

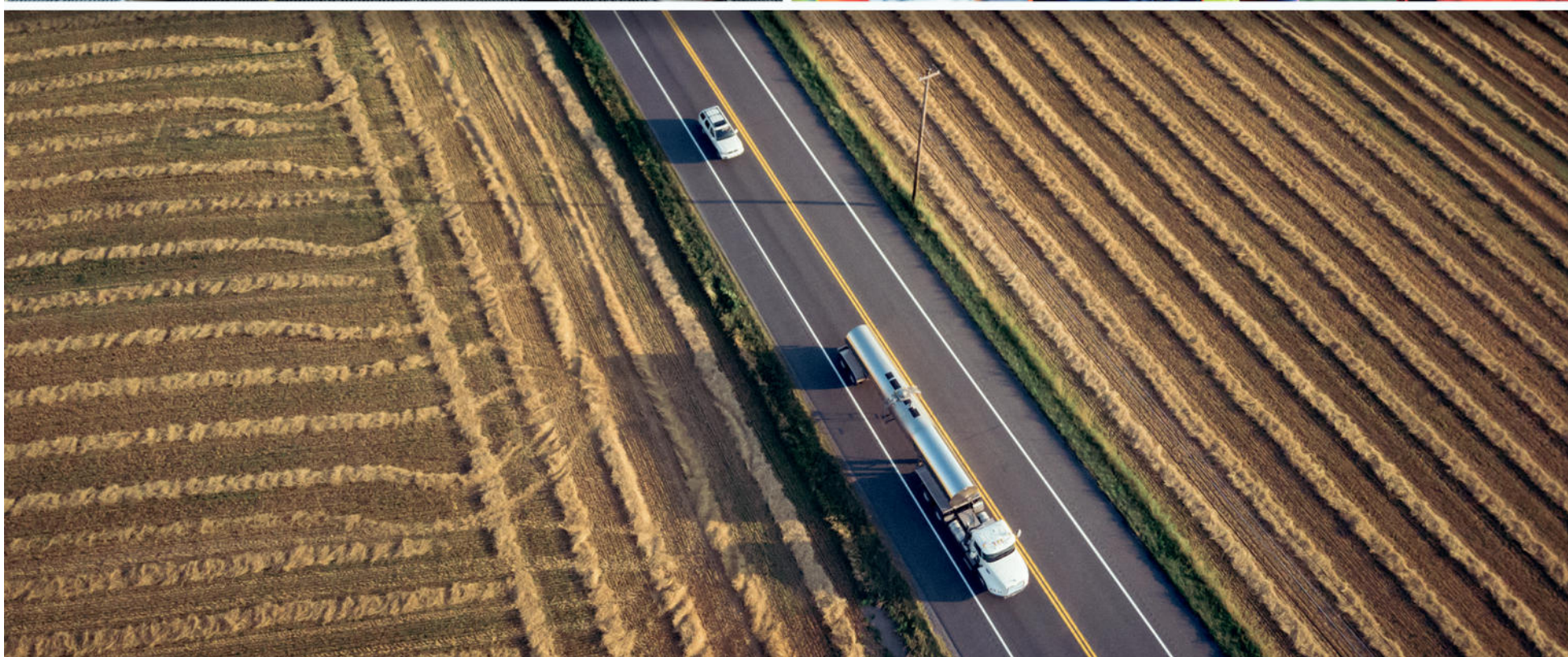
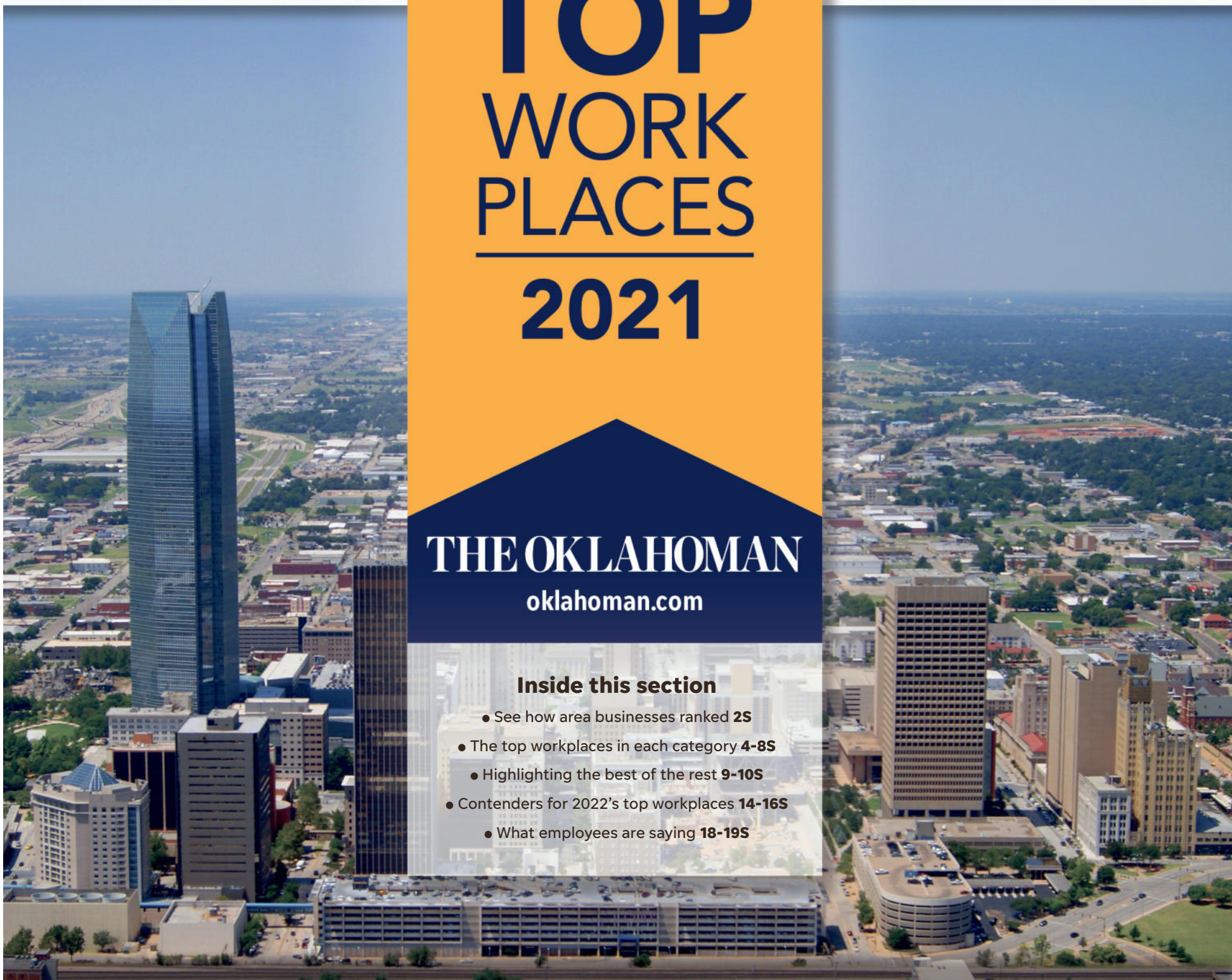


TOP WORK PLACES 2021

THE OKLAHOMAN
oklahoman.com

Inside this section

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- The top workplaces in each category **4-8S**
- Highlighting the best of the rest **9-10S**
- Contenders for 2022's top workplaces **14-16S**
- What employees are saying **18-19S**



TOP WORKPLACES HOW THE COMPANIES RANKED

LARGE COMPANIES

Rank	Company	Year founded	Ownership	Sector	Number of employees
1	Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation (OMRF)	1946	Private	Biomedical Research	462
2	Ben E. Keith Company	1906	Private	Wholesale Foodservice Distribution	515
3	Capital One Financial Corporation	1994	Public	Banking	403
4	First United	1900	Private	Banking, Mortgage, Insurance & Wealth Management	740
5	Paycom Software, Inc.	1998	Public	Payroll and HR Technology	3780
6	US Cellular	1983	Public	Telecommunications	500
7	Panda Restaurant Group	1973	Private	Restaurant	402
8	Sherwood Companies	1934	Private	Heavy Construction & Civil Engineering	472
9	EPIC Charter Schools	2011	Public	Education - Primary / Secondary School	2056
10	Webco Industries, Inc.	1969	Public	Metal Tubing Manufacturer	830
11	Gateway First Bank	2000	Private	Financial Services	480
12	Stevens Trucking Co	1979	Private	Dry Van Freight and Oilfield Flatbed/Hotshot	364
13	EncompassHealth - Home Health & Hospice	1998	Public	Home Healthcare and Hospice Services	503
14	Oklahoma Health Care Authority	1993	Government	State Government	545
15	FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center	1946	Government	Aviation and Aerospace	2927
16	Yukon Public Schools	1891	Public	Public Education	1027
17	OnCue Marketing, LLC	1966	Private	Retail	1387
18	Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma	1936	Non-profit	Training / Employment	702
19	St. Mary's Regional Medical Center	1915	Private	Hospitals	432

MIDSIZE COMPANIES

Rank	Company	Year founded	Ownership	Sector	Number of employees
1	Meridian Technology Center	1973	Public	Education	133
2	Regent Bank	1898	Private	Bank	155
3	TBS Factoring Service	2004	Private	Financial Services & Insurance	246
4	Kindful Hospice	2018	Partnership	Hospice	132
5	Benham, a Haskell Company	1909	Private	Architecture, Engineering and Construction	129
6	CMSWillowbrook, Inc.	1974	Private	Construction Management	127
7	Central Technology Center	1970	Government	Education	179
8	Claims Management Resources	1988	Private	Financial Services & Insurance - Other	185
9	GableGotwals	1944	Private	Law	163
10	United Rentals Inc.	1997	Public	Rental & Leasing	154
11	CompSource Mutual Insurance Company	1933	Non-profit	Workers' Compensation	300
12	Green Country Behavioral Health Services Inc	1979	Non-profit	Community Behavioral Health Center	157
13	World Acceptance Corporation	1962	Cooperative/Mutual	Credit & Finance	197
14	Melton Truck Lines, Inc.	1954	Private	Distribution, Logistics, & Freight	286
15	CEC	1966	Private	Engineering	195
16	LifeShare Transplant Donor Services of Oklahoma Inc	1986	Non-profit	Non-profit	148
17	BKD CPAs & Advisors	1923	Partnership	Public Accounting	130
18	Oklahoma Wesleyan University	1905	Private	College / University	138
19	ALDI	1976	Private	Retail	345
20	AllFirst	1920	Private	Financial Services & Insurance	283
21	NorthCare	1980	Non-profit	Human & Social Services	291
22	Great Plains Bank	1907	Private	Community Bank	298
23	Science Museum Oklahoma	1958	Non-profit	Museum	177
24	BankOnITUSA	2003	Private	Information Technology for Financial Institutions	160
25	Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma	1980	Non-profit	Human and Social Services	145
26	Dove Schools	2000	Government	Primary / Secondary Schools	310
27	Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services	1953	Government	State Government	293

SMALL COMPANIES

Rank	Company	Year founded	Ownership	Sector	Number of employees
1	PaceButler Corporation	1987	Private	Buyers of used cell phones	46
2	Trisura Specialty Insurance	2017	Public	Specialty Insurance	38
3	Oklahoma Pediatric Therapy Center	2014	Public	Healthcare - Other, OT, PT, SLP and Behavioral	81
4	Russell-Murray Hospice, Inc.	1988	Non-profit	Non-profit	45
5	Cornerstone Home Lending, Inc	1988	Private	Mortgage	93
6	Pinnacle Business Systems	1988	Private	Value Added Reseller - Information Technology	46
7	DIGITALiBiz	2002	Private	Information Technology	36
8	Homeless Alliance	2004	Non-profit	Human and social services	90
9	Homes by Taber	2000	Public	Integrated Development, Construction, & Management	104
10	Eastern Oklahoma County Technology Center	1980	Public	Education and Training	79
11	Aviation Training Consulting, LLC	2001	Private	Federal Government	44
12	MIRATECH Corporation	1992	Private	Environmental emission and acoustical products	65
13	TEAM Professional Services Companies	2002	Private	Other - Business Services	54
14	OKIE811	1979	Non-profit	Utilities & Telecommunications	62
15	CGI	1976	Public	IT Consulting	66
16	NextThought	2011	Private	Education Software Technology	38
17	Changeis, Inc.	2008	Private	Management & IT Consulting Services firm for Federal Government	47
18	Chickasaw Community Bank	2002	Private	Banks	112
19	C L Boyd Company, Inc.	1913	Private	John Deere Construction Equipment Dealership	85
20	Orthodontic Associates	1987	Private	Orthodontist	51
21	Accenture	1951	Public	Consulting	65
22	EOG Resources	1985	Public	Oil & gas exploration and production/extraction	96
23	Cookshack, Inc.	1962	Private	Electrical Equipment, Appliances, & Components	35
24	Olsson	1956	Private	Engineering design firm	96
25	Rich & Cartmill Insurance	1922	Private	Independent Insurance Agency	98
26	Graybar	1869	Private	Electrical Distribution	72
27	Timberlake Construction	1946	Private	Commercial Construction	43
28	Stan Johnson Company	1985	Private	Commercial Real Estate Brokerage Firm	75
29	Presort First Class	1982	Private	Design, Print & Mail	89
30	Ross Group Construction Corporation	1996	Private	Building Construction	90
31	Casualty Corporation of America, Inc.	1964	Private	Property and Casualty Insurance Company	43
32	Objectstream, Inc.	2004	Private	Custom Software Development & Consulting	56
33	PHILLIPS MURRAH P.C.	1986	Private	Law	118
34	Ditch Witch of Oklahoma	1976	Private	Construction Equipment	112
35	Scott Rice and NexSpaces	1920	Private	Commerical Furniture, Home Furnishings, Flooring	96
36	Oklahoma Water Resources Board	1957	Government	State Government	104
37	Brainerd Chemical Company, Inc.	1959	Private	Speciality Chemical Solutions	61
38	Devon Industries	1988	Private	Automotive Equipment Services	55

TOP WORKPLACES MAINSTAYS

5 companies make 'top' list year after year

Jordan Green
Special to The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

Five companies that have been named Top Workplaces each year since the contest began in 2013 ago made this year's list.

