



Chicago Workplaces Show Why They're the Best and Brightest

August 19, 2010

Only companies with the highest quality human resources initiatives are named "Chicago's 101 Best and Brightest Companies to Work For," an honor highly sought after by competing companies throughout the region. These select companies were honored by the National Association for Business Resources (NABR) on Mon., August 2, 2010 in Oak Brook, Ill.

This year's winners practice innovative strategies and represent best practices in human resources in industries as diverse as automotive, insurance, hospitality, communications and nonprofit.

An independent research firm evaluates each company's entry based on key measures in the categories of: Communication, Community Initiatives, Compensation and Benefits, Diversity and Multiculturalism, Employee Education and Development, Employee Engagement and Commitment, Recognition and Retention, Recruitment and Selection, Small Business and Work-Life Balance.



Judy Hsu News Co-anchor at ABC 7 Chicago News, was the Mistress of Ceremonies.

The winning 101 companies also vie for 10 elite awards, one granted for each category. Also an overall winner, who has excelled in all categories, was honored with a "Best of the Best" award. The elite winners were:

CATEGORY	COMPANY
Communication	Harrah's Joliet Hotel & Casino (Joliet)
Community Initiatives	Turner Construction Co. (Chicago)
Compensation and Benefits	Verizon Wireless (Schaumburg)
Diversity and Multiculturalism	KPMG LLP (Chicago)
Employee Education and Development	Ernst & Young (Chicago)
Employee Engagement and Commitment	Assurance (Schaumburg)
Recognition and Retention	Digitas (Chicago)
Recruitment and Selection	Care Communications (Chicago)
Work-Life Balance	FONA International Inc. (Geneva)

CATEGORY	COMPANY
Small Business	BGT (Chicago)
Best of Best	Radio Flyer (Chicago)

It's no small feat to be named a Best and Brightest company, especially since the Conference Board says U.S. job satisfaction is at a 22-year low. Add to that the pending retirement of a large part of the work force – Baby Boomers – and planning for the transfer of knowledge from one generation of workers to the next also becomes critically important for maintaining a top workplace.

In fact, it's becoming clear that the workplace and the relationship to employees is changing, as evidenced by the 2009/2010 U.S. Strategic Rewards Report from Towers Watson, which describes the importance of a company's Employee Value Proposition (EVP). EVP encompasses the collective array of programs the organization offers in exchange for employment and is influenced by the organization's brand, values, culture and leadership, according to the report. Certainly, an important aspect of culture is work-life balance and management's view of employees from a holistic perspective.



Pat Cassidy, News Anchor at WBBM Newsradio was the Master of Ceremonies.

Based on this



Amy Bastuga accepts the Chicago 101 Best of the Best Elite Award for Radio Flyer Inc.

information, *Corp!* asked Chicago's 101 winners about their plans for the generational knowledge transfer, how their companies keep employees motivated and satisfied, and to share with readers their innovative approaches to creating a great workplace.

We invite you to read more about these winners and hopefully, take away some ideas for your own workplace.

(Editor's note: information for this article was compiled by Corp! editorial staff through two methods: 1) completed editorial questionnaires from the 101 winners and 2) brief company descriptions provided by the winners. Not all of the winners submitted editorial questionnaires.)

Alterian, Inc.

Chicago, Ill.

www.alterian.com

Alterian strives to put employees first from the moment they are hired and throughout their journey at

the company. Despite the fact that the country is going through tough economic times, the company has continued to offer employees great benefits. More than two weeks in vacation days, health benefits, gym membership and flexible hours are just some of the things offered to every employee. Alterian is committed to celebrating all workers' individual accomplishments and successes in every department to keep them motivated and to show the company's appreciation. Receiving feedback from all employees remains important and necessary to Alterian executives and management. After receiving feedback they make sure to implement any appropriate changes and according to employees' needs. Research done within the company showed that nine out of 10 people who work at the company enjoy coming to work because of their fellow employees. "Alterian strives to maintain an environment of teamwork and cooperation, with employees who are friendly and supportive of one another," said David Eldridge, CEO. Eldridge adds that this all starts with the company being supportive of each employee.

American Academy of Dermatology

Schaumburg, Ill.

www.aad.org

The American Academy of Dermatology knows employees want to be recognized and rewarded for their hard work. And to recognize them as not only employees, but as people with families and lives outside of work, the Academy developed a Work-Life Balance program in 2005. The program gives employees many options and opportunities, including volunteering in the community, charity matching gift program, employee assistance program, flexible hours, a compressed work week and occasionally working from home. "The American Academy of Dermatology is dedicated to providing an enjoyable and rewarding work environment for all staff members," said Ronald A. Henrichs, executive director and CEO of the Academy. The Academy works hard to promote lifelong learning for all employees and constantly encourages communication and collaboration throughout the company.

American Academy of Pediatrics

Chicago, Ill.

www.illinoisaap.org

The mission of the AAP is to attain optimal physical, mental, and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

Ampac Flexibles

Cary, Ill.

www.ampaonline.com

A privately owned flexible packaging company, Ampac Flexibles believes in ensuring employees know the company cares about their lives and values. John Baumann, CEO and president of Ampac, says the key is to have "the feeling of belonging to a family and not just a job." They make it a point to let employees know that they have interest in them as individuals. Honesty is the best policy for Ampac when communicating with employees. By sharing the company's finances with them monthly, the management team allows the employees to understand where the company stands and when they make a profit as a team. One way of showing appreciation to employees is by having family outings every quarter, including a picnic and breakfast with Santa Claus in the winter. In preparation for the retirement of the Baby Boomers, Ampac says they have an approach already in place to transfer the knowledge to younger workers. "We have set up apprenticeship programs for our employees so they have the ability to grow within our organization into the more skilled roles," said Baumann. By promoting from within they are able to make the transition an easy one.

Assurance Agency Ltd.

Schaumburg, Ill.

www.assuranceagency.com

Assurance Agency prides itself on the creative ways it shows its employees appreciation. One appreciation activity was to have a carnival day at the office. The day was filled with fun snacks — such as snow cones, soft pretzels and cotton candy — and, with a balloon maker onsite, the day was a hit. Management does not hide anything from employees, providing information on the company's finances to them at any time, so employees know exactly what is going on within the company. Assurance cares for their employees' lives by encouraging them to live healthy, happy lives. Providing them with a wellness program and resources to help with everyday concerns are only some of the ways they assist employees. Leadership recognizes employees are committed to their jobs and helps them grow and succeed within the company. In order to help them grow, every employee is asked to identify business and development goals. In return, their managers help them reach these goals by giving them appropriate opportunities, tools and training to achieve them. "With all that we offer, we know all of our workers will have the knowledge to do a job well done," said Lisa Pinion, Assurance Agency's vice president of human resources.



Pat Cassidy presented all the Elite Awards. Assurance of Schaumburg won the Elite Award for Employee Engagement and Commitment.

Astellas Pharma US, Inc.

Deerfield, Ill.

www.us.astellas.com

Through a long tradition of giving back to the community, Astellas Pharma US helps the Chicago area while retaining a solid relationship with employees. Astellas employees appreciate that their company is engaged in the surrounding area. Employees are encouraged to give back as well through a StarGIVING program, which gives employees up to five days paid time off throughout the year to volunteer for organizations. Astellas believes in investing in their employees and this has not changed during tough economic times. They continue to offer learning opportunities onsite and have an unlimited tuition reimbursement program. By encouraging employees to grow in knowledge and skills, the company believes it will become more successful along with them. To help not only Astellas' employees, but their spouses and families as well, the company has extended job and career workshops to employees' families. Astellas Pharma also wants to make sure every employee feels included. By having Heritage Month Celebrations, the company acknowledges employees from every walk of life including ethnicities, genders, sexual orientation and more. "Everyone wants to be respected and treated fairly, so diversity and inclusion are more important than ever," said Seigo Kashii, president and CEO of Astellas Pharma U.S.

