offices stayed open late so employees and their spouses and children could gather to watch the games. Spouses and their children are not only invited to the Christmas Party but often participate actively in planning and buying customized gifts for kids. Retirees are always invited to the annual Sommerfest, and everyone's family was invited for an open house when the company moved to its new office.

"The company likes to party, as a result of which an excellent working atmosphere is supported," wrote a SimCorp employee in the *Great Place to Work® Trust Index® Survey*. "[It is] an extremely cooperative and friendly working atmosphere."

HAND IN HAND

Runner Up: Cushman & Wakefield (Portugal)

A runner up for this year's award is the Portuguese office of **Cushman & Wakefield**. Every Cushman employee surveyed in this year's **Trust Index**[®] responded positively to the statement, "When you join the company, you are made to feel welcome," and 97% agreed that "this is a friendly place to work."

Of course, much of this camaraderie centers around a common topic: football.

When the Portuguese national football team plays during the workday, the CEO invites all employees to watch with him in the office social area. Every Wednesday after work, employees come out for a football game at a nearby field. And every year, the London office of Cushman & Wakefield organises a football tournament in which men's and women's teams from the different European branches go head to head. The company supports travel and hotel expenses for everyone who participates.

But it's not all about kicking the ball around. Cushman & Wakefield Portugal employees went on a trip last year to Marrakesh, Morocco, and they have fun during the work day as well. "We have an unique and contagious companionship that makes us stop and try to help every time we see that one of us is having a problem or difficulty, whether a professional or personal problem," wrote one Cushman & Wakefield employee on the survey.

Runner Up: Trodat (Austria)

Trodat, a 97 year-old Austrian maker of self-inking stamps, marking products, and laser engraving machines, counts on teamwork as part of its core philosophy. Each person's compensation is partly based on the performance of the team on which they work.

To keep teams strong, successful projects are celebrated frequently, and the company offers special awards for outstanding team performance. Employees also maintain tight bonds by celebrating the births of each other's children, as well as retirements and other occasions.

Trodat also encourages a healthy sense of competition: employees regularly organise tabletop football tournaments, bowling tournaments, ski days, and other activities, and there are teams for football, walking, running, and ice hockey.



Fun and teamwork go together at the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe

Want to play a game of "egg roulette"? In this "sport," managers at **Admiral Group**, a British auto insurance company, take turns selecting from a box of six eggs (only five of which are cooked), and smashing them against their heads until someone gets...messy.

Such wacky events are common at Admiral, which has a dedicated Ministry of Fun (MOF) that organises activities like [Nintendo] Wii-bleton Olympics, Last Choir Standing, Office Olympics, Talk Like A Pirate Day, and other events. Each month the MOF moves to a different department in the company. Silliness is common among the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe – and this is reflected in the high percentage of employees who agree with the **Trust Index**[®] Survey statement, "This is a fun place to work."

Having fun at work builds camaraderie, which in turn leads to an increased sense of enthusiasm, teamwork, and a shared dedication to common goals – all of which are important for organisational success. Here are some tips from the 100 Best on how to make fun and teamwork go hand-in-hand.

Stretch, an IT consulting company based in Sweden, is the kind of company where people dress up in costumes for the company's annual profit-sharing party, and where they often challenge competitor companies to sports matches. But this has had an added business benefit: the company reports that its customers and competitors alike regard Stretch as a highly personable, "socially aware" company staffed by "employees with high EQ [emotional intelligence]."

SOFTONIC.COM, a software download site headquartered in Barcelona, earned the number one spot on this year's 100-250 employees list of the Best Workplaces in Spain. Employees responded so positively to the statement on camaraderie in the Trust Index® Survey that Softonic.com came away with a 96% score. The company's offices have game rooms where people play and relax, and co-workers post photos of their holidays online for everyone to see. This sense of

fun and camaraderie has provided important glue to the company's steady growth in recent years: "While I understand that some people might be worried that we'll lose our sense of 'family' as we grow, I don't believe that these fears are justified," wrote one employee on this year's survey. "The effort being made to maintain our sense of community is impressive."

ELICA, an Italian maker of kitchen hoods, sponsors outdoor training days, which in the past three years have included adventures like rafting, orientation, and skiing, as well as more adventurous trips, like sailing in Croatia and climbing Mt. Kiliminjaro. Last year the company even sponsored an employee to embark upon a solo crossing of a lake in Bolivia. Elica employees commenting in the survey praised the "strength of the team" and the "great relationship typical of a big family".