The 2021 list of winners includes 21 newcomers from several industries across the state. In total, 84 companies are on the list.

Of the 19 companies on the list with 350 or more employees, which are considered large companies, three have been on the list nine times. They are: No. 1-ranked Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation; Ben E. Keith company, the runner-up; and Paycom Software, Inc., at No. 5.

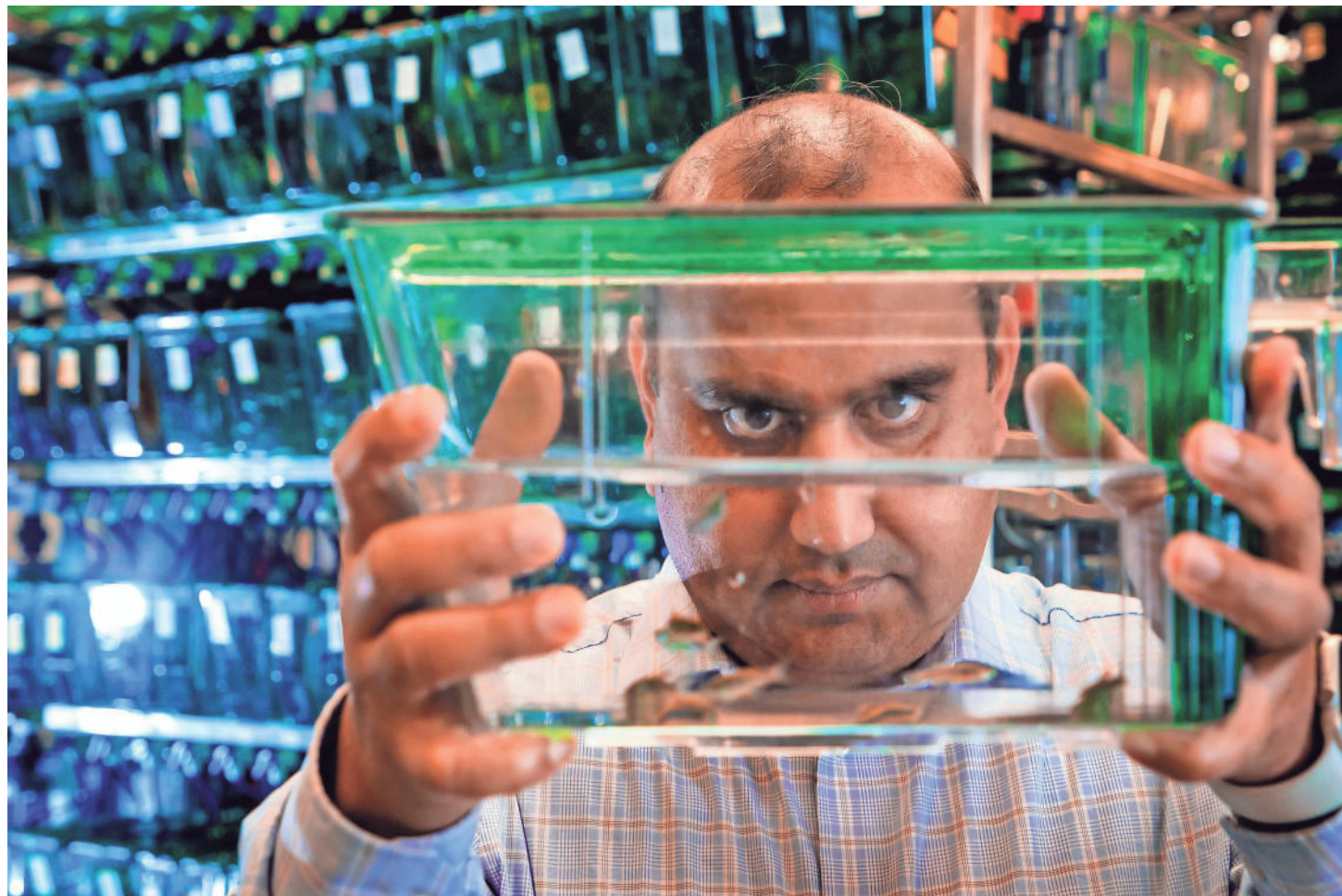
Three large companies are new to the list, including: Capital One Financial Corporation, No. 3; El Reno-based Stevens Trucking Company, No. 12; and Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma, No. 18.

Of the 27 mid-size firms, which have between 125 and 349 employees, only one has been on the list nine times. That's No. 17-ranked BKD CPAs & Advisors.

Seven mid-size firms made the list this year for the first time. They are: Benham, a Florida-based architecture, engineering and construction firm, No. 5; United Rentals Inc., an equipment rental and leasing company, No. 10; Muskogee-based Green Country Behavioral Health Services Inc., No. 12; Tulsa-based AllFirst, a financial services and insurance company, No. 20; NorthCare, a social services provider, No. 21; BankOnITUSA, an information technology services provider, No. 24; and Dove Schools, a public charter school, No. 26.

Of the 38 small employers, which have fewer than 125 employees, only one has made the list nine times. That's No. 22-ranked EOG Resources, an oil and gas exploration and production company based in Houston, Texas.

Eleven small employers are new to the list, including: Trisura Specialty In-



Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation's Dr. Gaurav Varshney holds a tank of zebra fish in his lab in Oklahoma City in 2019. File photo CHRIS LANDSBERGER/THE OKLAHOMAN

urance, No. 2; Yukon-based Oklahoma Pediatric Therapy Center, No. 3; Pinnacle Business Systems, an information technology company based in Edmond, No. 6; DIGITALiBiz, a Maryland-based information technology company, No. 7; the Homeless Alliance, No. 8; CGI, a Virginia-based IT consulting company, No. 15; Changeis Inc., a Virginia-based management and IT consulting firm, No. 17; Olsson, a Nebraska-based engineering design firm, No. 24; Graybar, a Missouri-based electrical distribution company, No. 26; Objectstream Inc., a custom software development and consulting firm, No. 32; and Devon Industries, an automotive equipment services company, No. 38.



Paycom headquarters in Oklahoma City. File photo BRYAN TERRY/THE OKLAHOMAN

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TOP WORKPLACES LARGE EMPLOYER



Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation scientist Valerie Lewis, Ph.D. PROVIDED

OMRF tasked with saving lives

Josh Wallace
Special to The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

With a focus on creating advancements in medicines that could save countless lives, many employees of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation said it's employee-focused support that allows them to thrive and earned the foundation top honors for 2021's Top Workplaces list.

While many companies struggled to come to terms with how to operate dur-

ing the COVID-19 pandemic, Toni Snow, an administrative assistant with 23 years at OMRF, said the foundation shined in terms of the level of care and attention they gave employees.

"The pandemic is the perfect example of why OMRF is a great place to work. Even more than in years past, OMRF has shown that its employees are the heart of the foundation and that our safety and well-being are paramount," Snow said. "During the height of the pandemic, they allowed those of us who

could to work from home without fear of job loss."

Snow said the foundation also provided vaccine clinics for patients and employees and provided weekly COVID-19 screenings, which she said provided peace of mind during a time of heightened uncertainty.

"Our physicians, researchers and staff truly lead the way in what we've come to know as the Oklahoma Standard. I'm proud to play a small part in supporting those efforts," Snow said.

Founded in 1946, the nonprofit biomedical research foundation is dedicated to understanding and developing more effective treatments for human disease. Scientists focus on critical research in areas such as Alzheimer's disease, cancer, lupus, Multiple Sclerosis and cardiovascular disease.

With more than 450 employees, this is the 9th consecutive year for OMRF to be named a top workplace.

Continued on next page

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TOP WORKPLACES LARGE EMPLOYER

Continued from previous page

For Bertha Osei, a research technician who has worked for the foundation for 3 years, the level of care from supervisors and co-workers meant everything during a time of family tragedy.

"When I lost my dad a couple of years ago, it was challenging for my family and me. However, the love I received from my OMRF family during that time was overwhelming," Osei said. "I felt the love and support from everyone in my building, especially my boss, Dr. Tommy Lewis, and my colleagues. Aside from that, I have also learned a lot from my boss in my field of research. Dr. Lewis has taught me a lot and has inspired me to develop professionally."

OMRF staff scientist Dr. Padmaja Mehta-D'souza, who has spent the last 25 years with the foundation, said OMRF is best described as a workplace with a social conscience where great science, professional achievement and personal growth are equally important and interrelated.

"There are so many reasons why working at OMRF is a pleasure: cultural and ethnic diversity, collaborative spirit, stimulating scientific environment, opportunities for mentoring younger scientists and students, flexibility to manage family obligations, great benefits, great support staff who keep everything non-science-related at the foundation humming, several 'extra-curricular' activities that regularly bring scientific and non-scientific staff together, and more recently, an impressive response to the pandemic and a sensitive response to social changes around us," Mehta-D'souza said. "There is a sense conveyed from the top down, that we all play a vital role in the foundation's success. I thank my stars every day I walk into OMRF."

For Courtney Stevens Greenwood, Vice President of Human Resources and an 18-year employee of the foundation, the goal of a team working to help people live longer, healthier lives are of great pride for employees, but there is much more that makes the foundation a



Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation scientist Agnieszka Borowik, Ph.D. PROVIDED



Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation Manager of IT Operations Brad. Pazoureck PROVIDED



Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation accounting clerk Sue Campbell. PROVIDED



Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation Multiple Sclerosis Center of Excellence staff Micki Drake, front, and Kellie Kraus-Flores. PROVIDED

place where people want to build a career.

"We also have a very diverse workplace with more than 30 countries represented. OMRF offers generous paid leave, comprehensive benefits, and a retirement program that doesn't require

employee contributions," Greenwood said. "We have an onsite fitness center with a certified personal trainer on staff, and our Research Café offers healthy choices for breakfast and lunch. We also offer tuition assistance and have a rowing team."

She also said in a highly competitive market, you have to make sure employees are more than just content.

"Employers are competing for top tal-

ent more than ever. At OMRF, that doesn't just mean scientists. That's in our administrative staff like accounting and IT, clinical talent, and the skilled trades we need to keep OMRF ticking like HVAC and plumbing," Greenwood said. "Across the country, we know that employers are losing staff to burnout and dissatisfaction. We have more than 60 employees at OMRF who have been with us for over 20 years. People don't become longtime employees just being content. They have to believe in the organization and be happy, engaged, and excited to be here every day."



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TOP WORKPLACES MIDSIZE EMPLOYER



Financial aid officer Ashley Hernandez Torres, second from left, takes part in Meridian Technology Center's tie-dye First Friday Fun Day as part of the school's fun work culture. PROVIDED

Meridian Technology Center tops again

Josh Wallace
Special to The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

STILLWATER – For the second year in a row, Meridian Technology Center has been named the top mid-size employer in the state and employees say the company's work-life balance, support and the relationships fostered are just a few of the reasons it remains on top.

Ashley Hernandez Torres, a financial aid officer who has been with the company since December 2018, said she's thankful for the support and the understanding of co-workers and supervisors, whether she needs to be away from her job or any other circumstance that might come up.

"There is always a positive and encouraging atmosphere. I believe every department works well together to achieve our mission as a team. We respect and treat each other like family, because we are family," Torres said.

That sense of family and encouragement has led to a large number of employees working for the company for decades, with many planning to retire with the company, Torres said.

"Our hard work is acknowledged and appreciation is shown in so many ways. We not only can feel and see the difference we make for our students' lives, but we strive to help each other excel as well," she said.

Part of a network of 29 career technology centers across the state, Meridian Technology Center was created in 1975 with the goal of training students for success in the workplace. Covering more than 900 square miles, the Merid-

ian Technology Center district spreads throughout Lincoln, Logan, Noble, Pawnee and Payne Counties.

Being named a top workplace over the last 8 years, this is the third time for the company to take the winning spot among mid-sized employers.

For Jeff Littau, an instructor who has been with the company for 3 years, he appreciates the company's ability to cultivate relationships and that it is structured to promote success and growth, which translates into better preparing their students to enter the workforce.

