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Best Places to Work 2011

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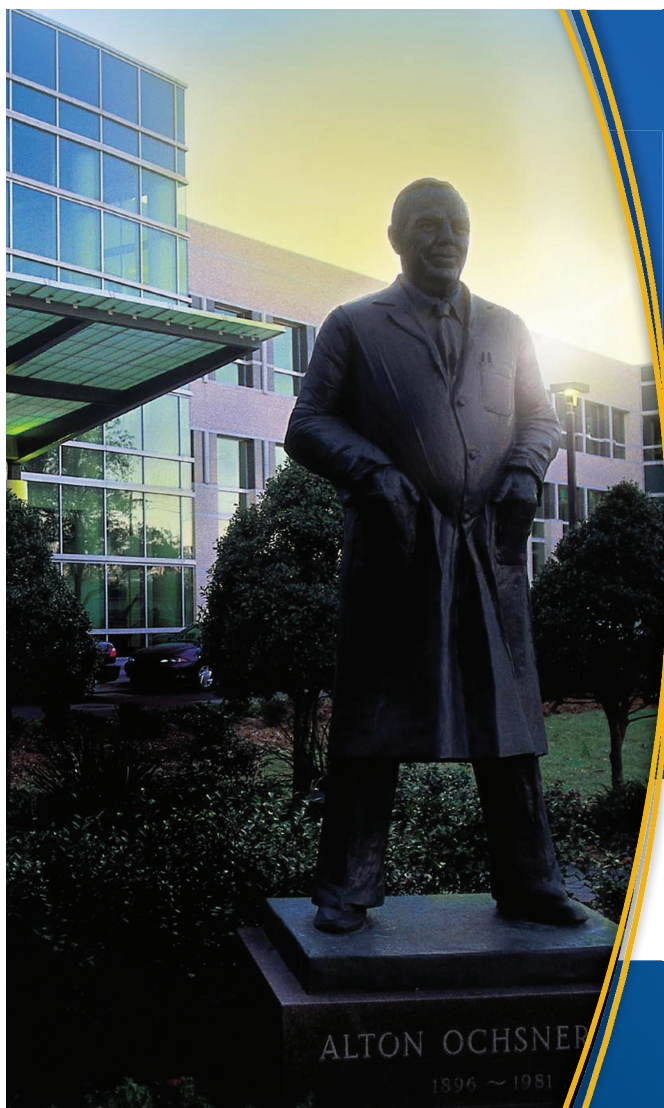


On the cover: Top: From left: Eagan Insurance Agency employees Jenna Dubroc, Erin Hampton, Zack Fanberg, Mallory Eagan and David Strassel show off their crazy socks in the company's new board room. Bottom: Art Directors Shea Duet, left, and William Gilbert, imitate a scene from the movie "Office Space" on the company's printer.

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Management at Best Places know employees come first



Christian Moises

Family, team and respect are the top three terms employees used to describe the 2011 Best Places to Work.

While it's impossible to list all the tangible and intangible perks and benefits this year's Best Places provide for their employees, the following profiles and lists outline the bulk of why people want to work at these companies.

To determine its honorees, CityBusiness in part used a scoring system based on benefits including salary, health care, paid time off and average length of employment. In addition, employees at the nominated companies were asked to complete a survey that allowed us to gauge the workplace culture and staff morale to determine the final cut.

A handful of companies submitted a nomination but did not want to send the survey to their entire roster, resulting in disqualification. One company went as far to say it didn't want to rock the boat among employees.

Individual company survey results are not released to the public and are only used to complete the selection process. But whether it's to be considered a Best Place to Work or just allowing employees to voice their opinions — good or bad — knowing what your staff needs to remain productive and happy is vital to a company's bottom line.

Management at the 2011 Best Places to Work understand that, going above and beyond the company benefits guide by offering intangible perks, such as team-building and morale-boosting programs, receptive executives and fun office activities. They recognize that keeping their employees happy helps boost their bottom line.