GET EVERYONE INVOLVED

Fun is not something that can be ordered from on high. Rather it is best whipped up by employees themselves. **Umoe Consulting**, a business intelligence and technology consulting firm based in Norway, has a committee of employees who organise social events each month, ranging from skiing to cooking classes. Attendance is high and committee membership rotates regularly. **Premier Group's** social committee is funded by contributions from the company and staff; activities include karaoke, quizzes, mystery tours, casino nights, barbecues, and outings. "We have managed to maintain a positive, close-knit, family-friendly culture, despite growing from 80 to 800 employees in just eight years," the company wrote in their Culture Audit®.

GET COMPETITIVE

A little friendly competition can vitalize an event. **Accenture Ireland** holds an annual baking competition in which individuals square off cooking cakes, cookies, desserts, and more (with all the proceeds going to a charitable cause). **Sigmar**, an Irish recruiting firm, holds regular competitions on Nintendo Wii and rewards winners with concert tickets or a bottle of champagne. And **Autisme Center Vestsjælland (ACV)** organises a fun annual team project to build team spirit. One year, the assignment was to create a song about ACV: the best three songs were posted on the company's website, and the winning song has become the "hold" music for the company's phone system. Many of the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe use competitive sports as a way for people to have fun and blow off steam. At **AECOM** (formerly Faber Maunsel), an engineering management firm in the UK, employees compete in paintball, ten-pin bowling, treasure hunts, golf, rugby, football, basketball, squash, and other games. AECOM also competes against other companies, through competitions like the ICE Teamwork Challenge, in which engineering students build rafts and bridges.

MAKE IT MEANINGFUL

Fun corporate activities are even better when they serve a cause, and it doesn't take much to build giving into a group event. **Danone UK** recently staged a quiz night that attracted 70 % of the company – and raised more than £1,000 for charity. And when **NetApp** held a Wii-Olympics at its UK sites, it used the occasion to raise money for charity. Of course, participating in charitable events directly can also be good for fun and teamwork. At **Vector Informatik**, a German software company, a team of employees recently teamed up to participate in the "Run for a Good Cause," a charity run. The company pitched in €4 for every kilometre people ran.

USE THE GLUE

Modern companies often have dispersed employee populations, which can make it difficult to maintain camaraderie. But there are ways to keep remote teams together. For example, at **Bain & Company Spain**, a division of the global business consulting firm, people circulate humorous video clips about funny things that happened throughout the year, posting them on the company intranet. And at **Ormit**, a staffing agency based in the Netherlands where the majority of employees work off-site at other organisations, the company promotes camaraderie by sponsoring sailing and skiing trips, paintball, theatre workshops, bowling, and more. Ninety-seven percent of the company's employees say that "there is a 'family' or 'team' feeling here." "Despite the fact that I do not work daily with other Ormit people, the feeling of camaraderie is strong," wrote one employee in the Trust Index® Survey. "The moment we see each other, we always have good fun."



WELCOME!

AS THE MAYOR OF THIS TOWN, I'm proud to welcome the 100 Best Workplaces in Europe 2009 as our guests in Baden, Austria. I am very pleased that the Great Place to Work® Institute has chosen Baden as the host city for the Great Place to Work® European Events 2009. It is great to be named alongside with London, Dublin and Berlin!

After the enormous success of the Austrian Great Place to Work® Awards in the elegant surroundings of the Congress Casino Baden, it is an honour to celebrate the European Awards with the Best Workplaces of Europe within the beautiful halls of the ancient City Theatre. Historically, the host city Baden was an imperial summer residence of the Hapsburg monarchy that today offers the perfect place for seminars, workshops and the opportunity to relax your mind from your daily business routines. Baden is located very close to Vienna, but offers all the tranquillity you would expect of a peripheral town.

I'm looking forward to welcoming you again as a guest of our beautiful town.

Congratulations on your success!