One of my most enjoyable experiences of working at Meridian is having past

students stop by and visit or reach out to me through a text or phone call. I know of several other teachers who have had the same experience.

Many of the reasons Torres and Littau mentioned as why they enjoy working for the company are by design and are a key focus, said Dr. Douglas Major, Meridian Technology Center CEO.

"We know there are many factors that contribute to an employee being

happy in and staying with an organization. These include a supervisor who cares about them, having the equipment to do their job, having the opportunity to learn and grow, and working for an organization where they know their work supporting the mission is impactful. Each of these has been an important focus for Meridian and has resulted in the positive culture of the organization," Major said.



Energy and power instructor Jeff Littau assists a student with a wind turbine project. PROVIDED

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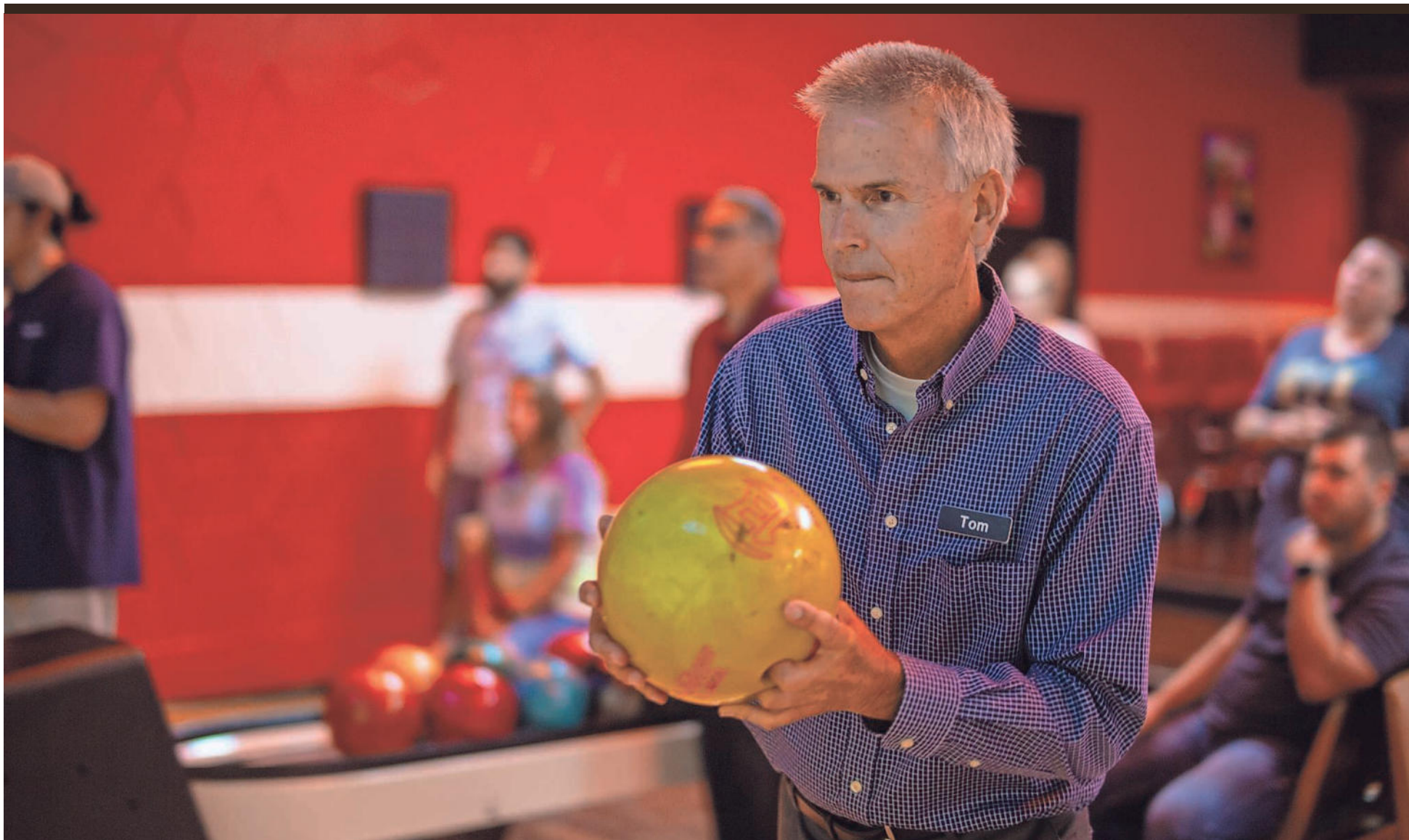
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TOP WORKPLACES SMALL EMPLOYER



Tom Pace bowls with PaceButler coworkers as part of a reward outing. His team won that month's companywide game, where "shots" are earned based on each person's production from the previous day. PROVIDED

PaceButler building 'better lives'

Josh Wallace
Special to The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

House-moving parties, paying employees to read, and a focus on personal development are just some of the unique aspects of the PaceButler Corporation's approach to employee engagement. Celebrating its 2nd consecutive year as winner in the top workplaces small employer category, the company has always focused on the growth of its

employees. For Cooper Rayburn, a process manager with PaceButler for four years, it's more than just a job, it's been a lifestyle change. "I have completely changed my lifestyle because of working at PaceButler. I 100% bought into our culture and started taking actions that we reward at PaceButler. While at first, I was only participating because we were rewarded, I now continue to participate because my life has gotten better. My company has

encouraged me to read more, exercise, and stop smoking. All of these things have had a positive impact on my life and I continue to do them because I get so much out of them," Rayburn said. Working his way up from an entry-level position to an administrative position, Rayburn said there is no limit to where you can take yourself within the company. Stefanie Aranda, a senior buyer with the company for just over a year, agrees and said whether you're looking to start

a career or just looking for a change, nobody leaves the company without experiencing growth. "The environment at PaceButler is second to none. From our co-workers to our leadership to our customers, everyone is so supportive and we all share a common goal of building better lives," Aranda said. Started in 1987 with just a little over \$62, the company has flourished over

See **PACEBUTLER**, Page 8S

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TOP WORKPLACES SMALL EMPLOYER



From left, Phu Nguyen, Isaac Hembree, Alex Hernandez, Meagan Sevedge and Stefanie Aranda participate in a space-themed dress-up day. PROVIDED

PaceButler

Continued from Page 7S

the years as a company that purchases and sells used cellular phones. For every cell phone purchased, the company donates a book to an organization in need. Since opening, the company has donated more than 1.3 million books to prisons, homeless shelters, schools and more.

That focus on education and reading also carries over to employees, said Vice President David Middlebrooks.

"We also have a book reading program. We get paid to read! Each week we can turn in up to two books for payment. The only requirements are 100+ pages in length and non-fiction. We at PaceButler invest in more than business production, we invest in building great lives," he said.

Middlebrooks said their main focus is in their mission statement, "to build great lives," and that mantra can be seen in the everyday actions of their employees.

"In the 11+ years I have been with the company I have seen countless selfless

acts from both PaceButler leadership as well as a regular employees," Middlebrooks said. "As an example of this, any time we have an employee move homes we put out an email asking for help. Most times we have nearly 50% of the employees show up to help. Earlier this year we moved a full 3-bedroom house out of the old home and into the new home in about 20 minutes of actual working time. That is only possible because the culture of building great lives is so strong at PaceButler Corporation. We are a company of teamwork and interdepartmental teamwork."

Not only has he seen a remarkable focus on teamwork and the changes its made to employees lives while working at PaceButler, Middlebrooks said his life changed dramatically since he's been there.

"PaceButler Corporation has changed my life trajectory. Just in the last year I was able to adopt 2 great kids, get engaged to a lovely woman, whom I met at PaceButler Corporation. As a single man in his mid-40's I wasn't sure that was in the cards. And without the encouragement and help of my fellow employees I may not have experienced it," Middlebrooks said.



Staff participate in PaceButler Corporation's morning meeting. Pictured from left, Cooper Rayburn, process manager; Kathy Thompson, recruiter; and Josh Battles, CFO. PROVIDED



From left are Cooper Rayburn, Darla Ellis and Austin Payne, pictured on a helicopter ride. Teams of PaceButler coworkers compete in companywide games each month to receive rewards, such as a helicopter ride. PROVIDED



Dez Hayles is pictured on a helicopter ride with coworkers, which was the prize her team received for winning that month's companywide contest. PROVIDED




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TOP WORKPLACES BEST OF THE REST



Paycom Center, home of the OKC Thunder, in downtown Oklahoma City at night, Oct. 20. DOUG HOKE/THE OKLAHOMAN

Numbers 2 through 5 in the rankings

Jordan Green

Special to The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

While not everyone can claim the top spot in The Oklahoman's annual Top Workplaces contest, the following companies scored a spot in the top-5 for their respective categories.

Large employers

No. 2: Ben E. Keith Co.

A mainstay on the Top Workplaces

list, Ben E. Keith Co. jumped to the No. 2 spot in 2021 from the No. 15 spot in 2020. In the Special Awards category for large employers, Ben E. Keith ranked top in the Clued in Senior Management Award, based on employee responses.

The company is a wholesale distributor of food service products, including dry, refrigerated and frozen food products, as well as paper goods, chemicals, equipment and small wares. The company started in 1906.

Employee benefits include paid time off plans; medical, dental and vision

health plans; health savings accounts, flexible spending accounts and dependent care reimbursement account options; and yearly profit-sharing contributions.

No. 3: Capital One Financial Corp.

A newcomer to the Top Workplaces list, Capital One Financial Corp. ranked top in the Special Awards for benefits, meaning employees said they believe their benefits are good compared to others in the industry.

Capital One has grown to be one of the 10 largest banks in the U.S. It serves

tens of millions of customers across a diverse set of businesses. The company's mission is "to change banking for good and help people succeed by bringing humanity, ingenuity and simplicity to their everyday banking experiences." In 2020, the company committed \$50 million to support COVID-19 relief.

Company benefits include medical, dental and vision insurance, paid time off, a 401(k) plan with a 3% basic company contribution, education assis-

See 2 THROUGH 5, Page 10S

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TOP WORKPLACES BEST OF THE REST

2 through 5

Continued from Page 9S

tance of up to \$5,250 per year and two floating holidays each year.

No. 4: First United Bank

Appearing on the Top Workplaces list for the second time, First United Bank and Trust stayed in the No. 4 spot this year.

First United is a community bank founded in 1900. With headquarters in Durant, it has 43 locations in Oklahoma and more than 700 employees. Its purpose is to inspire and empower people to “spend life wisely” with a balance of faith, financial well-being, health and wellness and personal growth. The company encourages employees volunteer time in community organizations and projects, including civic, religious, neighborhood, minority, small business, charitable and community development groups.

The company offers a comprehensive benefits package including medical, dental, and vision insurance, voluntary and group life insurance, health savings accounts and flexible spending accounts. The company has a wellness program, giving employees reimbursement for gym memberships.

No. 5: Paycom Software Inc.

Previously the Top Workplace in the large business category, Paycom dropped to the No. 5 spot in this year’s listings. The company is a Top Workplaces mainstay, having been ranked since the listing began.

Paycom launched in 1998 as one of the nation’s first web-based HR and payroll technology companies. Paycom’s cloud-based software allows employers and their HR teams to focus on strategies that drive business forward by empowering employees to manage their own HR data. Through its single-database software or mobile app, employees can complete onboarding tasks, update personal information, submit time-off requests, access pay stubs and year-end forms, enroll in benefits and more.

Employee benefits include \$1 per-pay-period health insurance, 401(k) plans with company matching, flexible spending accounts, pet insurance, backup childcare and an onsite workplace wellness advisor.

Mid-size employers

No. 2: Regent Bank

Appearing for the third time, Regent Bank took home the No. 2 spot on this year’s Top Workplaces list among mid-size employers. In 2020, it was ranked No. 13 among small employers. This year, it also came in top in the Special Awards category among mid-size companies for going in the right direction, based on employee responses.

Regent Bank, founded in 1898, provides funding for growth, acquisitions, equipment loans, operating lines of credit, commercial real estate and more. It also offers cash management, mobile deposits and a host of other business services. It aims to help clients “achieve their dreams.”

Employee benefits include medical, dental, vision and other voluntary programs. After five years of employment, employees have a two-week sabbatical.

No. 3: TBS Factoring Service

Appearing for its eighth consecutive time on the Top Workplaces list, TBS



The new Paycom Center logo on the downtown Oklahoma City arena on July 27. Paycom now has the arena’s new naming rights agreement. CHRIS LANDSBERGER/THE OKLAHOMAN

Factoring service took home the No. 3 slot among mid-size employers. It had the No. 10 spot in 2020.

TBS Factoring Service and its affiliated companies serve small businesses across the U.S. with financial tools that improve business cash flow, maximize operational efficiency and honor the spirit of the entrepreneur. Founded in 2004, it is headquartered in Oklahoma City.

Employee benefits include 401(k) with a 5% company match, formal mentorship and leadership training and family events. It is a dog-friendly workplace.

No. 4: Kindful Hospice

Appearing for the second time on the Top Workplace list, Kindful Hospice jumped to the No. 4 spot among mid-size employers. In 2020, it ranked No. 11 among small employers.