ATI Physical Therapy

Bolingbrook, Ill.

www.atipt.com

At ATI Physical Therapy, their mission is to "exceed customer expectations by providing the highest quality of care in a friendly and encouraging environment." The company realizes that to provide the highest quality of care it must depend on staff at ATI. In order to recognize the hard work of employees, management rewards them with gift cards, letters and dinners. To add to the supportive workplace atmosphere, the staff takes part in various contests including a hula hoop contest, a cooking contest, watermelon eating contest and many others. The Wellness Center Attendance contest is ongoing and an

employee is named a winner every quarter. Their mission to the employees is to have them understand the complete vision of the company and to have an environment that is friendly, yet personal, that allows employees to grow and mature professionally. ATI Physical Therapy presents their employees with flexible hours, also giving them the opportunity to work on a part time basis. This helps employees find a more stable work-life balance.

BDO USA, LLP

Chicago, Ill.

www.bdo.com

BDO is the brand name for BDO USA, LLP, a U.S. professional services firm providing assurance, tax, financial advisory and consulting services to a wide range of publicly traded and privately held companies.

Bel Brands USA

Elk Grove Village, Ill.

www.thelaughingcow.com

Annual surveys and focus groups are not just a formality at Bel Brands USA. They use the information gathered to help better serve employees. To improve communication with employees, management took the following three steps: adding TVs throughout the workplace and plants that feature news on the company, employees, community involvement and more; second, Bel Brands President Lance Chambers writes a blog on a monthly basis discussing key issues; finally, they made the company news from Chambers accessible for those without a computer by placing it in a voice message at a toll-free number. Employees can leave messages for the president after listening to his message. The company has implemented several employee suggestions, such as improving employee recognition. Bel Bucks, Cheese Checks, Bel Safety Bucks and Bel Coins are all ways employees can be recognized by management and fellow employees and receive a cash reward in return. "At Bel Brands, we continue to strive for continuous improvement in building a positive and enriching culture and an engaging work environment for our employees," said Chambers.

BGT Partners

Chicago, Ill.

www.bgtpartners.com

BGT Partners, one of the most award-winning interactive agencies in the world, helps companies strengthen their brands through business strategy, creative design and technical expertise.

Bosch Rexroth Corporation

Hoffman Estates, Ill.

www.boschrexroth-us.com

At Bosch Rexroth, management has a direct approach to finding out what employees want and seek from the corporation. "We ask them what they want. We can't grant every wish, but we sure do try," said Berend Bracht, president and CEO. Some of granted requests include the following: a system that allows employees to look for new job opportunities nationally at sister companies, development programs for all associates and tuition reimbursement. Bosch Rexroth views their employees as family and focuses on their needs on a daily basis when making decisions that affect them and their families. One way the corporation is preparing for the knowledge transfer from Baby Boomers to the next generations is by hiring back retirees as



BGT Partners won the Elite Award in the Small Business category.

consultants and trainees. This method has worked well in the recent years, but Bosch Rexroth keeps looking for additional ways to make the knowledge transfer a success. It's a constant goal for them to provide as much information to employees as possible. In an annual company survey, employees said they want to know more and the company continues to supply that each year.

bswift

Chicago, Ill.

www.bswift.com

bswift treasures their employees and believes three things help recruit and retain the great work force they have on staff. First, by having great products and services employees will be committed to the company's cause and take pride in the work that is done. The second step is to have a fun environment that keeps employees loyal and allows them to enjoy coming to work everyday. And last is to keep every employee's and team's contributions and successes visible to everyone and reward them for their hard work. "Employees first and foremost want to be appreciated and feel that the work they do -- whether it's answering the phone or writing software code -- contributes to the success of the company," said Rich Gallun, bswift's CEO. By developing their own recognition tool, the company makes sure each employee receives the credit they deserve. A feeling of togetherness is fostered throughout the company by communicating often to employees through "town hall" meetings. These meetings allow the company to share financial information and company strategies. Although they treasure each of their employees, bswift makes sure that no one person is irreplaceable, making any kind of knowledge transfer easy if someone was to retire.

Burwood Group Inc.

Chicago, Ill.

www.burwood.com

Burwood Group is a technology consulting firm that specializes in IT management and infrastructure solutions. Burwood prides itself in being a trusted business advisor to clients by delivering innovative solutions and superior quality through the employment of exceptional people.

Care Communications

Chicago, Ill.

www.carecommunications.com

Care Communications continues to make employees their main focus. Since the beginning, the company has always focused on being a place where people can have a successful career while having work-life balance. The company provides employees with flexible hours and discourages working on the weekend or past regular business hours. They make it a point to tell employees that work should not interfere with their family life and while they want committed workers, there are priorities. With a work force that contains all four generations, it was imperative that the company came up with a plan for the knowledge transfer that will continuously take place in the company. With flexible hours and good benefits, the older generation enjoys continuing to work and is a good example for the younger generations. Through all that they do for their employees, it's by treating them with respect that forms the strong relationship between the leadership and employees, which often turns into long-term relationships.



Care Communications won the Elite Award for Recruitment and Selection.

Celergo LLC

Deerfield, Ill.

www.celergo.com

Celergo provides global payroll calculation, compliance and distribution services in over 97 countries. It supports clients' local and expatriate payrolls in a variety of sectors including financial services, oil and gas, staffing, technology, education, real estate, manufacturing, consumer goods and many others. From one employee to several thousand employees, Celergo helps clients increase their visibility, control and compliance of their global payroll process.

Chicago Trading Company

Chicago, Ill.

www.chicagotrading.com

Chicago Trading Company is primarily a proprietary options market making firm and is recognized internationally as a leading provider of liquidity and pricing on all U.S. derivatives exchanges.

Clarity Consulting Inc.

Chicago, Ill.

www.claritycon.com

Clarity Consulting Inc. specializes in custom application development on desktop, web and mobile platforms; business intelligence solutions; and legacy application migration.

CME Group

Chicago, Ill.

www.cmegroup.com

CME Group is the world's largest and most diverse derivatives exchange.

Comcast

Chicago, Ill.

www.comcast.com

Comcast is one of the nation's leading providers of entertainment, information and communication products and services, with more than 2.1 million residential and business customers in Illinois, northwest Indiana and southwest Michigan.

Cosi, Inc.

Deerfield, Ill.

www.getcosi.com

According to the company's website, if life is a journey, food is the fuel that lets us keep exploring what's ahead – Cosi (a premium convenience, fast-casual restaurant chain) was founded on the idea that good food will make that journey all the more delicious....from its hand-tossed Signature Salad to a Tomato, Basil, and Mozzarella Sandwich served on delicious warm flatbread, to the comfortable, urbane and contemporary atmosphere, Cosi is more than a restaurant – it is a constantly surprising, always delightful experience.....a place where people gather to relax, dine and share their common belief that "Life Should Be Delicious."