The honorees are 35 large and 15 small businesses. Based on the U.S. Small Business Administration's definition, large businesses have 50 or more employees. Companies that are part of larger corporations but have fewer than 50 New

Respondents by age

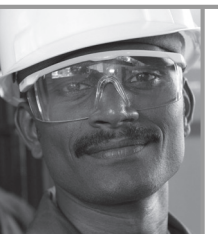
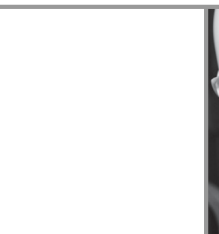
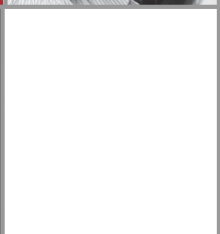
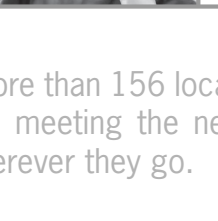
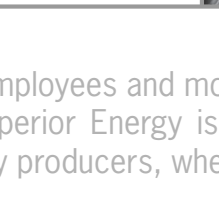
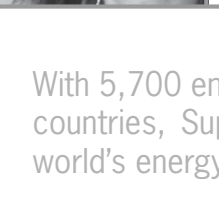
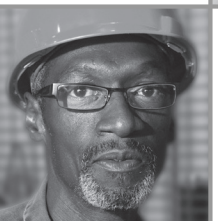
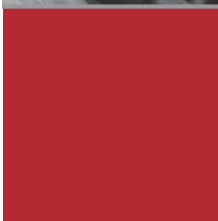
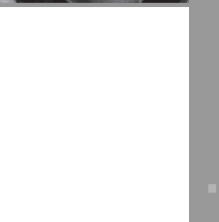
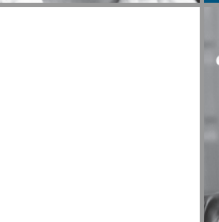
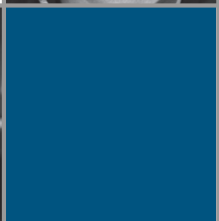
Of the 3,511 respondents who completed the 2011 Best Places to Work employee satisfaction survey as part of the nomination process, the majority were 50 years old and older:

18-25	6.9%
26-33	20.4%
34-40	15.9%
40-50	25.6%
50 and older	31.2%

continued on next page



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continued from previous page

Orleans employees fall under the large businesses category.

Leading this year's large companies are: 1. Eagan Insurance Agency 2. First NBC Bank and 3. Fair Grounds Race Course and Slots. Leading the small companies are: 1. Zehnder Communications (the firm's third time atop the list since the first ranking in 2003 and its second consecutive first-place ranking) 2. Ericksen Krentel and LaPorte and Blitch Knevel Architects.

Adding new faces to the mix, 13 newcomers joined this year's honorees: the Fair Grounds, ConocoPhillips Alliance Refinery, The Domain Cos., 1st Lake Properties, International School of Louisiana, Landis Construction, Blitch Knevel Architects, Archon Information Systems, iSeatz, The McDonnel Group, Mouldoux, Bland, Legrand and Brackett, The Rose Garden and Susco Solutions.

Just one company — Zehnder — has made the list every year since the publication's inception in 2003.

Congratulations to the 2011 Best Places to Work. Their commitment to employees during tough times sends a strong message to their employees and the New Orleans business community. •

News Editor Christian Moises can be reached at 293-9249 or at christian.moises@npg.com.

Measuring up

Part of the Best Places to Work nomination process includes a satisfaction survey sent to employees who work at all nominated companies. CityBusiness analyzed the 19 aspects most important to employees. Here's how the 3,511 respondents rated their companies based on those questions:

	Excellent	Above average	Average	Below average	Poor
Your chances for advancement	25.9%	29.3%	28.4%	8.3%	8.1%
Emphasis on personal time away from work	26.1%	28.9%	32.6%	7.5%	4.9%
Communication between employees and management	34.5%	30.7%	22.1%	6.5%	6.2%
Recognition of employee job performance	35.5%	30.6%	20.6%	7.7%	5.6%
Seeking out and implementing employee ideas	31.7%	32.4%	22.5%	8.1%	5.3%
Emphasis on achieving goals	42%	31.9%	18.9%	4.1%	3.1%
Employee autonomy and independence	36.6%	33.1%	22.1%	4.1%	4.1%
Spirit of teamwork	43.9%	27.7%	17.2%	6.3%	4.9%
Use of employees' skills and experience	38.5%	32.8%	20.2%	4.5%	4%
Tangible benefits (salary, 401(k), health care, etc.)	45.2%	27.1%	20.3%	4.5%	2.9%
Intangible benefits (fun activities, game nights, etc.)	31.2%	25%	25.6%	9.6%	8.6%
Diversity at the workplace	36.4%	30%	25.3%	4.6%	3.6%
Keeping pace with industry change	43.5%	28.6%	19.3%	4.9%	3.8%
Emphasis on personal development	36.3%	29.3%	21.9%	6.7%	5.8%
Employee morale	31.5%	31.1%	20.5%	7.5%	9.4%
Recognizing employee expectations	29.6%	31.6%	24.5%	7.4%	6.8%
How well company "practices what it preaches"	35.1%	29.2%	20%	7.5%	8.1%
Chances you'll retire with this company	41.2%	24.2%	18.7%	6.7%	9.4%
How well employer solves problems in the workplace	32.3%	31%	21.7%	7.6%	7.4%