Kindful Hospice, founded in 2018 and headquartered in Ada, is a hospice and palliative care provider aiming to give comfort, relief and kindness to the seriously ill and their families. Kindful Hospice employees are encouraged to be active in their communities. It has six Oklahoma locations.

Employee benefits for full-time workers include medical, dental, vision, and life insurance. The company offers a 401(k) program, paid time off and personal care days.

No. 5: Benham

A Top Workplaces newcomer, Benham earned top place in the Special Awards category for training among mid-size companies, meaning employees said they get the formal training they want for their careers.

Benham is an architecture, engineering and construction firm. It is based in Jacksonville, Florida, and has more than 100 Oklahoma employees.

The company did not disclose its benefits offerings.

Small employers

No. 2: Trisura Specialty Insurance

Trisura Specialty Insurance is another Top Workplaces newcomer, and it earned top accolades in the Special Awards category for new ideas, based on employee responses.

Trisura Specialty Insurance Company is a specialty insurance carrier headquartered in Oklahoma City. The company also owns Trisura Insurance Company, which is admitted in 48 states,

with surety capabilities in 47 states. TSIC is non-admitted in all 50 states and Washington, D.C.

Employee benefits were not disclosed.

No. 3: Oklahoma Pediatric Therapy Center

Yet another newcomer, the Oklahoma Pediatric Therapy Center earned top marks in the Special Awards category for having strong values, based on employee responses.

The Oklahoma Pediatric Therapy Center, founded in 2014 and based in Yukon, offers speech, occupational, physical and behavioral therapy. It has about 80 employees.

Benefits were not disclosed.

No. 4: Russell-Murray Hospice Inc.

Russell-Murray Hospice is on the Top Workplaces list for the fourth time. In 2020, it was ranked in the No. 15 spot among small employers.

An El Reno-based nonprofit, the company cares for terminally ill patients with a life expectancy of six months or less. Workers take care of patients in their homes, whether in a private home, nursing home, assisted living facility or hospital. The company’s mission is “to enrich the lives of individ-

uals and families by providing a comprehensive, personalized program of services delivered by trusted, caring professionals, emphasizing quality of life, comfort, dignity, and personal choices.”

Benefits include health, dental and vision insurance, a retirement package and paid life insurance.

No. 5: Cornerstone Home Lending Inc.

A six-time member of the Top Workplaces list, Cornerstone Home Lending took home the No. 5 spot, up from No. 7 in 2020.

Cornerstone Home Lending Inc. is a Houston, Texas-based mortgage banker with about 1,500 U.S. employees. The company was founded in 1988. Its mission is “to use and improve upon our God-given talents to make a positive difference in the lives of our team members, customers, shareholders, and the people who provide services to us.” Its employees are involved in community service activities, including giving Christmas gifts to at-risk families.

Benefits include flexible work schedules, 401(k) plans, flexible healthcare and dependent care accounts and discounted mortgages for employees.

1 in 4 Oklahomans experiences mental health and addiction issues each year. Through treatment, support services, and sharing our personal stories of recovery and well-being, we’re able to inspire change. It’s our employees living our mission that makes ODMHSAS a Top Workplace in Oklahoma.

Thank you to all of our ODMHSAS team members!

TOP WORKPLACES BIGGEST IMPROVEMENTS

3 companies that climbed in the rankings

Jordan Green

Special to The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

Three employers in this year's Top Workplaces competition rose several places in the rankings from their 2020 spots.

In the large firms category, Ben E. Keith Co. jumped from No. 15 in 2020 to No. 2 in 2021.

Among mid-size firms, TBS Factoring rose from No. 10 in 2020 to No. 3 in 2021.

In the small firms category, El-Reno based Russell-Murray Hospice went from No. 15 in 2020 to No. 4 in 2021.

"The common thread among these companies is that the employees have a lot of confidence in their leaders and managers, and they feel appreciated for what they are doing," said Bob Helbig, media partnerships director for Energage, the company that conducts the surveys for the Top Workplaces rankings.

"It appears that people have rallied around the challenges of the business environment and really pulled together," Helbig said. "Leaders are providing clear direction. Managers are connecting with employees and making sure people have what they need to be successful. And employees are feeling like their contributions are noticed and valued."

Spokespeople for some of the companies agreed with those statements.

Dan Carman, marketing manager for Ben E. Keith Co., praised the company's employees.

"During the past year, our employees have been resilient in their response to an ever-changing work environment," Carman said. "As our business grew, our employees responded with the 'whatever it takes' attitude to serving our customers. Ben E. Keith strives to create a family-type environment for our employees, and that is reflected in our being named a Top Workplace for nine consecutive years.

"Since we were designated an essential industry, our operations and transportation departments adopted 'social-



TBS Factoring in Oklahoma City. BRYAN TERRY/OKLAHOMAN FILE

ly distanced' protocols to ensure the safety of our associates. Our office personnel began working remotely where possible. We are excited to welcome back all of our 'family' beginning in December."

Christina Ketter, an administrator with Russell-Murray Hospice, said the company's workplace environment has continued to improve for a number of reasons.

"I believe our company had a stronger performance due to the camaraderie that has developed during the pandemic," Ketter said. "The RMH staff has pulled together to provide high-quality care to people during an unprecedented time.

"RMH has also focused on creating an ever-increasing compassionate and nurturing environment," Ketter said. "Our staff are resilient. They face death every day with love and compassion. They are able to put their talents and skills to use in a non-profit hospice environment for people that need the help.



Ben E. Keith Co. food distribution center. CHRIS LANDSBERGER/OKLAHOMAN FILE

"The RMH workplace has become much more technologically savvy since the pandemic began. Most of the staff are able to work in a virtual environment outside of direct patient care," Ketter said. "Although face-to-face meetings have decreased, communica-

tion has increased overall through voice, email and virtual meetings. RMH has adapted to regulation changes with a positive attitude to move our mission forward to provide the very best hospice care we can to as many that want our service."

TOP
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We did it...again!

Presort First Class has been named one of Oklahoma's Top Workplaces for the second year in a row! Thank you to our team for making Presort First Class a great place to work!

TOP WORKPLACES LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Sherwood recognized among large employers

Josh Wallace
Special to The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

David Sherwood, CEO of Sherwood Companies

Q: Having to deal with a global pandemic over nearly the past two years, how has your company changed with the challenges the pandemic brought?

A: There have been many challenges that drive self-reflection and reviewing the process we had in place prior to it.

First and foremost, how do we address the safety of our employees, the way we communicate and how we interact each day?

We have always done a great job of identifying and eliminating the common hazards we face in the construction industry, but we had to change our mindset to include infectious viruses on, and off, the job to protect our employees and their families.

The second major challenge was being creative in overcoming the supply change issues that we have been facing over the past 6 months.

As a company, we had to be more flexible and vigilant to stay within budget and on schedule. We believe that these challenges and how we have overcome them have made us a stronger and better company.

Q: How would you describe your leadership style?

A: In one word, empowering.

I have always viewed my role as getting the right people on our team, getting everyone the tools and training they



David Sherwood PROVIDED

need to succeed, and then staying out of their way. Allowing people to be creative, make decisions and execute the game plan has always worked best for us.

Q: Have you seen much change in productivity from your workforce since the pandemic started?

A: In the first year of the pandemic, we were very fortunate. When a large majority of the population began staying home, we saw an increase in production due to less congestion on the roadways and availability of raw materials was plentiful.

In the second half of the pandemic, however, we have seen supply chain issues with construction materials, availability of heavy equipment, and the

ability to hire people hamper production, but with proper management and the ability to re-phase projects and schedules, we have kept those to a minimum.

The construction industry has always been challenging, but I must applaud our workforce and management on how we have handled the pandemic.

Q: Many companies across a wide variety of industries have had a difficult time hiring and retaining workers. How has your company fared, and what separates your company from others in how you work to keep up retention and worker morale?

A: There is no doubt that hiring and retaining talent is the number one challenge facing American businesses today.

We have seen our fair share of challenges when it comes to finding and hiring new talent. What has worked best for us is hiring for attitude and aptitude.

If a person is willing to work hard, learn and grow, we will supply them with the tools, the training, and the opportunities they need to succeed.

As for retention, being a 3rd generation, family-owned business, our culture is built around family.

Our employees are not just employees, they are family to me. I grew up with their parents, their aunts and uncles, and now I get to work with the next generation of families.

I am so proud of how many families call Sherwood Companies home.

Q: What are some of the company's goals going forward into the near future?

A: We are extremely optimistic about our future; we will stay consistent in both our short- and long-term goals and values.

First, driving commitment to and continuing to build on our workforce-driven safety culture will always be our number one value — everyone going home to their families at the end of the day is the most important goal we have.

Second, seizing the opportunities that lay ahead of us by equipping our team with the tools, training, and resources they need to be successful.

Third, laying the foundation for generations to come by building on our family culture, strong financial performance and developing our talent to be the best leaders in the industry.

DeHart recognized among mid-size employers

Josh Wallace
Special to The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

Cary DeHart, founder of CMSWillowbrook Inc.

Q: Having to deal with a global pandemic over nearly the past two years, how has your company changed with the challenges the pandemic brought?

A: We were lucky that our IT department had our technology on remote video conferencing and cloud-based servers completed before the pandemic.

With materials and supply chain delays, we must plan way ahead to ensure we can meet completion dates for our projects. Due to our local relationships with subcontractors and suppliers spanning back nearly 50 years we have been able to avoid the pains many other contractors have faced due to good communication and relationships.

Costs, for both materials and labor, have increased and are hard to control. We must find ways to lock-in pricing before we can give a total price for a project.

Q: How would you describe your leadership style?

A: I strive to lead our people to be the best construction firm. The best for our people, that they will be happy and proud to be a member of our company. They will never let us fail and they will never let a fellow employee down.

Our mission is to help others. Sure,



DeHart

we must make money, but why are we spending our time and effort? It is really not about money, it is about helping our clients meet their goals and needs.

My style is one of showing respect to everyone, to care about each other and everything we do.

Q: Have you seen much change in productivity from your workforce since the pandemic started?

A: Our employees have been very productive during this pandemic. We have seen some subcontractors and suppliers having problems with shortage of labor.

Q: Many companies across a wide variety of industries have had a difficult time hiring and retaining workers. How has your company fared, and what separates your company from others in how you work to keep up retention and worker morale?

A: We have great employees and long-term retention.

Our average tenure of key positions is over 20 years, with many employees over 30 years. I feel our people are proud and excited to be a part of CMSWillowbrook.

They set us apart from other companies because we care. We care for each other, and we care about our work, clients, subcontractors, and architects/engineers. We've experienced almost no

turnover during the pandemic.

Q: What are some of the company's immediate goals going forward into the near future?

A: My one important goal is to be the most respected construction firm in the

state. The best company to work for as an employee. The best company to work with as a subcontractor. The best company for an architect. The number-one company for clients to want CMSWillowbrook to build for them.

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TOP WORKPLACES LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Straughan wins award among small employers

Josh Wallace

Special to The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

Dan Straughan, executive director of the Homeless Alliance

Q: Having to deal with a global pandemic over nearly the past two years, how has your company changed with the challenges the pandemic brought?

A: So many changes! And yet, still the same mission to end homelessness.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Homeless Alliance completely changed our operations in order to continue providing services while limiting the spread of the virus.



Straughan

We changed operations at our Day Shelter so we could continue serving meals to hundreds of people every day, increased street out-

reach to engage people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, assisted the clients in our various housing programs to remain isolated in their homes, and worked closely with funders and our partners to implement all kinds of measures to keep the virus out of the city's homeless population, with great success.

The pandemic also added to the challenges we faced this past winter with the October ice storm and the February deep freeze. Through it all, our staff consistently demonstrated their commitment and flexibility to meet the evolving needs of our community.

Q: Have you seen much change in productivity from your workforce since the pandemic started?

A: If anything, productivity has risen. As staff roles have evolved in response to the changing environment in Oklahoma City, the people working at the Homeless Alliance have repeatedly stepped up to new challenges and opportunities.

My consistent concern, as their leader, is how much they are burning the candle at both ends. That's just not sus-



Volunteers work at the Homeless Alliance, serving lunch Nov. 24. DOUG HOKE/THE OKLAHOMAN

tainable forever.

Q: Many companies across a wide variety of industries have had a difficult time hiring and retaining workers, how has your company fared and what separates your company from others in how you work to keep up retention and worker morale?

A: Working with people experiencing homelessness is as much a calling as it is a job. Finding those committed people who hear that call can be really challenging but when we do, the mission of the Homeless Alliance can be a strong selling point. We try to be attentive to

the needs of our staff and provide them the flexibility to find whatever their definition is of "work-life balance."

Moreover, people in the caring professions tend to extend their compassion and empathy beyond their clients to their co-workers and colleagues. That makes our work environment feel supportive and understanding.

As an organization we recognize that we need to offer more and better opportunities for our staff to feel appreciated. We ask so much of them, and they give so much of themselves, that we need to find better ways to give a little back.

Q: What are some of the company's immediate goals going forward into the near future?