Digitas

Chicago, Ill.

www.digitas.com

Digitas is a leading global integrated brand agency, helping the world's biggest brands develop, engage and profit from building profitable relationships with customers. The Agency pairs media, marketing, technology, creativity, imagination and analytics to ignite emotional bonds between people and brands. Digitas also operates the brand content platform, The Third Act, the independent healthcare marketing brand, Digitas Health, as well as Prodigious Worldwide, the world's only standalone, global digital productions company. With sister agencies Starcom MediaVest, ZenithOptimedia and Denuo, Digitas is a member of Publicis Groupe's VivaKi -- a global digital knowledge and resource center that leverages the combined scale of the autonomous operations of its members to develop new services, new tools and new partnerships.



Digitas won the Elite Award for Recognition and Retention.

Domino Amjet

Gurnee, Ill.

www.domino-printing.com

Domino Amjet views their work force as the most valuable asset and provides employees with a strong benefit and compensation program, which is consistently better than the rest of the market. Also, they encourage further training and education for all employees to help them reach their full potential and to succeed and grow in the company. They also want them to succeed in the other parts of their lives and understand that a work-life balance is critical. Domino Amjet allows employees to work from home and have a variety of start and end times to help them discover the right balance for them between their work life and their personal life. "We know that taking time off to spend with family and friends can be a huge stress reliever for our employees as well as give them the 'down time' that they deserve," said Michael Brown, president. Employees' families are invited to company outings and with paid holidays and extra vacation time during December, the Domino leadership gives employees many opportunities to enjoy their down time. In preparation for the knowledge transfer that will need to occur in the future, management prepares development plans for all of employees to help them prepare and strengthen their skills.

Donlen Corporation

Northbrook, Ill.

www.donlen.com

For more than 40 years, Donlen Corporation has been delivering innovative solutions for vehicle fleet leasing and management for corporations, and is North America's fastest growing fleet management company for the past five years.

Draftfcb

Chicago, Ill.

www.draftfcb.com

Draftfcb is a new breed of agency—the largest holistic ad agency in North America, with more than 1,000 employees in Chicago. Draftfcb operates against a single P&L, which enables the agency to provide the best solution for their clients no matter the platform or idea.

Emergency Nurses Association

Des Plaines, Ill.

www.ena.org

The Emergency Nurses Association's (ENA) leaders dedicate themselves to listening to employees' opinions and needs, and base their decisions for the company around their workers. They offer multiple ways for employees to be appreciated and praised, as well as ways to teach them how to grow within the business. ENA offers a variety of work hours to make things easier for those with family commitments. Because of the amount of work and fast paced lives the employees face every day, ENA offers a program once a year on how to deal with stress. It's important to the company to take care of the health and wellness of their own employees and to ensure their well-being. Another way they help employees deal with stress is by having a masseuse in the office on a monthly basis and by celebrating employees' accomplishments and birthdays. All are invited to enjoy a birthday celebration, anniversaries, Halloween or holiday get together, the summer event and many other special events for employees throughout the calendar year.

Emkay Incorporated

Itasca, Ill.

www.emkay.com

During this tough economic time, Emkay Incorporated stepped up to take care of employees with two programs. A fuel plan was implemented when gas prices rose above \$4 a gallon. In order to help employees with their daily commute, Emkay gave them \$500 gas cards. In 2008, management followed in the national government's footsteps. After the Economic Stimulus Plan took place, Emkay matched the plan by giving employees bonuses. It's also important to the company to recognize individuals' accomplishments by honoring an employee of the quarter, key contributor awards, employee of the year and more. Emkay focuses on training throughout each employee's career. In the very beginning, an employee takes part in the Emkay 101 training when he/she is first hired. There are also quarterly training sessions, which allow employees to cross train in departments and grow in order to better serve customers. "Many employees feel that as a whole the employee base maintains a high level of morale in comparison to previous environments," said Emkay's President and CEO Greg Tepas. He adds that the company is unique because all employees work together to make it the best place to work.

Ernst & Young

Chicago, Ill.

www.ey.com

Ernst & Young is a global leader in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services, with 144,000 people worldwide who are united by shared values and an unwavering commitment to quality.

Euro RSCG Chicago

Chicago, Ill.

www.eurorscgchicago.com

At Euro RSCG Chicago, the company is interested in helping employees achieve all of their goals, both personal and professional. By having a competitive base compensation, health benefits and more, they are able to do so. "We believe that by offering employees a diverse mix of benefits, they'll be better positioned to achieve a positive work-life balance,"

said Ron Bess, CEO of Euro RSCG Chicago and president and COO of Euro RSCG North America. Euro RSCG Chicago makes it a point to help the community of Chicago, but also to use resources to benefit



Ernst & Young won the Employee Education and Development Elite Award.

world issues. They believe current employees look for more and working for a company that supports important causes is valuable. "We know we must stand for more than profit, and we do," said Bess. At Euro RSCG Chicago they invest in their employees by providing them with formal training programs and employee led "lunch and learns." They acknowledge that no one person is alike and therefore offer a variety of training programs that are created uniquely for what an employee wants from their training. The company provides a \$200 incentive for all employees to join a health and fitness club and encourage them to live active lives.

Flexco

Downers Grove, Ill.

www.flexco.com

Flexco is a leading manufacturer of conveyor belt fasteners and related products that increase belt conveyor productivity. Headquartered in Downers Grove, they employ close to 600 employees around the globe.

FONA International Inc.

Geneva, Ill.

www.fona.com

FONA creates and manufactures flavors for the world's leading food and beverage companies. Known for its service culture and commitment to excellence, FONA has earned a reputation as a leader in the highly competitive flavor industry.

Geneca

Oakbrook Terrace, Ill.

www.geneca.com

With a work force made up of four different generations, Geneca is presented with the challenge to form one culture that will work for all age groups and employees. They encourage employees to offer suggestions and ideas to help form a solidified culture. Geneca employees have access to the company's onsite gym and take part in weight loss contests. Geneca has discovered that employees are very supportive of one another and each other's well-being, and they encourage each other. They know that employees are trying to balance a life outside of work and sometimes work interferes. Geneca tries to make it up to employees by sending a gift or a dinner night out for the employee and their spouse, when the employee needed to work late. "We believe in the potential of our employees to do great things. Therefore, we do everything possible to set our people up for success," said Mark Hattas, CEO.



FONA International won the Elite Award for Work-Life Balance.

Getty Images

Chicago, Ill.

www.gettyimages.com

Getty Images was the first company to license imagery online -- and has continued to drive the industry forward with breakthrough licensing models, digital media management tools and a comprehensive offering of creative and editorial imagery, microstock, footage and music.

Golin Harris

Chicago, Ill.

www.golinharris.com

Golin Harris is a leading public relations firm built on 50 years of commitment to our clients, our values and our employees. Its professionals in 34 offices around the globe build long-term partnerships based on mutual trust. The agency's job is to deliver bold thinking and flawless execution that produce meaningful results for client partners.

Greeley and Hansen

Chicago, Ill.

www.greeley-hansen.com

Greeley and Hansen is a leading national niche firm specializing in practical engineering, architectural, and management solutions for complex water, wastewater, and infrastructure challenges since 1914.

