



Focus

A publication of Wagner Consulting Group

July 2011

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Why Great People Want to Work Here

This is an encore of my February 2007 article, and there's an interesting contrast between then and now. The economy was booming in 2007; now it's in a prolonged slump. I originally wrote the article when high-growth businesses were competing to attract top talent. Now I want to highlight the importance of a positive workplace environment because many of the best employees are ready to jump ship when the economy improves.

*Moreover, the employees of great workplaces voluntarily give more discretionary effort (higher productivity) and present fewer management headaches. If you'd like to learn more, read *The Great Workplace* by Burchell & Robin, published this year.*

So here are my words as originally prepared in 2007.

Internet search engine company Google received 1,145,000 job applications last year - that's 500 contenders for each job added - according to a recent article in *Fortune* magazine. Google ranked #1 on *Fortune's* list of the 100 best companies to work for, and can choose the cream of the crop among prospective employees.

Google is famous for a geek-friendly culture that appeals to its target employees: bright, young, competitive engineers and mathematicians. The company knows that a great working environment attracts and retains great employees, and great employees produce better results and require less supervision. Besides supporting growth and improving the company bottom line, great employees make their supervisor's job more rewarding and enjoyable.

Great employees:

- Are more productive and profitable
- Are easier to manage
- Deliver better customer service
- Are less likely to resign to take another job

- Attract other good people to the company

A company does not have to be like Google to attract top talent; any business can make this choice and work to build a culture that appeals to desirable workers. If you're so inclined, begin with the end in mind and think about what would draw great employees, as you define them. I recommend a list like the following example.

Ten Reasons Great People Would Want to Work Here

1. My achievements are recognized, reported, and rewarded.
2. I have the opportunity to grow professionally and as a person.
3. The work is interesting and stimulating, not routine or boring.
4. I work with other great employees who challenge me to get better.
5. My boss truly cares about me as a person.
6. My job has scheduling flexibility.
7. Management keeps me informed about what's going on.
8. I have freedom to experiment and create new and better ways of getting my job done.
9. My boss gives me frequent, candid, and helpful job performance feedback.
10. Working here is fun.

Notice these reasons are from the employee's perspective.

Naturally, no single list is appropriate for all situations. The Top Ten list should reflect customer demands and the company culture - but the culture and job processes *can* reflect a future not yet realized. Think of the Top Ten list as a vivid description of a future vision, then use the reasons to guide new thinking, policies, and management behaviors.

The payoff: Building a desirable workplace environment attracts more and better job applicants, thereby giving your company more choices to hire the best people. Even the company ranked last on *Fortune's* 2007 best places to work list received 45 applications for every job opening.

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Wagner Consulting Group helps leaders prepare for succession,
develop employee management skills,
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