As a practical matter, three of the most immediate and important goals are to develop and implement a community plan for addressing the needs of Oklahoma City's unsheltered homeless population through the coming winter, working with the City, County and State to find smart ways to utilize federal AR-PA funds to prevent and reduce homelessness, and collaborate with all of our partners to protect the homeless population from the pandemic.

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TOP WORKPLACES CONTENDERS



Oklahoma Wesleyan University is offering a 50% tuition scholarship to students and employees of Tri County Tech. ANDY DOSSETT/EXAMINER- ENTERPRISE

These companies had high marks in 2021

Jordan Green

Special to The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

Accenture is a global professional services company, providing a broad range of services in strategy and consulting, interactive, technology and operations, with digital capabilities across all of these services. It has 513,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries.

Aldi, a grocery store chain, has more than 2,000 stores across 37 states. The company says it is one of the fastest-growing retailers in the nation and plans to become the third-largest U.S. grocery retailer by store count by the end of 2022.

AllFirst, an Oklahoma title and abstract service, is the result of a 2021 merger between the Tulsa-based company and Allegiance Title Company of Dallas.

Aviation Training Consulting LLC is based in Altus and has an office in Edmond. The company was founded in 2001 by Air Force veteran Robert Cox, the company's president and CEO.

BankOnITUSA is an information technology service provider for financial institutions founded in 2003. The provides service in the areas of IT infrastructure, oversight, security and support.

BKD CPAs & Advisors has professionals serving clients in all 50 states and internationally. The company and its subsidiaries offer a variety of services in accounting, auditing and assurance, tax, risk management, technology, corporate finance, forensic and valuation services to a wide range of public and private industries.

Brainerd Chemical is a manufacturer and distributor of chemicals for research facilities, industrial plants and agricultural operations. It offers rail terminal services, large-scale packaging, bulk storage, bulk blending, contract packaging and logistic facilitating for larger organizations.

CL Boyd Company Inc., a John Deere construction equipment dealer in Oklahoma City, is more than 100 years old. The Crews family has been involved in operations since the 1930s.

Casualty Corporation of America Inc.

is an Oklahoma property and casualty insurance company based in Jones. It opened in 1964.

CEC is a privately-held, multi-discipline engineering incorporated in 1966. It has offices in both Oklahoma and Texas. Clients include numerous federal, state, municipal, county, government agencies and private organizations.

Central Technology Center, part of the Oklahoma CareerTech system, provides technical education that elevates the workforce through economic development collaborations. Last year, CTC had more than 20,000 enrollments and provided customized business and industry training to 400 companies.

CGI, founded in 1976, is an IT and business consulting services firm with more than 78,000 members across 21 industry sectors in 400 locations.

Changeis Inc. is a management consulting and technology services firm that delivers government operations to public-sector customers. These include planning, integrating, and executing all aspects of transformation, from budget and acquisition to implementation and change management.

Chickasaw Community Bank is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Chickasaw Banc Holding Company, making Chickasaw Community Bank 100% owned by the Chickasaw Nation. It has received state and national recognition through its efforts in Indian Country, especially in housing.

Claims Management Resources adjusts and recovers property damage claims for self-insured entities. The company partners with organizations in the utility industry and governmental agencies.

CMSWillowbrook Inc. is a full-service construction management that oversees projects from inception to completion, including planning, design, procurement and construction. The company has more than 100 employees at offices in Chickasha, Oklahoma City, and Tulsa.

CompSource Mutual Insurance Co. provides workers' compensation insurance. The company was founded in 1933 and has about 300 employees, with its headquarters in Oklahoma City.

Cookshack Inc., established in Ponca City in 1962, manufactures stainless

steel smoker ovens, grills and other products. The company employs 36 people.

Devon Industries, founded in 1988, manufactures equipment for the quick lubrication industry. Its offers equipment and installation services.

DIGITALiBiz, founded in 2002, is a professional services firm that provides support to government agencies. It

aims to provide products and services the United States government needs to support the public good and national defense.

Ditch Witch of Oklahoma is a full-service construction equipment dealership. The Bridwell family acquired the business in 1976 and still owns and op-

Continued on next page



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accenture



Epic Charter Schools exterior in northwest Oklahoma City. THE OKLAHOMAN ARCHIVES

TOP WORKPLACES CONTENDERS

Continued from previous page

erates it today. It has dealerships in five states and seven cities, including Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

Dove Schools is a public charter school system that promotes science, mathematics, engineering and educational technology in school environments. It was founded in 2000 and has more than 300 employees.

Eastern Oklahoma County Technology Center serves approximately 600 students per year in the communities of eastern Oklahoma County. Secondary students living in the technology center district who attend a public, private, parochial, charter or home school are eligible to attend tuition-free.

Encompass – Home Health & Hospice is a Medicare-certified home health and Hospice service provider. With more than 330 branch offices across the United States, Encompass provides skilled nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and additional services to more than 200,000 patients.

EOG Resources is an oil and gas exploration and production company with proven reserves in the United States and Trinidad. EOG's focus on advanced technology and data analysis improves the use of 3-D seismic/microseismic data, the development of reservoir models, the use of drilling equipment and completion technologies.

EPIC Charter Schools is Oklahoma's largest public charter school and largest public school system, serving more than 61,000 students in the 2020-2021 school year. EPIC provides a free state-accredited and individualized education for each student through a blended-learning model that pairs digital curriculum with regular one-to-one instruction with a fully certified Oklahoma teacher.

The FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center was established in 1946 and has led the way in aviation training, research, aircraft maintenance and logistics support. Today, it is home to federal employees, contractors and students who work in a wide variety of careers, performing critical functions that touch every aspect of the National Airspace System.



Don Walden loads a box May 4, 2020, at the Goodwill Store at 1900 NW 164 in Oklahoma City. SARAH PHIPPS/THE OKLAHOMAN FILE

GableGotwals is a full-service law firm representing a client base throughout the United States and internationally. The Oklahoma-based firm represents Fortune 500 corporations, entrepreneurs, privately owned companies, foundations and individuals.

Gateway First Bank was the result of a 2019 merger between Gateway Mortgage Group and a longtime community bank. Gateway was founded by Gov. Kevin Stitt and is headquartered in Jenks.

Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma provides low-cost clothing and household items for sale in retail stores. The non-profit helps people with challenges to employment such as disabili-

ties, computer illiteracy, criminal justice backgrounds or long-standing unemployment or unemployability.

Graybar distributes electrical, communications and data networking products. Through more than 260 North American distribution facilities, it stocks and sells products from thousands of manufacturers.

Great Plains Bank is a community bank focused on providing modern, convenient services with a little western Oklahoma charm. It offers both consumer and commercial products and was founded in 1907.

Green Country Behavioral Health Services, founded in 1979, is a certified Community Behavioral Health Center

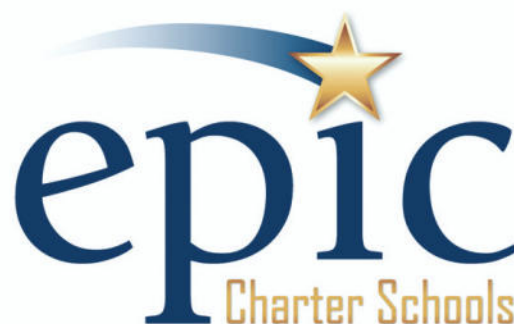
in Muskogee. The company has more than 100 employees.

The Homeless Alliance works to end long-term homelessness in Oklahoma City. It operates several housing programs, a multi-agency homeless resource campus, a low-barrier day shelter, a street outreach team and several employment programs.

Homes by Taber is a home building company based in Oklahoma City. Founded in 2000, it has more than 100 employees.

Lifeshare Transplant Donor Services of Oklahoma recovers organs and tissue for transplant. It was founded in 1986,

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TOP WORKPLACES CONTENDERS

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and its team members contribute to the core purpose of saving lives.

Melton Truck Lines Inc. is an over-the-road flatbed transportation company, providing transportation services for the United States, Canada and Mexico. It was founded in 1954 and is headquartered in Tulsa.

Meridian Technology Center is part of a network of 29 career technology centers across the state. Its district covers parts of Lincoln, Logan, Noble, Pawnee and Payne counties, encompassing more than 900 square miles.

MIRATECH Corp. provides emission and acoustical solutions for stationary natural gas and diesel reciprocating engines. The company was founded in 1992 and is headquartered in Tulsa.

NextThought is a learning solutions company that develops online course technology designed for connected learning. The company also provides a full suite of learning design and video production services.

NorthCare is a provider of integrated behavioral health services for Oklahomans living with mental illness, trauma and addiction. It offers more than 20 trauma-informed programs for Oklahomans of all ages throughout all of central Oklahoma and neighboring counties.

Objectstream Inc. is a custom software development and consulting company in Oklahoma City. It was founded in 2004.

OKIE811 provides a safety and damage prevention program designed to promote public awareness, provide a communication link between excavators and operators of underground facilities and eliminate potential hazards posed to excavators, the general public, vital underground facilities and the environment whenever excavation is done.

The Oklahoma Department of Substance Abuse Services supports community and neighborhood-level prevention coalitions across the state by providing community-based prevention services in partnership with local organizations such as county/municipal governments, school districts, faith communities and businesses.

The Oklahoma Healthcare Authority administers the state's SoonerCare program. The agency strives to educate and engage its one million members regarding personal responsibilities for their health services utilization, behaviors and outcomes in partnership with a statewide network of almost 65,000 providers.

The Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation is an independent, non-profit biomedical research institute dedicated to understanding and developing more effective treatments for human disease. Its scientists focus on such critical research areas as Alzheimer's disease, cancer, lupus, multiple sclerosis and cardiovascular disease.

The Oklahoma Water Resources Board oversees the state's water use appropriation and permitting, water quality monitoring and standards, financial assistance for water/wastewater systems, dam safety, floodplain management, water supply planning, technical studies and research and water resource mapping.

Oklahoma Wesleyan University, founded in 1905 in Bartlesville, is an Orthodox Christian University of the Wesleyan Church. It models a way of thought, life and faith.

Olsson is an employee-owned engineering and design firm founded in 1956. Staffers provide services in the areas of planning and design, engineering, environmental, field services and technology.

OnCue Marketing LLC is in the Oklahoma and Texas convenience store market. OnCue is in the pursuit of employment opportunities as its continued growth targets an additional 100 new jobs each year.

Orthodontic Associates serves children and adults using modern orthodontic treatments, including Invisalign treatment, modern braces, bite correction, virtual house calls and more. It has two locations in Oklahoma.

PaceButler Corp. purchases used cell phones from businesses. It was formed in 1987 as a computer business.

Panda Restaurant Group, parent company of Panda Express, Panda Inn, and Hibachi-San, delivers Asian dining experiences. It is family-owned, with about 2,200 locations worldwide, and employs more than 40,000 people.

Phillips Murrah P.C. grew from a four-lawyer start-up to one of the state's largest full-service law firms. The firm provides a comprehensive line of business and litigation solutions, offering clients the insight and strategic legal counsel necessary to maintain a competitive edge.



A Science Museum Oklahoma visitor tries one of the museum's exhibits during a previous SMO21 evening. PROVIDED

Pinnacle Business Systems, headquartered in Edmond, was founded in 1988 as an information technology solutions provider. The company creates and oversees IT services for clients across multiple industries.

Presort First Class is a locally-owned turnkey graphic design, print marketing and direct mail marketing agency in Oklahoma City. The company focus on strengthening its customers' images to drive sales and secure repeat business.

The Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, a member of the Feeding America network of Food Banks, is the largest hunger-relief charity in the state. It provides enough food to feed more than 136,000 hungry Oklahomans every week, 37% of whom are children.

Rich & Cartmill Insurance & Bonds is a privately held independent agency. It is headquartered in Tulsa.

Ross Group provides development, engineering, construction and industrial construction services to a variety of clients nationwide. Some of the clients it serves include the federal government, oil and gas partners, energy partners and a variety of commercial and private interests.

The Science Museum Oklahoma is a private, nonprofit, educational and cultural resource center with a mission of enriching people's lives by revealing the wonder and relevance of science. It was founded in 1958.

Sherwood Companies is a family-owned and family-operated heavy highway and industrial contractor with nearly nine decades working in construction across Oklahoma, Kansas, and Colorado.

St. Mary's Regional Medical Center in Enid has served the healthcare needs of northwest Oklahoma for more than 100 years. It is a comprehensive acute care, 229-bed hospital.

Stan Johnson Company is a commercial real estate brokerage and advisory firm that focuses on investment sales transactions involving retail, office, industrial, healthcare and specialty properties. The company is now in its fourth decade of operation and has expanded its service platform.

Stevens Trucking is a family-owned and operated business. Based in El Reno and serving the oil industry, it now operates more 300 tractors and 1,000 trailers.

TEAM Professional Services Corp. serves companies of all sizes nationwide to provide drug and alcohol, background screening, COVID-19 testing and screening solutions and occupational health services program management.

Timberlake Construction was founded in 1946. It has clients in several sectors and industries, including civic and municipal, corporate, educational, healthcare, hospitality and multi-family, industrial, public safety and law enforcement, retail, spiritual, and sports and entertainment.