Harley Ellis Devereaux

Chicago, Ill.

www.harleyellisdevereaux.com

Harley Ellis Devereaux describes themselves as a compassionate professional architectural and engineering design firm. With flexible work hours, the company supports its employees' individual interests and encourages them to take time to relax and rejuvenate themselves. It's also important to the company to keep management involved with staff and this is done through the many social activities Harley Ellis Devereaux takes part in, including volleyball tournaments during the summer. The wellness of each employee is important to the company. To assure that employees are able to have support with work and personal issues, an employee assistance program is offered around the clock, seven days a week. "Employees need to feel that their efforts count for something, that they are appreciated, and that their employer is supportive of their individualized quest for professional success," says Enrique Suarez, CEO of Harley Ellis Devereaux. Suarez says that he recognizes that these past couple years have not been easy on employees because of tough economic times, however, he continues to believe that employees want to make a meaningful contribution that is acknowledged and they can provide that desire.

Harrah's Joliet

Joliet, Ill.

www.harrahjoliet.com

At this Chicago casino and hotel, employees are critical to the company's success. Harrah's Joliet believes in the service profit chain theory, which boils down to the idea that the more a company invests into employees, the more the employees will invest in customers and the more return on investment the company will receive. The result this theory is a focus on Harrah's employees. Harrah's Joliet's Total Return Reward Plan helps motivate employees by rewarding them quarterly for improving customer service levels. The monthly Star Performer award encourages all employees to recognize the efforts of fellow employees in five different categories. The most prestigious award given to employees is the Chairman's Award, which honors an employee who works at superior levels consistently. Besides recognizing their employees in various ways, Harrah's works hard to make sure employees reach their full potential and are constantly learning new skills to provide the best customer service possible. "We believe that employee engagement is still driven by the same basic principles...leadership, communication and



Harrah's Joliet Casino and Hotel won the Communication Elite Award.

rewards and recognition," said Anastasia Falconio, vice president of human resources.

Hartshorne Plunkard Architecture

Chicago, Ill.

www.hparchitecture.com

Established in 1987, Hartshorne Plunkard Architecture is an award winning, 22-person strong architecture, interior design and planning firm located in Chicago's Fulton Market District.

Hephzibah Children's Association

Oak Park, Ill.

www.hephzibahhome.org

Hephzibah Children's Association is a multi-service child welfare agency that provides school-age child care, child abuse and neglect prevention programs, family assessments and support services, foster care, adoption services, and group homes for children who have suffered abuse, neglect, abandonment and failed foster placements.

Hitachi Consulting

Chicago, Ill.

www.hitachiconsulting.com

As Hitachi, Ltd.'s global consulting company, with operations in the United States, Europe and Asia, Hitachi Consulting is a recognized leader in delivering proven business and IT strategies and solutions to Global 2000 companies across many industries.

Ifbyphone, Inc.

Skokie, Ill.

www.ifbyphone.com

With a dedication to treating all employees equally, Ifbyphone believes happy employees will result in happy customers and investors. In order to keep employees motivated, the company finds out-of-cycle salary adjustments work best to encourage above and beyond performances from employees. But monetary incentives are not the only way to compensate employees for their work, there are others such as group health benefits and non-monetary benefits (including flexible work arrangements, an employee stock plan, an optimistic and collaborative work environment). A couple ways to keep the work environment relaxed and enjoyable are by providing free snacks, coffee, juice and other beverages to staff. To promote camaraderie, a pool table and ping-pong table can be found in the recreation room. "Overall if you create a fair and transparent workplace, you will maximize both employee satisfaction and productivity," said Irv Shapiro, CEO. It's important that all members of the company, management and staff, are treated in a fair and reasonable matter, added Shapiro. Still in its early years, Ifbyphone does not foresee a need for a knowledge transfer from the Baby Boomer generation. A majority of their employees were hired in 2007, come from the millennium generation and the company looks forward to many more years of working with them.

Impact Networking, L.L.C.

Waukegan, Ill.

www.impactnetworking.com

Impact Networking helps businesses create, distribute and manage documents by providing leading-edge technology and support. Impact solutions include: design and web development services; document management; conversion services, cabling and phone systems; and digital office equipment from the leading global manufacturers of printers, copiers and multi-function devices.

Incredible Technologies

Arlington Heights, Ill.

www.itsgames.com

Incredible Technologies (IT) treats all employees as special assets and celebrates the many different occasions that take place in their lives, such as birthdays, anniversaries with the company and personal accomplishments. The company encourages and supports employees who continue their education, whether it be a degree, certificate or attending a few classes. With seminars at the workplace and other training opportunities, employees can learn new skills to help them improve and excel. Flexible hours at Incredible Technologies allow employees to balance their work life and personal life. Whether it is working from home or paid time off for personal matters, the company is there for its employees when needed. Company leaders put a lot of time and focus on employees and through the communication practiced throughout the company it is obvious to management that the employees appreciate it. "The company is supporting each person in all they do and that the ultimate goal of providing the best quality product for the best possible value is being reached not just by the organization as a whole, but that it is felt as an achievement to each member of the IT team," said President and CEO Elaine Hodgson.

Infinium Capital Management

Chicago, Ill.

www.infiniumcm.com

Infinium Capital Management is a proprietary capital management firm based in Chicago. The firm's massive force of specialists in trading, technology, financial engineering and other key operational support areas, represents one of the most powerful groups of any kind in the industry.

Infogix, Inc.

Naperville, Ill.

www.infogix.com

Infogix offers a complete portfolio of software products and services to monitor, detect, and prevent information errors.

Instant Technology

Chicago, Ill.

www.instanttechnology.com

Instant Technology has discovered that employees are encouraged and motivated through incentive programs and these programs have helped the company reach their goals and increase productivity and revenue. The various rewards include tickets to sporting events, gift cards to restaurants and other locations and a shopping spree. These contests run four times during the year and sometimes a fun spin is added to the competition, such as integrating themes from games like Monopoly and Battleship and reality TV shows like "The Amazing Race." Instant Technology has created a wellness program that gives employees the opportunity to eat healthy and stay active. Recently they partnered with ADP, allowing the wellness program to go to the next level and provide employees with additional resources to better their lives. Along with employee health, Instant Technology also takes its role in the community seriously. In 2009 alone, the company donated thousands of dollars to multiple nonprofits including Ronald McDonald House Charities. And the company is always open to employees' suggestions on new ways to get involved in their Chicago community. "Developing, empowering and retaining our internal employees is the key to our success," said Rona Borre, president and CEO. The company works work hard to find the right people and are willing to provide them with all of the training and knowledge necessary to let them flourish.

KeyLimeTie

Downers Grove, Ill.

www.keylimetie.com

KeyLimeTie knows that the success of the company directly comes from the individual success and dedication of every employee. Working hard on a daily basis can put a strain on employees, but management awards this work with a quarterly outings. Once a quarter the company as a whole spends some time together outside of the workplace to relax and unwind. Significant others are also invited to attend the outings, encouraging employees to come together as families during these times as well. On a daily basis, the company offers many amenities on the work site, such as free membership to the company's fitness center, a cafeteria, dry cleaning and a putting green. KeyLimeTie realizes the strain an employee's work life can have on their personal life, so the company offers competitive benefits and rewards employees by showing appreciation in various ways. The company is well prepared to bring up younger generations when the Baby Boomer generation retires. With a mentoring program already in place, junior staff learns from senior and c-level staff. The company encourages employees to work with those on other levels and in different departments to continuously improve the company's culture and the individual employees' knowledge.

Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants

Chicago, Ill.

www.kimptonhotels.com

Kimpton hotels features personalized guest services, comforting in-room amenities, specialty rooms and suites, and provides a range of exciting culinary experiences through affiliated top-related destination chef-driven restaurants.

