

People count

The benefits of having a workforce who are in their dream job are clear. **Tim Edwards** asks the UK's best employers how they do it

A motivated worker is a productive worker – just look at perennially cheery Santa Claus, whose courier business delivers to the entire world in a single night. But if you insist on not believing in him or his workplace policies, perhaps you'd prefer to believe in *The Sunday Times* 100 Best Companies To Work For 2004 survey. The businesses that made the top 100 in this list of the enlightened have consistently outperformed the FTSE All-Share Index over the past five years, which suggests that making your staff feel good is an excellent way of ensuring your

company thrives. We asked two of the best large companies – and the best small company – why their staff gave them top marks.

Village people

Lin Hilditch head of Flight Centre's training and recruitment division, puts this travel agency's success down to an unorthodox approach to people management. 'It's based on anthropology,' she says. 'Staff are divided into "families" of three to seven people, which in turn belong to "villages" (three to five families), and "tribes" (several villages in a region). The theory is

Top 10 UK employers*

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| 1 W L Gore, Gore-Tex manufacturer, Livingston | 6 Pannone & Partners, legal firm, Manchester |
| 2 Beaverbrooks, jewellery retailer, St Annes-on-Sea | 7 St Ann's Hospice, hospice, Manchester |
| 3 Data Connection, computer software, Enfield | 8 Universal Music, recording company, London |
| 4 Flight Centre, travel agency, New Malden | 9 Timpson, shoe repair and key cutting, Manchester |
| 5 Bacardi-Martini, drinks manufacturer, Southampton | 10 Lush, cosmetics manufacturer/retailer, Poole |

*Source: *The Sunday Times* 100 Best Companies to Work For 2004 (UK)



that people in small groups build strong relationships, which fosters more loyalty to their team and therefore the company.'

www.flightcentre.co.uk

Keeping the cream

Quirky cosmetics manufacturer and retailer, Lush, likes to challenge staff and reward success with bonuses. A sense of shared ownership also motivates staff. CEO Andrew Gerrie says respecting Lush's employees is all-important: 'This includes encouraging them to participate in the development of relevant aspects of the business. We're also a home for people who don't fit into the mould of more mainstream companies.'

www.lush.co.uk

Small, but dutiful

Major Players, a recruitment consultancy established in 1992, came top of *The Sunday Times* 50 Best Small Companies to Work For. Benefits include flexible working hours to meet individual needs and a flexible bonus that can be spent on things like a laptop or nursery fees; away weekends, summer fun days and company nights out. As you can see, flexibility is key for CEO Jack Gratton: 'With work-life balance and the new flexible working legislation on everyone's lips, we need to be proactive in providing flexible work benefits and working hours to improve staff retention.'

www.majorplayers.co.uk

Give, give, give

What benefits do other businesses offer their staff?

Major Players:

- Flexible benefits – staff can spend the equivalent of £1,000 on over 20 different benefits, including contact lenses, a laptop, dental plans, extra days off and non-work related course fees
- Discretionary bonus and commission structure
- Share scheme for long tenure staff
- Twice-yearly appraisals
- Away weekends, summer fun days and company nights out
- Flexible working hours to accommodate individual needs.

Flight Centre:

- Moneywise – advice on personal finance issues
- Healthwise – assessments and advice to improve employees' health and fitness
- Business ownership scheme – staff can buy into the business in return for a percentage of the profits
- Monthly 'buzz nights' to celebrate individual employee successes, as well as the opportunity for the top people in every team to go to the annual global Flight Centre Ball
- Staff are paid a base salary plus uncapped monthly incentives.