United Rentals provides construction, industrial and homeowner equipment for rent, underground construction tools, temporary power, climate control, fluid solutions, disaster recovery and onsite tool management. It has 29 Oklahoma locations.

U.S. Cellular is the fifth-largest full-service wireless carrier in the United States. The company's offerings include postpaid and no-contract service, voice, data and messaging, mobile Internet and international calling.

WEBCO Industries Inc. manufactures carbon, stainless steel, and other high-alloy specialty tubing products produced to exacting industry and customer specifications. It was founded in 1969 and headquartered in Sand Springs.

Workspace Solutions LLC, DBA Scott Rice and NexSpaces, works with clients to plan, furnish and manage interior spaces using architecture, furniture, technology products and an array of value-added services. Its core market is providing space solutions for corporate, education and healthcare organizations.

World Acceptance Corporation is a finance company that provides personal installment loan solutions and personal tax preparation and filing services to more than 1 million customers each year. Headquartered in Greenville, South Carolina, the company operates more than 1,200 community-based World Finance branches across 16 states.

Yukon Public Schools empowers learners to be self-sustaining, successful contributors to life and the global community. It has more than 1,000 employees and an enrollment of more than 8,000 students.

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TOP WORKPLACES INTERESTING FACTS

Things to know about companies on the list

Jordan Green
Special to The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

Ben E. Keith

As the largest privately owned company in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex, Ben E. Keith is one of the Top 10 food distributors in the United States. A species of bat, Benkeith's short-tailed bat (*Carollia benkeithi*), was named after the company's founder.

BKD CPAs & Advisors

Under the SKY Initiative, the firm emphasizes and strengthens diversity, focusing on attracting, retaining and developing women leaders for the sustainable growth of the firm.

Brainerd Chemical Co.

In March, the company pivoted all of its corporate employees to remote work. The company recently polled its remote employees, and they all said they are as happy as they have ever been.

C L Boyd Co. Inc.

More than 30% of the company's employees worked there for 10 years or more. Each year at a Christmas party, the company rewards employees who celebrate employment anniversaries.

Capital One Financial Corp.

Pay equity has been a core tenet of the company's pay philosophy. Its aggregated adjusted pay gap results show that the company pays women 100% of what men are paid. It also pays racial and ethnic minorities 100% of what non-minorities are paid.

Casualty Corporation of America Inc.

Each year, employees make holiday gift baskets filled with "Made in Oklahoma" products. The company provides



The new Paycom Center logo is shown Tuesday on the downtown Oklahoma City arena. Paycom now has the arena's new naming rights agreement. CHRIS LANDSBERGER/THE OKLAHOMAN

the same to CCA's independent agents across Oklahoma.

Central Technology Center

Central Tech achieves 95% placement for students entering the workforce or continuing their education and creates an annual economic impact of \$31.9 million.

CGI

CGI's Member Satisfaction Assessment Program allows employees to interact with managers and review CGI via an online survey. Employees are also invited to participate in an annual member consultation program, which solicits input on CGI's strategic direction and priorities.

Cookshack Inc.

Founder Gene Ellis built the first Cookshack smoker oven at his home in Red Rock. Ellis would build smoker ovens, put them in the back of his pick-up

and drive around until he sold them. Then, he would go back home and build more.

Cornerstone Home Lending Inc.

The company's LoanFly innovation has saved more than 311,000 sheets of paper since 2019.

DIGITALiBiz

One of the company's most interesting contracts works in Antarctica, providing weather tracking and forecasting for Navy planes coming and going to Antarctica.

EOG Resources

EOG is one of 19 Fortune 500 companies headquartered in Houston.

FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center

The center hosts quarterly Center-Wide Virtual Town Halls to share infor-

mation about the work being done across the center.

GableGotwals

The law firm collected photos from employees' work-from-home setups and shared them in a virtual presentation amid the pandemic. Attorneys and management created a video thanking members of the firm.

Gateway First Bank

Gateway Mortgage Group, started by Gov. Kevin Stitt, services mortgage loans totaling more than \$16 billion for more than 100,000 customers. Each month, Gateway funds almost 2,000 new loans.

Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma

Goodwill celebrated its 85th anniversary in 2021 with the publication of a book, "More Than A Store," telling the history of this community-serving organization through the decades.

Great Plains Bank

During the Great Depression, when a "bank holiday" was called by President Roosevelt, this bank (then known as the First State Bank and Trust Company of Hollis) was one of the few banks in the country given permission to remain open, which it did.

Homeless Alliance

In 2020, the Homeless Alliance housed 810 people, including families with children, veterans, and single adults; assisted 1,481 people with housing; and served 83,633 meals at its day shelter.

Kindful Hospice

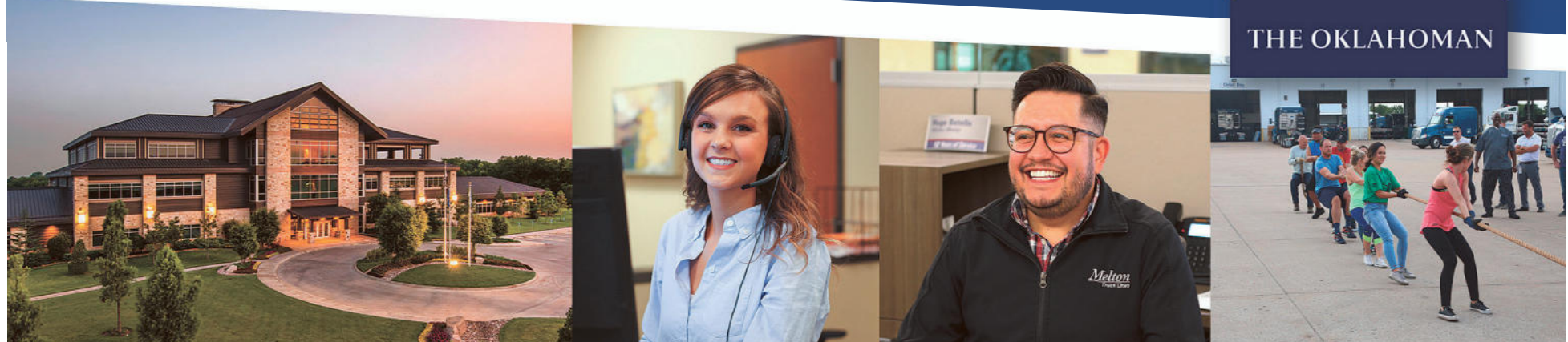
Kindful is the fastest-growing hos-

See COMPANIES, Page 18S

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TOP WORK PLACES 2021



THE OKLAHOMAN

TOP WORKPLACES 'I LOVE MY JOB'

Why employees love their workplace

Josh Wallace

Special to The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

Employees had a lot to say about why they love their job. Here are a few quotes from some of the Top Workplaces contestants:

Accenture

I have the flexibility of my work environment and schedule, I feel empowered in the organization, and my voice is always heard.

ALDI

It is fast paced and gives the opportunity to move up if you prove you are ready for it.

AllFirst

It allows me the flexibility to work from home 4 days a week and work with some of the most caring and kind people who respect me and appreciate the work that I do.

Aviation Training Consulting, LLC

I am able to contribute my time and talent to a purpose greater than myself, and do so in an environment surrounded by mission-focused, caring, positive people striving to make a difference and ultimately save lives.

BankOnTUSA

It has allowed me to expand my skills beyond what I had imagined and the management strongly supports a healthy balance of work/personal life.



People of all ages will have opportunities to learn and build during Tinkerfest at Science Museum Oklahoma. PROVIDED

Ben E. Keith Company

Great atmosphere to work at with people who are all goal oriented. It makes coming to work easy and comfortable.

Benham, a Haskell Company

Everyone I work with has become a mentor to me in some sort of way. The knowledge sharing in this company runs far and wide.

BKD CPAs & Advisors

I get to do something I am passionate about everyday with others who feel the same way. I am always encouraged and never feel like I can't ask for help when I need it.

Brainerd Chemical Company Inc.

I have the opportunity to help develop the people and the business.

C L Boyd Company, Inc.

I have the ability to create my own schedule, set and achieve goals, and work in a family-like environment.

Capital One Financial Corporation

I learn new things every day and I get to help people.

CEC

I get to see people achieve things together that they didn't at first believe they could.

Central Technology Center

I am able to do something that I love in a way that I feel works best with students.

CGI

I am empowered to innovate and engage to generate plans and influence decisions and work tasks for management and the customer.

Changeis, Inc.

My colleagues, management and executives came to my aid when I needed it the most. I have the ideal work/life balance at a time in my life when I need it the most.

Chickasaw Community Bank

I love what the bank stands for and the mission statement. They truly care about the customers and the employees and it's not always the bottom line. Great place to work.

Claims Management Resources

My manager treats everyone with respect and kindness. My job is diversified and my team members are helpful.

CMSWillowbrook, Inc.

I feel like we are bettering the communities in which we work.

Continued on next page

Companies

Continued from Page 17S

piece in Oklahoma. Kindful is embraces technology to help achieve its goal of "transforming the care of serious illness."

LifeShare Donor Transplant Donor Services of Oklahoma Inc.

In 2019, LifeShare broke its previous record and coordinated the donation of lifesaving organs from 197 donors, saving 516 lives. Sixty percent of Oklahomans are registered donors, with more joining the registry every month.

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

The agency trained more than 2,109 health care providers in 2020.

Oklahoma Health Care Authority

Seventy-nine percent of the agency's employees are female.

Olsson

In recent years, more than 90% of the company's annual revenue came from repeat clients.

OnCue Marketing LLC

OnCue was an early adopter of drive-throughs for convenience stores. Its first drive-through was built in 1971, four years before McDonald's began building drive-throughs.

PaceButler Corporation

PaceButler Corporation was formed in 1987 and originally was in the computer business.

Panda Restaurant Group

The family-owned group originated as a fine-dining restaurant, Panda Inn, in 1973 and opened its first Panda Express in the Glendale Galleria in 1983. It created the Orange Chicken.

Paycom Software Inc.

In 2020, Paycom made its fourth consecutive appearance on FORTUNE magazine's 100 Fastest-Growing Companies list. Paycom was also recognized as one of the Best-Managed Companies in 2019 and 2020 by The Wall Street Journal.

Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma

In February 2020, the Regional Food Bank launched a new brand, the first new look for the organization in more than 30 years.

Russell-Murray Hospice Inc.

The company provides care to terminally ill patients whether they have a payment source or not.

Stevens Trucking Co.

When he founded Stevens Trucking, Kenney Stevens set out to provide rapid, reliable delivery service for the oilfield industry. As the business has grown, a family member has stepped up to take on each core aspect of the business.

TBS Factoring Service

In 2017, TBS launched a weekly talk show on Facebook Live called the "Truck Boss Show" with just an iPhone. It focused on segments within the transportation industry. It now conducts field reports from several states as the hosts dive into issues facing independent drivers.

Timberlake Construction

Timberlake appointed a COVID officer, and strict guidelines were set-up for active job sites, along with ensuring PPE and other safety materials were readily available.

U.S. Cellular

U.S. Cellular has the Highest Wireless Network Quality Performance in the North Central Region, according to the J.D. Power 2017 U.S. Wireless Network Quality Performance Study, and 99% of customers have access to 4G LTE speeds.

Webco Industries Inc.

Webco created its own COVID leave policy to allow employees 80 hours of paid leave to employees who have been exposed to COVID and need to quarantine, care for children or make arrangements for long-term daycare with the closure of daycares and schools.

Workspace Solutions LLC, DBA Scott Rice and NexSpaces

The company started in 1920 and is the largest contract furnishing dealer in the state.

TOP WORKPLACES 'I LOVE MY JOB'

Continued from previous page

CompSource Mutual Insurance Company

I feel like I can help those that seriously need it. I feel I make a difference in the lives of the people I assist. They know we are not just an insurance company and they are not just a number.

Cookshack, Inc.

I get to work with a great group of people who are trying to build a world class organization.

Cornerstone Home Lending, Inc.

I feel valued and important on our team. New ideas are encouraged and supported. I love the culture and team dynamics that our team have.

Devon Industries

I feel like I genuinely am part of a team all focused on accomplishing a goal of improving Devon as a whole.

DIGITALiBiz

I get to do what I love, am paid well, and I love my coworkers.

Ditch Witch of Oklahoma

I feel fulfilled, appreciated and respected. I feel that there is room for growth in my career with Ditch Witch.

Dove Schools

I am able to create my own lesson plans and curriculum along side kind peers. I feel supported with hard situation and cared about as an individual.

Eastern Oklahoma County Technology Center

The people are wonderful. The work we are involved in help individuals, employers, and communities.

EncompassHealth – Home Health & Hospice

Everyone in the office seems friendly and eager to help and to genuinely care about patients and co-workers.

EOG Resources

I feel motivated to work hard everyday and get the support I need to do my job the best way possible. Management is encouraging and values my opinions. I am well compensated for my work.

EPIC Charter Schools

I am part of a truly outstanding team of individual who feel like family.

FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center

I have direct impact on the safety and security of all aspects of aviation for the American public.

First United Bank

I am free to express my faith and to genuinely help others.

GableGotwals

I can learn and grow in my position and become better each day at what I do.