KPMG

Chicago, Ill.

www.kpmg.com

KPMG LLP, the audit, tax and advisory firm, is the U.S. member firm of KPMG International Cooperative ("KPMG International.") KPMG International's member firms have 140,000 professionals, including more than 7,900 partners, in 145 countries.

LeasePlan USA, Inc

Rolling Meadows, Ill.

www.us.leaseplan.com

LeasePlan USA's annual employee satisfaction survey, conducted by an independent company, shows their employees are engaged and satisfaction is the highest. This survey lets the company hear real feedback from employees and helps them improve in any areas where they might struggle as a company. HealthyU is a program that encourages a healthier lifestyle for LeasePlan employees and improve their lives. Weight-loss competitions, fresh fruit at the office, yoga and other activities are made available to the staff through the program. They also focus on improving each employee's skills by doing various kinds of training and bringing experts onsite to help employees with issues, such as finances and health. "The one item for employees that has not changed over the years is their desire to work in an environment in which they feel appreciated, and which they know that they are making a difference," said Michael A. Pitcher, president and CEO of LeasePlan USA,. He adds that they constantly make an effort to show appreciation to their employees and to make sure each employee is recognized often.

Luna

Chicago, Ill.



KPMG LLP won the Elite award for Diversity and Multiculturalism.

www.luna.com

A family business, Luna believes in respecting customers, as well as employees. Like the man who founded the company, they continue to keep strong relationships with everyone involved in the business. The company understands the personal needs of their employees, such as time off for a family illness or a child's sporting event. They treasure the quality of the work more than how long each employee is behind his/her desk. Luna believes in "work hard, play hard." They celebrate employees' birthdays and other special occasions that occur in the workplace with a dessert or lunch. With a mentoring program in place to help with any knowledge transfer that may need to take place at the company, Luna is ready to face this challenge head on.

Maven Wave Partners LLC

Chicago, Ill.

www.mavenwave.com

The consulting business is unique since employees are the "product" and brand of the company; and Maven Wave Partners LLC takes employee satisfaction and commitment very seriously because of just that. The consulting firm focuses on three important categories to keep the employees satisfied in the workplace, including training and development, hiring only the best, and communication. One way Maven Wave helps associates is to focus on them as individuals, providing each of them the opportunity to create their own unique training plans. Hiring only the best is the idea that "top talent enjoys working with top talent." "People are inspired, motivated and engaged by working alongside others who are smart and savvy and share the same attitudes and passion about their work," said Jeff Lee, partner and founder. And keeping everyone informed on what's occurring in the industry and the company remains a focus, added Lee. Maven Wave's partners consist of people from large consulting firms, who all value a work/life balance for all of their employees. The experience and discipline to accurately estimate work efforts on projects and the commitment to manage expectations of the clients by working hard, but also with an adequate number of people on a team, are ways to provide this balance to the workers. "While we set the bar very high for results, we are supportive of time off and the need to work remotely at times for 'life maintenance,'" said Lee.

McGladrey

Chicago, Ill.

www.mcgladrey.com

The fifth largest US provider of assurance, tax and consulting services, McGladrey has 7,000 professionals and associates in nearly 90 offices.

Milhouse Engineering and Construction, Inc.

Chicago, Ill.

www.milhouseinc.com

Milhouse Engineering and Construction, Inc. is a professional full service engineering/architecture firm that practices "Constructing Quality from the Ground Up" while providing services to private, municipal and governmental clients.

Millennium Electronics, Inc.

Crystal Lake, Ill.

www.mei2000.net

Millennium Electronics, Inc. is a privately held, woman-owned electronic contract manufacturer. Domestically it specializes in low-to-medium volume, higher complexity electronic assemblies, while its international group typically produces products for the higher volume commercial and consumer marketplace.

Mortenson Construction

Chicago, Ill.

www.mortenson.com

Now a six-time 101 Best & Brightest winner, Mortenson Construction has served Chicagoland for over 20 years and has established a reputation as a leader in the health care, municipal and higher education markets, thanks to the company's ingenuity, expertise and exceptional people.

Mutual Trust Financial Group

Oak Brook, Ill.

www.mutualtrust.com

Mutual Trust Financial Group's basic mission is to help people when they are most in need through its high-quality whole life insurance products and world class customer service.

National Collegiate Scouting Association

Chicago, Ill.

www.ncsasports.org

The National Collegiate Scouting Association (NCSA) welcomes employees into the organization with open arms and support from leadership continues from there. On an employee's first day many activities are planned to introduce them to other staff in the office. They also have lunch with the CEO during their first couple months on the job. An employee discussing an issue or having a conversation with the founder and CEO, Chris Krause, is not unusual for employees. The organization wants to keep communication and ideas open and flowing, no matter the employee's position at NCSA. Flexible scheduling allows employees better balance their personal and work lives. They also care about their employees' wellness and with a gym nearby, at which NCSA offers a subsidized membership, many of the employees exercise before or after work, or during lunch. The organization also promotes mental growth by encouraging workers to work on new tasks or projects and attend training classes to enhance their professional lives.

National Futures Association

Chicago, Ill.

www.nfa.futures.org

As a congressionally authorized self-regulatory organization for the U.S. futures industry, National Futures Association's mission is to provide innovative regulatory programs and services that ensure futures market integrity, protect market participants and help its members meet their regulatory responsibilities.

NOW Foods

Bloomington, Ill.

www.nowfoods.com

Focusing on the quality of life is important to NOW Foods and their employees. Flexible hours and the ability to work from home are just some of the perks valued by employees. The company provides an Employee Assistance Program that helps employees with the various issues in their lives. Every summer NOW Foods invites their employees and families to enjoy a day at the zoo or a baseball game in order to relax and enjoy some time together. "In addition to the 'standard' things such as extremely competitive pay and benefits package, we also focus on the little things," said Al Powers, president. Some of the little things include a free lunch to recognize employees' successes and having an ice cream truck at the workplace during a hot summer day. Management makes sure that they view things from an employee's point of view when making any policy changes, which allows them to visualize what kind of impact each change will have on their employees. Leadership at the company also acknowledges that employees value communication and long for more of it. With a good communication system already in place, the company strives to improve on this aspect to form a better relationship with employees.

Office Concepts Inc.

Chicago, Ill.

www.officeconcepts.com

Office Concepts is Chicago's leading commercial office furniture dealership, helping customers create dynamic and engaging work environments.

OtterBase, Inc.

Chicago, Ill.

www.otterbase.com

OtterBase is one of the fastest growing supplemental staffing companies in the country with a rapidly expanding list of Fortune 500 clients. They attribute rapid growth to unwavering focus in three key areas: its clients, its people and its services.

Paylocity

Arlington Heights, Ill.

www.paylocity.com

Paylocity is a leading provider of payroll and human resource solutions for medium-sized companies. One of the few companies currently experiencing growth, Paylocity offers an exciting environment for employees. Because of rapid growth over the years, employees have been provided with many opportunities to be promoted and expand their skills and knowledge. Last year, the company began a recognition program called Orppie and when nominated by managers and colleagues five times, the employee can trade in their Orppie cards in for a gift card. So far, the employees have stayed active in this program and enjoy the rewards. Founder Steve Sarowitz, wanted to have a company that allowed employees to be relaxed because he felt happy employees meant happy clients. With a casual dress code and flexible hours, this provides the relaxed environment desired in the beginning. "Many of our employees embrace the opportunity to make a difference, be involved with our executive team and have such an open door, laid back culture that they might not find at a large corporation," said Paylocity's President and CEO Steve Beauchamp.