Erika Adensamer, Mayor of Baden bei Wien

COMPANY INDEX

&Samhoud	18, 45	Irma	8, 62
3 Step IT	19, 45	Jones Lang LaSalle	5, 19, 34, 60
3M	5, 7, 32	Kellogg's	19, 62
Accent Jobs for People	20, 46	Leroy Merlin	9, 47, 54
Accenture	7, 34, 41, 53, 54, 64, 68	Liberty Seguros	19, 61, 64
Admiral Group	7, 15, 25, 59, 64, 67	Magna Powertrain	9, 45
Adobe Systems	15, 19, 45	Mars Belgium	20, 45, 60
AECOM (Faber Maunsell)	9, 33, 54, 64, 68	McDonald's	8, 47
Alka Forsikring	8, 42, 59	Microsoft	7, 10, 15, 26, 50, 58
ATP	7, 38	Middelfart Sparekasse	18, 25
Autisme Center Vestsjælland	19, 62, 68	Mjølner Informatics	18, 60
Bain & Company	19, 68	National Instruments Corp	20, 34, 45, 62
Baringa Partners	19, 60, 62	NetApp	7, 35, 43, 54, 62
Beaverbrooks the Jeweller	8, 33, 46, 64	NetDesign	8, 47
Boer & Croon	20, 61	noventum consulting	18, 34
Bristol-Myers Squibb	18, 30	Optimum	15, 20, 50
Capgemini sd&m	9, 35	ORMIT	20, 68
Ciba Vision	9, 41	Pentasys	18, 46
Cisco	7, 15, 28, 32	Philips Austria	9, 46, 54
Coca-Cola HBC	8, 57, 62	Piscines Ideales	18, 21, 40, 55
ConSol* Software	18, 23	Plus Uitzendkrachten	20, 62
Creativ Company	18, 53	Premier Group	19, 41, 68
CSU Total Care	9, 53	PricewaterhouseCoopers	8, 34, 35, 47, 53, 54, 60
Cultivator	18, 47	QlikTech	19, 45, 60
Cushman & Wakefield	15, 19, 66	Randstad Group Belgium	7, 41
Danone	18, 34, 41, 43, 45, 53, 59, 64, 68	Reaktor Innovations	18, 22, 46, 60
Danube Hotel-Betriebsgesellschaft	20, 42, 54	Roche Pharmaceuticals	18, 60
Deloitte	8, 42, 53, 64	SAP	9, 35, 60
Diageo	9, 60	SAS Institute	7, 41, 60, 62
DIS AG	8, 42	SBK Siemens-Betriebskrankenkasse	9, 42, 43
Dow Corning	7, 41, 46, 53, 54, 64	Schindlerhof, Klaus Kobjoll	20, 46, 60
E.ON Führungsgesellschaften	7, 47	Sigmar Recruitment	19, 34, 43, 45, 46, 54, 68
Elica	8, 68	SimCorp	15, 18, 65
EMC Ireland	8, 53	SMA Solar Technology	7, 42, 43, 48
EnergiMidt	8, 41	Soffonic.com	19, 68
Euro Car Parks	20, 63	Sparda-Bank München	8, 54
Everis Portugal	20, 33	Statkraft	9, 53
Fater	7, 42	Stretch	20, 68
FedEx Express	8, 50	TANDBERG	20, 36, 42
Frøs Herreds Sparekasse	18, 47	Techniker Krankenkasse	9, 41, 42
GlaxoSmithKline Pharma	19, 64	TomTec Imaging Systems	20, 47
Google	7, 12, 40, 54	Trodat	8, 66
Grundfos	20, 35	Umoe Consulting	20, 60
Grupo Visual MS	19, 35	Unimerco	18, 25
Hewlett-Packard	9, 43, 53	Vector Informatik	9, 45, 68
Hilti Deutschland	8, 58	Vitae	8, 60
Hulp in Huis	9, 62	W.L. Gore	7, 53
Impact International	19, 34, 62, 64	Webstep	19, 34
impuls Finanzmanagement	7, 11	Wolters Kluwer España	9, 64
ING-DiBa	9, 46, 53	Worthington Cylinders	15, 20, 33, 60

WHERE DO I FIND GREAT PLACE TO WORK® INSTITUTE?