Gateway First Bank

Gateway has given me the liberty to hire necessary support staff in order to grow my business. They had faith in me, and I delivered big. My previous employer would not do this.

Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma

I am allowed the freedom to help others who are less fortunate than me while being able to be my authentic self. We are encouraged to think creatively and outside the box without rigid, build-in modalities.

Graybar

I love the people I work with make every day interesting and my managers are always thinking of things to make the work place more exciting.

Great Plains Bank

I feel like I am part of a growing bank with a bright future. We are a great size, still a community bank feel, with products and services that are found at large banks.

Green Country Behavioral Health Services Inc

I get to come to work everyday to try and make a positive influence on someone's life whether it be the people I work with or the clients I serve.

Homeless Alliance

I can see the tangible impact that my agency is making in the community, and I love the amazing people I get to work with each day.

Homes by Taber

I get to breathe life lessons, experience, and operational excellence into employees. I also get to help people fulfill their career goals and income goals. I get to see new employees go from new to leaders.

Kindful Hospice

I love helping people that can't help themselves, it gives me purpose. It's really nice to be around a team of like minded people. It is truly wonderful.

LifeShare Transplant Donor Services of Oklahoma Inc

I have a personal connection to organ donation, and I am honored to be a part of an organization that strives to save as many lives as possible.

Melton Truck Lines, Inc.

I'm able to contribute to a team environment. I feel that my opinions are heard from management.

Meridian Technology Center

I feel that I gain knowledge and that my opinion is valued. I feel that I am encouraged to do better but also feel my contributions to this organization are recognized.

MIRATECH Corporation

The people here are wonderful! Everyone is competent and capable, collaborating to an end that is beneficial to all. The transparency of the executive plans gives me confidence in the future of the company too.

NextThought

I have clear expectations, I have clear mobility for my career and my free time, and my department is healthy/open with communication.

NorthCare

I have the opportunity to use my story to help clients in an intimate and focused setting.

Objectstream, Inc.

I am able to learn and try new things, share suggestions for client and get work life balance. It makes me happy because I keep growing along with my company.

OKIE811

I feel valued and feel like what I say matters. Everyone is always ready to jump in and help.

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

I know that what I do ACTUALLY MATTERS. The work I put in everyday benefits our community who need it.

Oklahoma Health Care Authority

I am making a difference in peoples lives. I have support from leadership to do everything I am capable of. They trust me and I work hard to never lose it. I love the program that I work in.

Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation

I do meaningful work with managers who care about me and my family.

Oklahoma Pediatric Therapy Center

I am able to grow and dream and the owners help to make my dreams come true.

Oklahoma Water Resources Board

My job allows me to practice science-based work that directly benefits the people of Oklahoma

Oklahoma Wesleyan University

My job allows me to be in so many different areas and complete different typed of projects. Above all, I get to work closely with students.

Olsson

I get to work with a great group of people that share my cares & concerns about bettering our communities.

OnCue Marketing, LLC

I can exercise my talents and interests in meaningful ways, I have the flexibility to try new ideas to accomplish my work. The efforts I put in are acknowledged and appreciated.

Orthodontic Associates

I get to see patients grow. I work with amazing people. The doctors are very amazing and caring.

PaceButler Corporation

PaceButler is just as invested in my personal growth and development as an individual as I am.

Panda Restaurant Group

It challenges me to be the best worker I can be. I have fun people around me and almost everyone engages.

Paycom Software, Inc.

This role pushes me to do my very best. I am surrounded by motivated, passionate, intelligent people.

PHILLIPS MURRAH P.C.

I can do high quality work in a flexible and considerate environment with professionals who I respect and enjoy spending time with!

Pinnacle Business Systems

The work environment is welcoming. I feel from the highest notch on the totem pole to the worker bees, we can approach anyone in the organization.

Presort First Class

I feel respected, my flexibility & financial needs are met.

Regent Bank

I get to do what I love, my coworkers are awesome and it's never boring.

Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma

I get to work with a diverse group of kind, compassionate people committed to ending hunger.

Rich & Cartmill Insurance

I feel valued and love what I do. People are always willing to help and check on me if I have a problem. Best job I have ever had.

Ross Group Construction Corporation

It is a great environment to work in and I can tell my superiors have everyone in mind when making decisions.

Russell-Murray Hospice, Inc.

I enjoy the people I work with and getting to know my patients and their families during my time caring for them. I enjoy the autonomy I have in doing my job. I feel supported by all those I work with at every level.

Science Museum Oklahoma

I feel genuinely appreciated. I learn something new everyday which in turn helps me to relay that constant information to guests!

Sherwood Companies

I feel as though I am a part of the family with the atmosphere at Sherwood.

St. Mary's Regional Medical Center

I'm helping people everyday. I work with coworkers who know the value of what we can accomplish together.

Continued on next page

The advertisement for NorthCare features a collage of images. At the top left is the NorthCare logo, which consists of a stylized green leaf icon next to the word 'northcare' in a lowercase, sans-serif font. Below the logo is a photograph of a modern, multi-story building with large glass windows and a brick facade. To the right of the building photo is a smaller photo of a sign that says 'northcare' in a blue, lowercase font. Below these photos is a banner with a green background and a white border. The banner contains the text 'TOP WORK PLACES 2021' in large, bold, white letters, with '2021' in a slightly larger font. Below the banner is a dark blue banner with the text 'THE OKLAHOMAN' in white, uppercase letters. At the bottom of the advertisement is a dark blue banner with the text 'Thanks to our amazing employees! Come join the NorthCare team' in white, uppercase letters, followed by the website address 'www.northcare.com' in a smaller, white font.

TOP WORKPLACES



A young businessman is shown looking stressed out while working in an office at night GETTY IMAGES

Survey: Employee engagement is down

Bob Helbig
Energage

Employee engagement is dropping amid a tight labor market. It's been a problem since the start of 2021, and it's an indication employees just aren't that into their employers right now. At least not the same way they were a year ago.

"What we're hearing from employees through this data is that they are rethinking their commitment to their employers," said Greg Barnett, chief people scientist of Energage. "We're seeing lower levels of loyalty as employees leave their employer for a new one."

Survey data collected from employees by Energage at more than 4,000 companies show that employee engagement levels have fallen to a level lower than anytime during the pandemic.

Data shows that employee engagement sharply increased in April 2020 as companies scrambled to ensure employees that they were prioritizing their health and well-being during the pandemic with initiatives such as work-from-home. After this initial spike, engagement declined but started inching up at the end of the year, before falling again in 2021.

"The new year started with a one-

point decline in engagement, and has fallen ever since," Barnett said.

The Energage research shows some industries have rockier relationships with employees than others, with Education, Hospitality, Utilities and Telecommunications, Services, and Manufacturing showing large decreases in employee engagement in 2021, off by six points or more compared to the second quarter of 2020.

"Employee burnout and stress has been a significant factor over the last year, and employees in these industries have been especially hard hit," Barnett said. "In many companies, initial hiring freezes and layoffs have been hard to reverse, leading to more work for fewer employees. In other situations, burnout is high because remote work has created situations where employees never feel like they are off the clock."

In addition to waning loyalty, many employees in these same industries note that they are less willing to recommend their own companies to others as a good place to work.

"Employees are at the point where they can reflect on their company's response to COVID-19 and are judging those actions in hindsight," said Doug Claffey, founder and chief strategy officer of Energage. "While the worst of the

pandemic appears to be behind us, the actions taken by employers have left some employees questioning not only their loyalty, but also their career choice. This is especially true in Education and Hospitality."

Despite these challenges, Claffey is quick to point out that focusing on the past won't likely be helpful.

"Organizations should resist the urge to overanalyze declines in employee engagement and instead focus on

improvement going forward. There are plenty of challenges and opportunities ahead that will impact future engagement, including how to run a hybrid workforce, keep employees safe, and balance new work/life flexibility issues," Claffey said.

Bob Helbig is media partnerships director at Energage, a Philadelphia-based employee survey firm. Energage is the survey partner for Top Workplaces.

Continued from previous page

Stan Johnson Company

I get to work with great people every day!

Stevens Trucking Co

I feel like I am trusted to work independently, but I also know that I have support when needed.

TBS Factoring Service

It's challenging and I have support from my co-workers on a daily basis.

TEAM Professional Services Companies

I am working somewhere with values that are upheld and my voice is heard.

Timberlake Construction

I'm given the ability to approach my job in an innovative way. I can work for the best of owners and the company.

Trisura Specialty Insurance

I am contributing to building something new from the ground up. It's exciting and challenging work.

United Rentals Inc.

I am able to make decisions that im-

pact the business and my job in a positive way.

US Cellular

I am encouraged and supported to share my thoughts and ideas. I am respected and appreciated for the work I do.

Webco Industries, Inc.

I have the ability to teach and learn from my team. My role allows me the freedom to engage with all team members as well as other department managers.

Workspace Solutions LLC DBA Scott Rice and NexSpaces

It is flexible. I can take off if I need to. I can talk to my supervisor and express my concerns and they truly understand and take my concerns seriously.

World Acceptance Corporation

This job had provided so much for me and my family. I love working for a company that values their employees and understands that we are human beings too.

Yukon Public Schools

I feel valued and love the people that I work with. It makes my job much more enjoyable.



Thank You!

Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma is proud to be named as a 2021 Top Oklahoma Workplace!

We want to thank our exceptional staff for accomplishing this milestone. Their dedication to our organization's mission and tireless efforts to transform lives through the power of work across Central Oklahoma has elevated our organization to new heights.

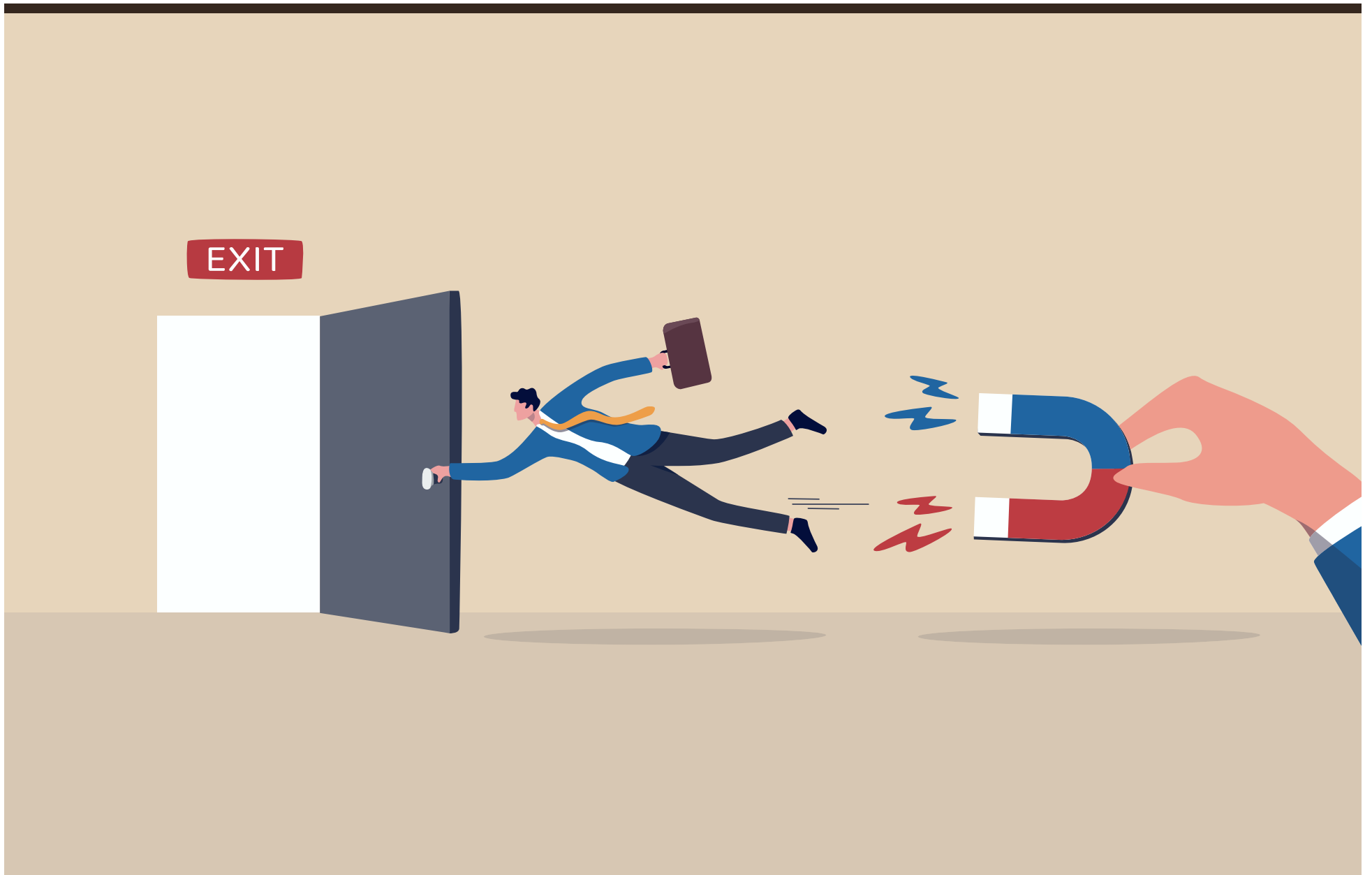
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TOP WORKPLACES



GETTY IMAGES

Tips to help survive ‘Turnover Tsunami’

By Gary Markle

Energage

When you lose a great employee, you're suffering strategic setbacks, wrecking team morale, and watching your productivity and profits flounder. Right now, more companies than ever are drowning in an unprecedented "Turnover Tsunami."