PEAK6 Investments, LP

Chicago, Ill.

www.peak6.com

Employees at PEAK6 Investments receive a great compensation package that is at or above the market value in Chicago. Short-term bonuses, along with other incentives and rewards, keep employees encouraged and help them stay motivated. Employees are provided many perks throughout the year and the company is known for its great summer parties at first class venues. Spouses and significant others are always included in these company outings. Parties in the past have included performances from Goo Goo Dolls, Lifehouse, Bon Jovi and other well-known bands. PEAK6 does a lot for employees on a weekly and monthly basis as well, including yoga classes three times a week, bagels once a week, a matching gift program, tuition reimbursement, along with sponsoring company sport leagues. Besides incentives and rewards, PEAK6 supports their employees throughout various stages at the company and helps them grow and develop. In order to achieve a complete and thorough knowledge transfer from one generation of employees to the next, employees take part in a mentoring program. Also a mandatory five business days time off for all workers allows other employees to be cross trained and learn the daily duties and responsibilities of other positions.

Physicians Interactive, Inc.

Libertyville, Ill.

www.physiciansinteractive.com

Physicians Interactive knows communication is a key component at the workplace and have increased

their efforts when it comes to communicating with the work force. Employees receive a weekly message from Donato Tramuto, the company's CEO, which they can hear by clicking on a web link that is sent to their e-mail. Also, employees are given the opportunity to have their ideas and comments heard by top management and work hand-in-hand with their management and leadership team. A key message that Physicians Interactive communicates to their employees is the company's purpose and what they wish to achieve. By keeping employees involved in the mission, leadership believes it will keep the work force engaged and committed to their work. However, leaders they know employees have other commitments in their personal lives and give them flexible hours to tend to these responsibilities. "Employees need to feel valued by the organization and their managers, and to feel fairly compensated for their contributions," said Tramuto. As a younger organization, Physicians Interactive has not come across the knowledge transfer problems that occur when employees retire. But they are well prepared for this because of a commitment to open communication and various meetings, such as virtual ones through Skype.

Plexus

Buffalo Grove, Ill.

www.plexus.com

Plexus is an award-winning participant in the Electronics Manufacturing Services (EMS) industry, providing product design, supply chain and materials management, manufacturing, test, fulfillment and aftermarket solutions to branded product companies in the wireline/networking, wireless infrastructure, medical, industrial/commercial and defense/security/aerospace market sectors.

PLS Financial Service, Inc.

Chicago, Ill.

www.plsfinancial.com

Brothers and co-presidents of PLS Financial Services, Bob and Dan Wolfberg believe in treating each member of their team as a valuable component and important to the company as a whole. "We want our people to be the best in the business – so that's exactly how we treat them," said Bob Wolfberg. Motivating staff by offering many incentive programs, contests within the store and among the stores in a district, performance bonuses for managers, and bonuses for referring new employees, PLS aims to keep employees passionate about their work. PLS has high expectations for all of their employees and stores; however, they do value each employee as a whole person. Flexible scheduling allows employees to tend to any personal/family matters that may arise. Another fun way they recognize the employees' families in the company is by sending a present for an employee's newborn baby – a PLS onesie. The company remains dedicated to promoting from within and providing every employee the opportunity to grow and learn new skills. Having the staff grow within the company allows for a deeper culture to develop and makes PLS stronger as a whole. "Employees want to feel like members of a team, whose contributions make a significant difference to the whole," said Dan Wolfberg.

Primera Engineers, Ltd.

Chicago, Ill.

www.primerachicago.com

Employees of Primera Engineers receive an endless supply of information and resources from the company. Whether it is a health fair, free flu shots, a cancer awareness campaign, or presentations on finances or health matters, Primera Engineers assist their employees with various issues that arise at the workplace. Another priority for the company is to consistently enhance employees' knowledge and training. The human resources department hosts many training programs onsite, such as one produced by a vice president, help the workers grow. In order to further their education and receive certifications, Primera provides the employees with financial assistance. With flexible hours, including "Early Fridays"

and "Paid Time Off Banks," employees can balance their work life and personal life. Also, long-term workers are awarded with a one week paid sabbatical after seven years employment and again after 10 years. "A good work-life program goes a long way towards increasing employee job satisfaction and retention," said Primera's President Michael DeSantiago. Making sure employees are able to spend time at home with their families and friends is important to the leadership team.

Protiviti Inc.

Chicago, Ill.

www.protiviti.com

Protiviti is a global business consulting and internal audit firm composed of experts specializing in risk, advisory and transaction services.

Rabjohns Financial Group

Chicago, Ill.

www.rabjohnsnef.com

Rabjohns provides comprehensive business, estate and insurance services to owners of capital-intensive businesses and their employees.

Radio Flyer, Inc.

Chicago, Ill.

www.radioflyer.com

Radio Flyer credits their employee satisfaction to what may seem obvious; they only hire those who are committed and fun people who others want to work alongside. Hiring the right people is the first and obvious step to creating a great culture and team. Consistently asking employees for feedback has created a relationship with management. "We want people to love their job, so that when they go home their work gives them energy, not drains their energy," said CEO Robert Pasin. If people love their job, Radio Flyer believes they can live the life they want outside of work and at the workplace. Already experiencing the retirement of employees, the company has incorporated a transition program to help the knowledge transfer. Employees are encouraged to share information with each other and learn from one another. Through the transition, those retiring train



Radio Flyer Inc. was the Best of the Best overall Elite winner for the first time.

the person replacing them and will work part-time to make the transition easy for them and for the company. Radio Flyer wants to make this time easy for the employees, as well as the rest of the company. "Employee's have and will always want their role to be meaningful and they want to know that their work contributes to the overall success of the company and its purpose," said Pasin, who adds that Radio Flyer works to achieve the same for its employees.

Rasmussen, Inc.

Chicago, Ill.

www.Rasmussen.edu

Rasmussen prides itself on caring for each employee by focusing on the financial, physical and mental well-being. Employees are encouraged to constantly learn and grow through training, career paths and the Rasmussen Leadership Institute program. Team members are recognized for their commitment and hard work through two awards, the REMy Award and the Harlan Employee Recognition program.

Communication remains important to the employees and the leadership at Rasmussen, who along with bi-annual review broadcasts, also do "fireside chats" with employees every month to discuss various areas of the organization. The company continues to use up-to-date, modern methods to train employees and plans to start an online training program for both employees and managers. Through these training and development programs they are preparing the younger generations for the future and for the knowledge transfer when the Baby Boomer generation retires. By sharing knowledge throughout the company, Rasmussen is well prepared for this transfer to occur.

RealTick

Chicago, Ill.

www.realtick.com

RealTick is the electronic trading industry's global, multi-broker, multi-asset, broker neutral Execution Management System (EMS), used by institutions, broker-dealers and traders worldwide to provide a fully integrated, customizable front-to-back solution, including sophisticated trading tools; electronic access to global brokers and trading liquidity; real-time market data, news, analytics and risk management tools, all supported by state-of-the-art global data centers and unrivalled client service model. RealTick keeps employees engaged by taking part in co-ed softball teams and celebrations during holidays. The company works hard to make sure their work force is treated fairly. Also, management continues to make attempts to stay open and communicate with all of the employees.

