

Making Your Company a Great Place to Work

By James Harwood – CEO, Total HR

One characteristic found in each company voted as “Best Small Places to Work”: They excel at engaging and empowering employees. This month’s HR Magazine ranks the 25 best small companies (50 to 250 employees) to work for in America, and describes what it is about these companies making employees so thrilled there. Not surprisingly, all the companies offer the basics like good benefits about working, competitive pay, a comfortable work environment and competent managers. But more importantly, employees expressed a feeling of belongingness, respect and appreciation. Often times, employees describe their work environment and coworkers as “family”. As a result, they are often more willing to stay with the company, are more committed to the company’s success and willing to offer suggestions for improvement.

These solid HR practices have a direct impact on the company’s success. For example, the number 1 rated small company Analytical Graphics (an aerospace software development firm based in Exton, Pennsylvania), had revenues that soared 47% last year to \$42 million. In addition, the company boasts exceptional employee productivity, with each employee producing 3 million lines of computer code each year, and per employee sales of \$260,000. Analytical Graphics epitomizes the family like atmosphere, with employee perks that include a laundry room, fitness room, and daily breakfasts, lunches and dinners, to which family members are invited.

Employee empowerment is another key element of small company success. Another small company making the list, Johnsonville Sausage (based in Kohler, Wisconsin) boasts a “culture of empowerment” where all employees (called members at Johnsonville) are authorized to shut down the production line if they see something that isn’t right. As one worker from the company reported “People here at Johnsonville are given the responsibility to run the company.”

In general, the most common characteristic making these small companies great places to work is their responsiveness to the needs of their employees. Each of them communicates effectively, keeps their employees in the loop and remains open to suggestions and input from employees at all levels. They value the entrepreneurial spirit, encouraging input from employees and treating their employees as equals. As a result, employees feel good about the company and themselves, and they care about their work – which translates to a boost to the bottom line.

For a complete list of the top 25 small companies making this year’s list along with stories and employee testimonials about what makes these companies so great, visit www.shrm.org/hrmagazine.