You see it everywhere now. From a recent edition of the Society for Human Resource Management magazine to any business blog out there, the Turnover Tsunami is upon us.

If you haven't been affected by it, good for you. You're either one of the lucky few or it simply hasn't hit your sector just yet.

For those already hit, the losses are adding up fast.

The true cost isn't something as simple as it taking X% of an employee's salary to replace them. It's exponentially more than that.

You'll be out not just the time and money for recruitment and training, but also the loss of customer's trust in your brand when they can't get their product or service with the same speed they've

come to expect.

What is driving this phenomenon? While most sources agree that a bad boss will drive your good employees off faster than anything, that's not the only factor right now. If it was, it would be as simple as replacing that one sub-par manager.

These days, we're seeing record numbers of people from the bottom to the top of any organization that are just walking away. Simply leaving after they ask themselves "Is this what I want to do with the rest of my life?"

"I did it. I did my duty. But do I want to do it again?"

"Is this all there is?"

That existential crisis is almost infectious. Worse yet, it's happening en masse.

Beyond the ones that are saying "I'm done with this" and moving on, your best and brightest are being courted.

"It's gone beyond just being a candidate driven market. Good talent across the board, whether they're looking for jobs or not, they're being actively pursued by companies and recruiters. Not just in their markets, but nationally and sometimes internationally," says Josh

McAfee of Humans Doing.

When those key contributors leave, they create a stress point.

Let's say you have a team of five developers. You lose one of them and now those other four are having to pick up 25% more work.

In this market, there are no quick replacements available. The longer that position remains open, the closer to jumping ship those other developers become. The moment a recruiter or competing company comes along and offers them something even a little bit better, they're gone.

So how do you attract and retain top talent and stay afloat during the Turnover Tsunami? Here are four key tips:

Make friends before you need them. Get to know your recruiters, whether they're internal or you get outside help. Be sure they have an in-depth knowledge of your organization's needs and what it will take for an employee to be a great fit.

Engage your employees. Your workers will have fears and doubts, even in the best of times. With all the uncertainty and opportunity right now, it's magnified that anxiety. Actively and openly

discuss what's going on with the organization with your teams. Earn their trust. Invite them to communicate with you. That relationship is probably the most valuable thing you'll have with your teams.

Build up your talent. Developing the skills of your people is vital to the overall growth and stability of your company. Refining proficiencies, learning new abilities or expertise, and cross training will all strengthen what your employees can contribute and increase how valued they feel.

Leverage the right system. Communicating and cultivating your employees sounds great, but actually doing it is a whole other matter. You don't have time or money to waste playing around and testing approaches. You need a proven system that facilitates those conversations, guides development, tracks progress, and gives you power over the data you're collecting.

Gary Markle, chief catalyst of Catalytic Coaching Inc, is a speaker, consultant, author, and a business partner of Energage, a Philadelphia-based employee survey firm. Energage is the survey partner for Top Workplaces.

Companies need to connect with worn-out workers

Greg Barnett

Energage

Since early 2020, employees have navigated a challenging environment, and they are tired.

We've gone from a pandemic-induced recession, to a growth period, to what now looks like pandemic with growth at the same time. It's no wonder employees are burned out.

Lower employee engagement can have a negative impact on all stakeholders, including customers and prospective new hires.

The good news is that communicators can play an important role in partnering with colleagues in HR to help reverse some of these trends, while leveraging communications skills to strengthen their organization's brand reputation and spur employee referrals and new hire interest.

Energage research underscores a meaningful shift in the employee experience in contrast to the early pandemic time period. Survey data collected from employees at more than 4,000 companies show that employee engagement sharply increased in April 2020 as companies scrambled to ensure employees that they were prioritizing employee's health and well-being during the pandemic.

However, after this initial spike, engagement has plummeted. In more recent surveys, employees reported feeling increasingly uninformed about what's going on in the company, and that leaders are less visible. At the same time, employees feel that the "all-

hands-on-deck" mission that defined the early pandemic and created such strong engagement has dissipated, replaced perhaps by growth and hiring concerns.

As a result, signs are pointing toward a "Great Resignation," as employee dissatisfaction causes them to leave for other opportunities. This couldn't come at a worse time, as many industries are struggling to find employees to fill current openings, and customer service has been hit hard.

What can help? Teaming up with HR counterparts, comms pros can apply their creativity to assist in the effort to get employee engagement back on track.

The intelligence learned through employee survey programs can be tapped to fuel strategic communications efforts targeted to employees, customers, prospective hires and others, working with HR and employee relations counterparts to identify storylines focusing on the culture that makes a company unique.

As company culture becomes a differentiator, think about how organizations can include it in every communication, on all channels, and with every influencer. Culture can add richness and purpose to advertising, social media, recruiting, analyst and shareholder relations, community outreach, philanthropy, and media relations.

In the early days of the pandemic, employees saw a different version of communication and information sharing. During a time of great unknowns, confusion and fear, companies an-

swered the call by increasing the quality and quantity of their communication.

The message from employees is clear: Companies must get back to this

approach.

Greg Barnett is chief people scientist at Energage, a Philadelphia-based employee survey firm. Energage is the survey partner for Top Workplaces.

49% of business owners want a marketing partner to help them grow.

What they really need is an entire team.



LOCALiQ, smart local marketing that gets you results.

LOCALiQ

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Learn more at localiq.com/sayhello

TOP WORKPLACES

ASK HUMAN RESOURCES

Promoted? Lean into work relationships

History can help when managing former peers



Johnny C. Taylor Jr.
Columnist
USA TODAY

Johnny C. Taylor Jr. tackles your human resources questions as part of a series for USA TODAY. Taylor is president and CEO of the Society for Human Resource Management, the world's largest HR professional society and author of "Reset: A Leader's Guide to Work in an Age of Upheaval."

The questions are submitted by readers, and Taylor's answers below have been edited for length and clarity.

Question: I was recently promoted to a position with my company that requires me to supervise people who were previously my peers. What advice do you have for handling the new reality? What kind of boundaries should I have for my work relationships? – Hans

Johnny C. Taylor Jr.: Congratulations on your promotion! New challenges inherently accompany new responsibilities. Your willingness to embrace them will go a long way in determining the outcome. Managing former peers presents a unique set of challenges, but it also opens up unique opportunities. Rest assured, with some preparation there are several tools and strategies available to help you establish boundaries and maintain work relationships. Be ready to meet these challenges head-on.

Former peers can actually be an advantage. You aren't starting your position with a group of total strangers; you already know many of them! Lean into those established relationships by acknowledging the positives each person brings to the table. Even if you haven't



Managing former peers presents a unique set of challenges, but it also opens up unique opportunities.
GETTY IMAGES

had the best working relationship with some of them, you now have an opportunity to reset the working relationship with respect and integrity. Share your appreciation for their unique experiences and perspective.

Clearly communicate your expectations. Share with your direct reports that you are serious about your new responsibilities but temper it by letting them know you support and value them all. Let your staff know your personal relationships will not bias your decisions or actions at work. Each person should have a clear understanding of how they fit in the team picture.

Treat all employees equitably. Be sensitive to their individual needs and recognize their unique contributions. When giving feedback to staff, be consistent. Provide positive feedback and suggestions for improvement to everyone regardless of personal relationships. Demonstrate you are invested in each employee's performance and development. Your staff wants to feel they have an opportunity to excel.

Even with all of the preventative measures you take, problems will still

arise. Be willing to acknowledge and deal with the elephants in the room. When problems are left to fester, employees see it and become resentful. So, establish healthy channels to address issues as they surface and maintain productive working relationships. Have an open-door policy to encourage workers to nip issues in the bud before they grow into larger problems. Set the vision for the team and conduct regular one-on-one meetings to verify everyone is still on track for success.

Don't underestimate the value of empathy. Several recent studies tell us employees want empathy from their managers now more than ever. Employees want to feel like their manager understands, or at least tries to understand, their lives and experiences. A recent survey reveals that of workers with an opinion, 93% of Gen X workers agree that if they were seeking a job, they would specifically look for a company that demonstrates empathy.

Make no mistake, trust goes both ways. If you want them to trust you, you must be willing to first extend trust. Certainly, equip them with guidelines but

slowly give them greater autonomy to perform their work as they demonstrate their acumen and reliability. Offer them the chance to contribute to their fullest potential and they will, in turn, appreciate and trust you.

Keep in mind, you aren't the first person thrust into a role where you are supervising friends and former peers – and you certainly won't be the last. Other leaders and managers can serve as mentors or coaches as you step into your new role. HR is also a tremendous resource for professional development and training opportunities.

I'll add this: be authentic and honest. Employees, especially the ones who already know you, can sense when you are being disingenuous. No matter the relationship, assure all workers, that you want to see them succeed and are open to suggestions and solutions.

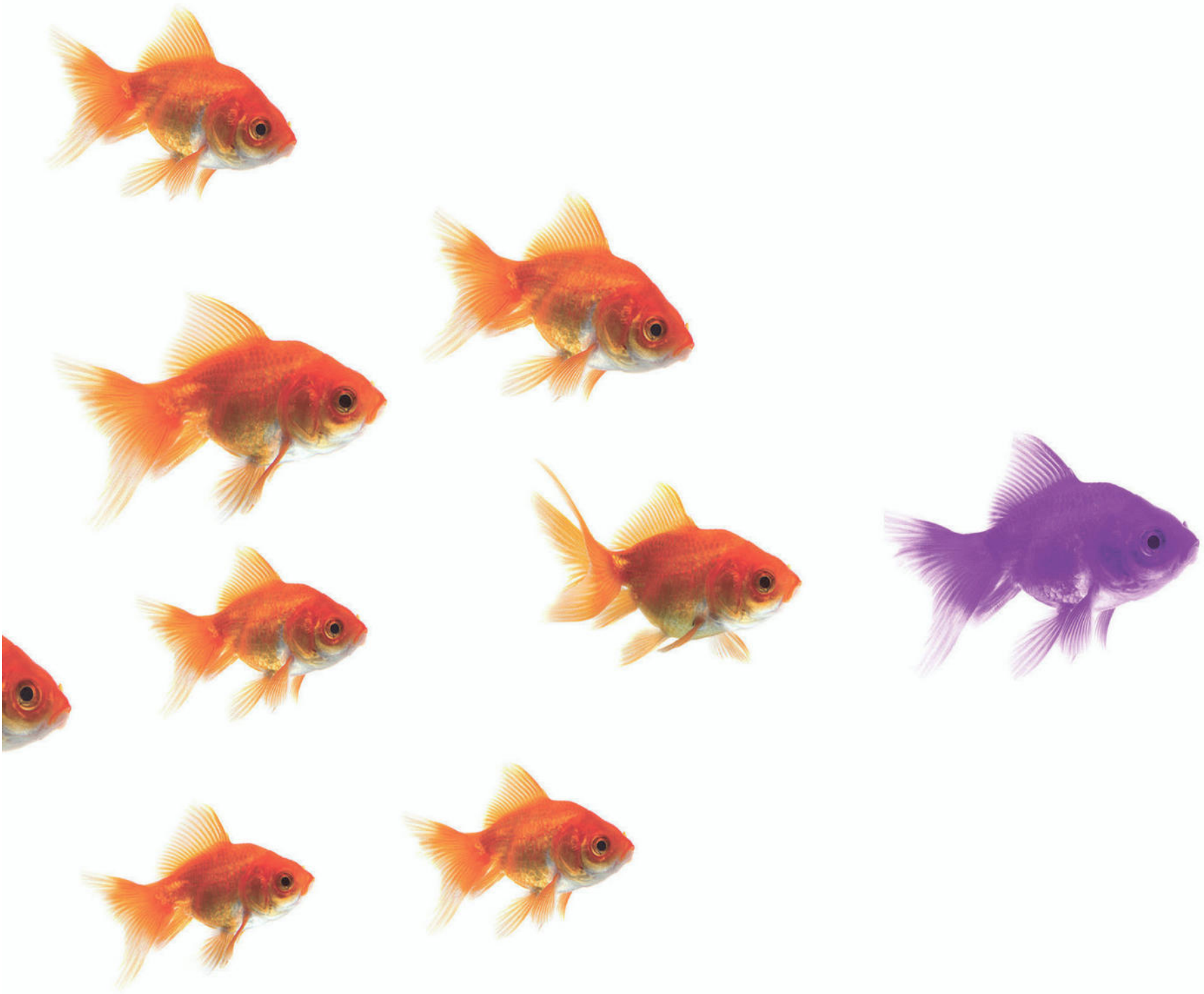
It sounds like you are truly concerned about being a good manager and striking a balance between personal and professional relationships. Caring about your mission and your people will serve you well going forward. I wish you much success!

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