Remedy

Chicago, Ill.

www.remedychicago.com

Remedy is a brand strategy and communications agency with a singular focus: to make a positive difference in the health of people locally, nationally and around the world. Our vision is to change how people think and act about health by helping clients create relatable, engaging brands.

R.H. Wine

Saint Charles, Ill.

www.winesergi.com

RH Sergi insurance experts are dedicated to specific industries and are immersed in the intricacies and nuances of a client's individual business. A significant depth of knowledge enables them to definitively craft insurance plans for specific business needs, with far more consideration and detail than any commoditized package.

Robbins Schwartz Nicholas Lifton & Taylor, Ltd.

Chicago, Ill.

www.rsnil.com

The partners/owners of the firm finds the simple task of treating each employee fairly and with the respect they deserve keeps them coming to work happy and committed to their job. One way the company celebrates with their employees is by having a company outing twice a year. Enjoying a baseball game at Wrigley Field or a boat cruise on the waters of Lake Michigan are some examples. They also make it a point to celebrate employees' milestones and birthdays. Once a month they bring in a cake to honor the birthdays of employees that born that particular month. Management at Robbins Schwartz work hard to provide a good work-life balance for employees, such as making it easy for them to work at home, and a work week of 35 hours for the staff. Employees who work part-time -- a minimum of 60 percent of a full schedule -- can still receive benefits. A majority of the partners at the firm are Baby Boomers and are dedicated to making sure the company succeeds after they leave the firm. Each associate at the firm works directly with a partner who guides and counsels them. Also with open communication between the attorneys and staff, the firm believes they will be ready for the knowledge

transfer when the time comes.

Service Express, Inc.

Chicago, Ill.

www.seiservice.com

At Service Express each employee's vision helps them receive the knowledge and tools needed to reach that vision. After an employee tells management their needs and goals, a training program is set up to help the employee achieve their goals. During the process the direct manager and a senior executive tracks the employee's vision goals and makes sure that everything is being done, by everyone, to help them reach their goals. Service Express also wants to help employees reach personal and family goals because they know that work life is not the only thing that is important to every employee. "Employees want to be treated as individuals, to be given a chance to do meaningful work that has an impact on the company and to be recognized for it," said Ron Alvesteffer, president of Service Express.

Shared Technologies Inc.

Naperville/Oakbrook, Ill.

www.sharedtechnologies.com

Shared Technologies is a uniquely-capable total solutions provider specializing in voice, data and converged technologies. Founded in 1977, Shared Technologies has endured and succeeded in a business environment where many competing organizations have failed.

Sikich LLP

Chicago, Ill.

www.sikich.com

Sikich LLP is a public accounting and business advisory firm comprised of more than 350 employees. It traces the firm's roots to 1928 and a one-man CPA firm founded in Champaign, Ill. Today, it ranks as one of the country's 100 largest CPA firms, operating 10 offices in four states.

Skender Construction Company

Chicago, Ill.

www.skender.com

Skender Construction Company strongly encourages employees to learn new skills, knowledge and improve on duties and functions. They provide a tuition reimbursement program for specific education. Skender also encourages all of their employees to take part in a volunteer effort because they believe that helping organizations that enhance others' lives can only improve an employee's career. Doing so also helps them with their personal and spiritual lives by gaining awareness and deepening the human character, according to Lisa Latronico, human resources manager. In preparation for the knowledge transfer that will need to take place at the point of the Baby Boomer retirement, Skender had developed a mentoring program, which provides a one-on-one guidance. Mentoring starts at the beginning of an employee's career, they continue to grow throughout their time at Skender.

Slalom Consulting

Chicago, Ill.

www.slalom.com

Slalom Consulting is a national business and technology consulting firm that works with companies to improve their business processes and enhance their technological systems by providing a range of services including project and program management, software development, portals, business intelligence, enterprise resource planning, customer relationship management, website development and more.

Sonoma Partners, LLC

Chicago, Ill.

www.sonomapartners.com

Sonoma Partners is dedicated to keeping their great employees. They recognize workers like their employees are hard to find, so once they have them they try to keep them as long as they can. Sonoma offers a variety of flexible work hours, including special summer hours, work from home every Wednesday, a paid holiday to celebrate their birthday and more. They provide employees with their own private office, but have monthly events and quarterly company outings that keep employees close and allow for socializing. Sonoma Partners allows their employees to work a 40-45 hour work week, which is lower than a majority of their competitors. Also, they limit an employee's out-of-town travel to only 10 – 20 percent of the time. Between the fewer hours and less traveling, employees are able to go home and spend more time with their families. And with a SWEET program (Sonoma's Whippin' Environment for Elastic Time), employees will be provided with more flexibility. The SWEET program originated because Sonoma Partners believes that in the next few years, employees will demand more flexibility and they want to make sure their employees will already have what they want.

Starcom MediaVest Group

Chicago, Ill.

www.smvgroup.com

Starcom MediaVest Group, one of the world's largest and most innovative marketing communications companies, builds connections between consumers and brands for hundreds of clients, including many of the world's most powerful marketers.

Stout Risius Ross, Inc.

Chicago, Ill.

www.srr.com

Stout Risius Ross is a financial advisory firm, specializing in investment banking, valuation & financial opinions, and dispute advisory & forensic services. SRR's clients range from Fortune 500 corporations to privately held companies in numerous industries around the world.

SWC Technology Partners

Oak Brook, Ill.

www.swc.com

SWC Technology Partners is dedicated to keeping employees engaged. By communicating often and forming a trusting relationship with their workers, SWC developed a strong bond with their employees. "It is important that SWC continues to employ innovative workplace solutions to keep employees engaged, happy and motivated," said SWC President Bob Knott. Providing a competitive base salary is only one of the many things SWC offers their employees; others include education reimbursement, employee of a month awards, company outings throughout the year, flexible hours, and health and wellness programs. The company focuses on providing a work-life balance for all of employees. They try to keep the stress level low and strongly encourages employees to work a maximum of 40 hours a week. SWC wants to make it easy for workers to balance their family life and work life by having a child care center onsite, family leave and paid vacations and sick days. When it comes to the knowledge transfer between employees, SWC treasures the knowledge that both their "seasoned experts" and younger employees bring to the company.

Tasty Catering

Elk Grove Village, Ill.

www.tastycatering.com

At Tasty Catering, leaders of the company and staff make decisions together as a team. A diverse group of people from throughout the company come together monthly with management and discuss benefits,

health insurance, education, strategic planning and, investments, among other topics important to the company and its employees. The company keeps all employees informed of financial standings and publishes updates from each team in a weekly internal newsletter, Inside the Dish. "Tasty Catering's mantra is 'God or Higher Power First, Family Second, Education Third and Work Fourth,'" said Thomas J. Walter, the company's CEO. The organization sponsors co-ed sports teams and welcomes staff and clients to attend the games, including celebrating with the team afterward with pizza. Twice a year staff and families are encouraged to spend a Saturday with Friends of the Park, cleaning buckthorn out of Busse Forest Preserve. Participating staff is paid and trucks are packed with beverages, burgers, salads and grills and the crew has a picnic lunch in the forest preserve. Also, an employee assistance program is in place to help with family emergencies and purchases like cars and homes, offering a lower interest rate than a bank. "We provide a workplace that allows our staff to reach their potential, to provide for their families and to achieve their eternal reward," says Walter. Tasty Catering is well prepared for the knowledge transfer necessary when the Baby Boomer generation retires. With a strong history of working with high school and college students, the company has more than 10 employees who are 21 to 32 years old who started as teenagers and three of them have a place on the leadership team. All owners have an understudy in place and a succession plan has already been put in place. Walter remains confident that the knowledge transfer will be a success.

