Great Places to Work

More than 50 employers that offer great pay and benefits, interesting work, flexible schedules, and a chance to learn and grow
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By Sherri Dalphonse, Ellen McLellan, Wayne Nelson, and Cindy Rich

Here’s who offers the best pay and benefits, most flexible schedules, interesting work, and chances to learn and grow.

Good news—they’re hiring.

HOW WE CHOSE OUR 55 GREAT PLACES TO WORK

This year’s Great Places to Work contest was very competitive: We had more candidates than in previous years and decided to pick 55 winners rather than 50. In all, we considered more than 225 companies, nonprofits, and government agencies.

The Great Places to Work named here excel at offering flexibility and work-life balance, challenging and interesting work, opportunities for career development, great pay and benefits, stability, recognition for a job well done, open communication, and a collegial environment.

To be considered, a company filled out an application that asked about everything from maternity leave and turnover rates to company culture and charitable giving.

Companies that participated were asked to select employees at random to fill out an online survey. Companies did not see employees’ answers; only we did. Both surveys were designed by Leora Lawton of TechSociety Research in Berkeley, California.

Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory

What it does: Tackles problems of national significance through engineering, research, and development.

Number of employees: 3,800.

Interesting perks: On-site part-time study program offering classes toward a master’s; compressed workweeks; 25 clubs including volleyball, Hispanic awareness, and parenting.

Look closely at the bottom of the TV screen during a NASA launch and you may see the words DESIGNED, DEVELOPED, AND BUILT BY THE APPLIED PHYSICS LABORATORY.

Over the past 46 years, the nonprofit laboratory has built 61 spacecraft. It’s working on New Horizons, set to launch in January and arrive at Pluto in 2015.

“It’s like a science fair for adults,” says one staffer.

APL’s work expands to land and sea: It supplies defense technology to the military. Employees manage a disease-surveillance center. Top-secret security issues are discussed in APL’s Warfare Analysis Lab.

Two-thirds of employees are engineers and scientists, but APL also employs graphic designers, Web developers, technical writers, librarians, carpenters, and more.

One staffer calls APL “its own little city.” The 360-acre complex has a fire station, tennis courts, and shuttle buses. The fitness club offers Pilates and Middle Eastern dance. Bikes are parked around campus for anyone to use.

The challenging work encourages employees to stay; turnover is less than 4 percent. “The man I replaced said he thought he’d work here a year,” says Helen Worth, chief of public affairs. “He retired after 45 years.”

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