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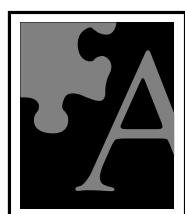
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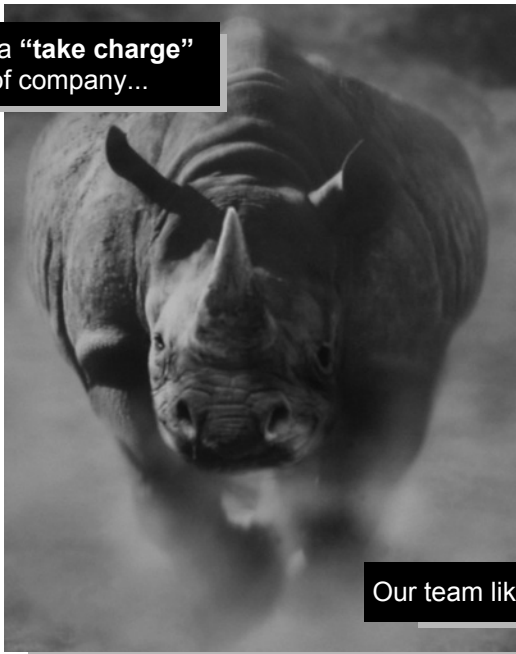
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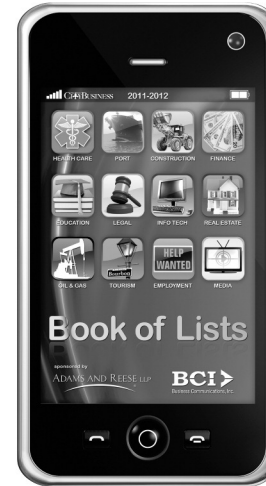


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2010

LARGE COMPANIES

- Laitram
- King, Krebs and Jurgens
- Geocent
- Adams and Reese
- Atmos Energy Corp.
- Booz Allen Hamilton
- Bourgeois Bennett
- Brown's Dairy
- Dickie Brennan and Co.
- Durr Heavy Construction
- Eagan Insurance Agency
- Eustis Insurance and Benefits
- First NBC Bank
- Gilsbar
- Harrah's Casino New Orleans
- Hilton New Orleans Riverside
- HRI Properties
- Kushner LaGraize
- LaPorte Sehrt Romig Hand
- Loews New Orleans Hotel
- Louisiana Medical Mutual Insurance Co.
- North Oaks Health System
- Ochsner Health System
- Pan-American Life Insurance Group
- Peoples Health
- Quest Diagnostics
- ReadSoft
- Rouses
- St. Tammany Parish Hospital
- Slidell Memorial Hospital
- Strategic Employee Benefit Services of Louisiana
- Superior Energy Services
- Taste Buds Management
- University of Phoenix — Louisiana Campus
- West Jefferson Medical Center

SMALL COMPANIES

- Zehnder Communications
- PMOLink
- Ericksen Krentel and LaPorte Aureus Research Consultants
- Bevolo Gas and Electric Lights
- Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy
- FH Myers Construction Corp.
- Greater New Orleans Federal Credit Union
- Hartwig Moss Insurance Agency
- Huseman and Associates
- Keating Magee
- M.S. Rau Antiques
- Mudbug Media
- Schafer Group
- U.S. Risk Management

2009

LARGE COMPANIES

- Booz Allen Hamilton
- North Oaks Health System
- ReadSoft
- Adams and Reese
- Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz
- Cox Communications
- Durr Heavy Construction
- East Jefferson General Hospital
- Eagan Insurance Agency
- First NBC Bank/Dryades Savings Bank
- Geocent
- Gilsbar