The Comprehensive Group

Glenview, Ill.

www.compther.com

The company was originally founded by a single mother who understood the balance of work and life all too well. Now 35 years later, the Comprehensive Group still believes in flexible hours, substantial time-off and employee recognition often. Employees are honored at an annual dinner and during the company's summer outing. The knowledge transfer at the Comprehensive Group goes both ways. The older therapists offer their experience and wise knowledge to the new students. In return, the new students bring in some of the latest research from the classroom to their professional lives. This sharing of information helps both groups.

The James Hotel

Chicago, Ill.

www.jameshotels.com

Team members have the most valuable information and The James Hotel encourages and asks for their input, since they have the most face time with the customers and have a better idea on what customers want. The fact that their opinions and responses mean so much allows employees to take pride in their daily duties. The James Hotel rewards their employees through some traditional ways like a team member of the month and manager of the quarter. Cross training and job transfers also gives employees a great opportunity to grow and learn new skills. "Respect for each other is the most important value that will never change and that will allow a company to grow or hold together even in tougher times," said Patrick Hatton, general manager. The management at The James Hotel greatly appreciates their employees and respects them and all the work they do.

The Marketing Store

Chicago, Ill.

www.themarketingstore.com

The Marketing Store delivers innovative, large-scale promotional and loyalty programs that result in sales, having particular expertise in the areas of loyalty/CRM programs, promotional development, toy premiums, contests/games/sweepstakes and digital strategy.

ThoughtWorks, Inc.

Chicago, Ill.

www.thoughtworks.com

This firm delivers custom applications and provides consulting grounded in reality; helping organizations become efficient through Agile and Lean practices and principles.

Thresholds Psychiatric Rehabilitation

Chicago, Ill.

www.thresholds.org

Thresholds Psychiatric Rehabilitation offers a casual and friendly environment for all of its employees. The leadership of the company works hard to provide great benefits with a good wage. Thresholds allows management to mentor the younger staff into the leaders they hope they will be in the future. It is important to the entire company to include all and to have an environment that is open to diversity and people from all walks of life. They provide employees the opportunity to explore something new everyday in the workplace and by providing employees with the right tools, the employees can achieve their professional and personal goals. "People want a comfortable, open-minded, challenging work environment where they consistently face down and remove barriers and obstacles -- both for themselves and for the members we serve," said Anthony M. Zipple, Thresholds Psychiatric Rehabilitation's CEO.

Total Attorneys

Chicago, Ill.

www.totalattorneys.com

Total Attorneys provides solo practitioners and small law firms with marketing solutions, back office management, virtual paralegal case support and a host of other specialized services that enable lawyers to focus on their clients while growing their practice.

Turner Construction Company

Chicago, Ill.

www.turnerconstruction.com

At Turner Construction Company, it's important to recognize the employees' principles, and despite having a multi-generational staff, they have come to understand the three key areas that are important to all: individual growth, health and well-being, and community. "One tried and true approach we always have and will continue to stress is putting emphasis on our managers' relationship with their direct reporting staff," said Steve Fort, vice president and general manager. The managers know best how to motivate and satisfy their workers, and to guarantee these goals are met, he added. Employees are inspired to come to work, because they are helping the community. Constructing buildings at Turner is more than providing a structure, but Turner and their employees are dedicated to providing places for clients to education, heal, conduct business and entertain, while making the area a healthier environment and preserving natural resources. A company goal is for employees to develop a connection with their work, and to show they work for a company that cares for them personally and the community as a whole. Turner provides many ways that employees can communicate with management; including a blog to post questions, town hall meetings, quarterly lunches with the general manager and other methods. "Employees want a sense of connection, engagement and camaraderie," said Fort. "This can be achieved through mutual respect and open communication between employees and the company."



Turner Construction won the Community Initiatives Elite Award.

Two Degrees

Chicago, Ill.

www.twodegrees.com

Two Degrees is a dynamic and rapidly growing consulting firm, which provides value-added finance and accounting services to clients through experienced Principal Associates, each of whom bring proficiency in ERP/financial systems, Excel and other reporting and analytic tools and expertise in how day-to-day business is done.

Vapor Bus International

Buffalo Grove, Ill.

www.vaporddoors.com

Vapor Bus International is the nation's leading supplier of doors and door actuation systems for public transit buses.

Verizon Wireless

Chicago, Ill.

www.verizonwireless.com

Verizon Wireless is ranked among America's best employers and its employees enjoy working in an environment that inspires excellence, integrity and has earned it recognition as the employer of choice in the telecommunications industry.



Verison Wireless won the Elite Award for Compensation and Benefits.

VW Credit, Inc.

Libertyville, Ill.

www.vw.com

VW Credit conducts an annual employee survey, using the information they receive to develop plans to respond to any issues that may arise. After meeting with their various teams, they also talk to the employees throughout the year and are available to them with any ideas or questions they may have. Currently, VW Credit has diversity and employee activity teams to implement fun activities in the workplace, ensure inclusion of all employees and create cultural awareness in the company. By offering training, seminars, tuition reimbursement and a 'job switching' training program, VW Credit focuses on the success and growth of each employee. "We know that we are only as strong as the combined competencies and overall engagement of our workforce. Leaders are trained to be leaders and not 'task masters,'" said Kevin Kelly, president. They go a step further and show that they care about the employees' lives outside of work. Whether it's offering family friendly discount programs, extending their lease and purchase discounts to family members or having fun at the company's annual family picnic, VW Credit has proven they care about the whole person.

Wheels, Inc.

Des Plaines, Ill.

www.wheels.com

Wheels is a family oriented business and this is evident in the culture at the workplace and by incorporating employees' families into the company. For example, the company has an annual Wheels Family Day as one of the many celebrations that occur throughout the year. Celebrations like this one allow employees to enjoy time with their families while getting to know their fellow employees and promote camaraderie. Wheels rewards their employees through incentives such as gas gift cards and a company polo shirt for meeting product milestones or working especially hard on a project. Town hall

meetings and training sessions are other ways the company positively influences the staff. Wheels takes flexible hours to a whole new level, being ready to accommodate employees who face difficult personal situations that take them away from the office and under certain circumstances, will make a home office for an employee. Also, they offer a variety of health and wellness programs to promote healthy and active lifestyles for all of their employees.

WMS

Waukegan, Ill.

www.wms.com

WMS takes employee engagement to a new level with the tool "Spark!" The tool allows employees to submit ideas on various topics throughout the organization. Employees can join together for a particular idea, vote to support ideas and more. Employee participation with Spark! has led to many new innovations and benefits in the company, showing that the employees do make an impact and are involved. "WMS has a long-term legacy of creating innovative products and our 'Culture of Innovation' fuels that legacy," said Brian Gamache, chairman and CEO. Employees are also given the opportunity to use the Flex-Time Work Arrangements program, which allows them to vary their time in the office throughout the work day. Also in the summer, employees are invited to take a shorter workweek by ending early on Fridays, as long as their work and projects allow it. WMS's wellness program helps keep employees active and healthy and provides them with a reimbursement, to eligible full-time employees, of up to 50 percent of their wellness cost (up to \$400/year).

WOW!

Chicago, Ill.

www.wowway.com

WOW! believes in providing an experience that lives up to its name.