Great Place to Work® Institute, Inc. has conducted pioneering research on the characteristics of great workplaces for over 25 years. We believe all companies can become great places to work, and our mission is to help them succeed. Our *Great Place to Work® Model®* is recognized as the standard for assessing great workplaces. In 40 countries around the world, we are proud to:

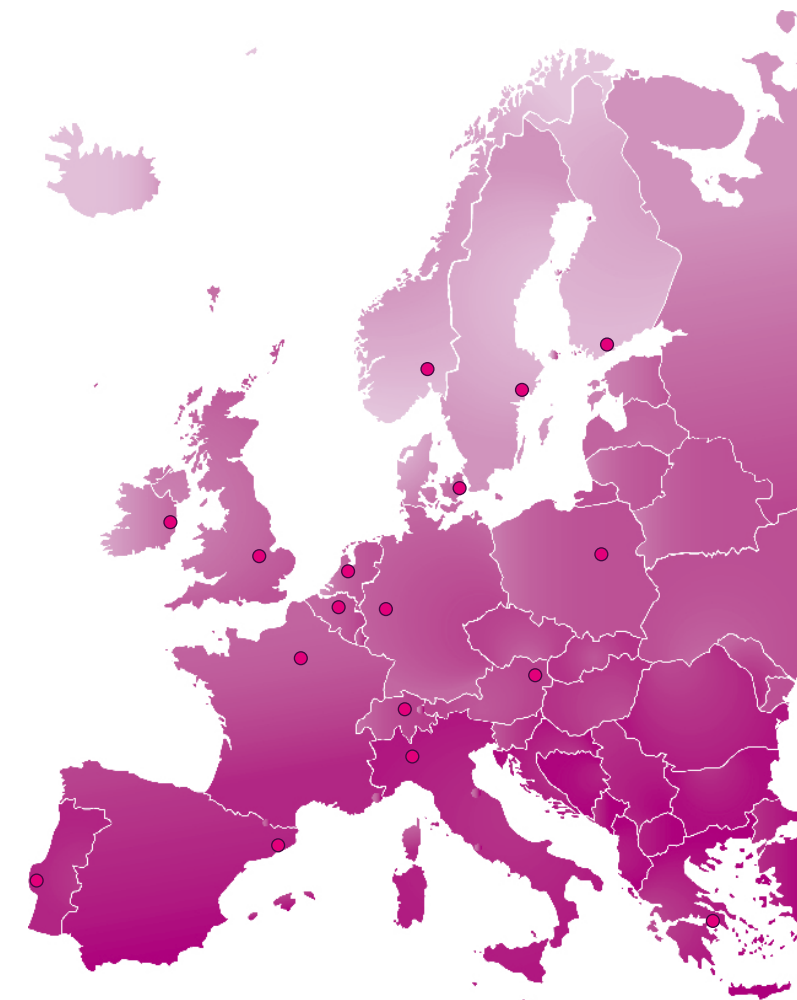
- **Recognize** the Best Workplaces for their achievements through our international Best Workplaces lists. In Europe we publish 17 national lists and worldwide we publish lists in more than 40 countries.

- **Help** companies create and sustain great workplace cultures through our consulting services. Our data collection tools (e.g. employee survey, focus groups, 360-degree professional development tool); educational workshops and training programs; action planning system; and strategic advisory services all support the transformation process within any organization. The Institute's unique access to Best Workplaces' data allows us to offer unparalleled benchmarking opportunities, best practice information, and transformation insight to our consulting clients.

- **Share** resources, best practices, and Institute research through our education services. These include peer networking groups, workshops, conferences, and publications, which enable organisational leaders to learn directly from each other, as well as benefit from our wealth of knowledge and lessons learned from the Best Companies and our clients.

European offices:

Oslo
Stockholm
Helsinki
Copenhagen
Dublin
London
Amsterdam
Leuven
Paris
Vienna
Cologne
Zürich
Warsaw
Milan
Athens
Barcelona
Lisbon



www.greatplacetowork-europe.com

Building a better society by helping companies transform their workplaces

WASIFHEAD

Editorial Team

Chuck Kapelke
Palle Ellemann Knudsen
Milton Moskowitz
Robert Levering
Frank Hauser

Art Direction & Design

Abel Derks
Utrecht, The Netherlands

Photography

istockphoto.com
Thanks to all the companies who shared their photos with us

Print

All Print
Utrecht, The Netherlands

Address

Great Place to Work® Institute Europe
Nansensgade 19, 6
1366 Copenhagen K
Denmark

info@greatplacetowork-europe.com
www.greatplacetowork-europe.com

© Great Place to Work® Institute, Inc. 2009

NOW
YOU
ARE
INSPIRED

...

WHAT ARE YOU
GOING TO DO
DIFFERENTLY IN
YOUR WORKPLACE?