- Hilton New Orleans Riverside
- Irwin Fritchie Urquhart & Moore
- LaPorte Sehrt Romig Hand
- Louisiana Medical Mutual Insurance Co.
- The New Orleans Hornets
- Pan American Life Insurance Group
- Peoples Health
- Peter A. Mayer Advertising Inc.
- Phelps Dunbar
- Postlethwaite & Netterville
- Quest Diagnostics
- Randa Accessories
- Sizer Thompson Brown Architects
- Slidell Memorial Hospital
- Strategic Employee Benefit Services of Louisiana
- St. Tammany Parish Hospital
- Superior Energy Services
- Taste Buds Management
- Touro Infirmary
- Tulane University
- University of Phoenix, Louisiana Campus
- Walton Construction Co.
- West Jefferson Medical Center

SMALL COMPANIES

- PMOLink
- Heller Draper Hayden Patrick & Horn
- Perez
- Deveney Communication
- Fleur de Lis Financial/MassMutual
- Gauthier, Houghtaling & Williams
- Hal Collums Construction/Central City Millworks
- Hartwig Moss Insurance Agency
- Huseman & Associates
- Loubat Equipment Co.
- PPOplus
- The Receivables Exchange
- Shell New Orleans Federal Credit Union
- United States Risk Management
- Zehnder Communications

2008

LARGE COMPANIES

- Harrah's New Orleans Casino & Hotel
- North Oaks Health System
- West Jefferson Medical Center
- Adams and Reese
- Booz Allen Hamilton
- Broadpoint
- Coventry Health Care of Louisiana
- Cox New Orleans
- Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles
- Diamond Data Systems
- Dickie Brennan & Co.
- Durr Heavy Construction
- Eagan Insurance Agency
- East Jefferson General Hospital
- Gilsbar
- Gregory C. Rigamer & Associates
- Hilton New Orleans Riverside
- Jones Walker
- Louisiana Medical Mutual Insurance Co.
- LaPorte Sehrt Romig Hand
- McGlinchey Stafford
- Ochsner Health System
- Omni Royal Orleans Hotel
- Peoples Health
- Phelps Dunbar
- Planet Beach Franchising
- Pool Corp.

- The Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group
- ReadSoft
- Slidell Memorial Hospital & Medical Center
- St. Tammany Parish Hospital
- Superior Energy Services
- Touro Infirmary
- Tulane University
- Walton Construction Co.

SMALL COMPANIES

- PMOLink
- Wolfe Law Group
- Chopin, Wagar, Richard & Kutcher
- Creative Engineering Group
- Deveney Communication
- Gauthier, Houghtaling & Williams
- Hartwig Moss Insurance Agency
- Heller Draper Hayden Patrick & Horn
- I-Assure
- Loubat Equipment Co.
- Louisiana Restaurant Association
- Morgan + Company
- Rimkus Consulting Group
- Schafer Group
- Zehnder Communications

2007

LARGE COMPANIES

- Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles
- ReadSoft
- Phelps Dunbar
- Diamond Data Systems
- Frilot LLC
- Superior Energy Services
- Booz Allen Hamilton
- Adams and Reese
- Planet Beach Franchising Corp.
- St. Tammany Parish Hospital
- DonahueFavret Contractors
- Coventry Health Care of Louisiana
- Louisiana Medical Mutual Insurance Co.
- Broadpoint
- LaPorte Sehrt Romig Hand
- Postlethwaite & Netterville
- Ochsner Health System
- East Jefferson General Hospital
- West Jefferson Medical Center
- Peoples Health
- Touro Infirmary
- Walton Construction Co.
- Tulane Medical Center
- Hilton New Orleans Riverside Hotel
- Durr Heavy Construction
- John Ehret High School
- Benjamin Franklin High School
- Strategic Employee Benefit Services of Louisiana
- Dickie Brennan and Co.
- Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group
- Harrah's New Orleans Casino and Hotel
- McGlinchey Stafford
- Louisiana Public Health Institute
- Toyota of New Orleans
- Stewart Enterprises

SMALL COMPANIES

- Ellsworth Corp.
- I-Assure
- PMOLink
- Louisiana Restaurant Association
- Trumpet

- Morgan + Co.
- Southern United States Trade Association
- Deveney Communication
- Zehnder Communications
- Riverwalk Marketplace
- Signature Destination Management
- Hartwig Moss Insurance Agency
- Johnson Johnson Barrios & Yacoubian
- Design the Planet
- Advanced Imaging Solutions

2006

LARGE BUSINESSES

- Ochsner Health System
- Adams and Reese
- West Jefferson Medical Center
- Gilsbar Inc.
- Omni Bank
- East Jefferson General Hospital
- St. Tammany Parish Hospital
- Deutsch Kerrigan & Stiles
- Touro Infirmary
- Harrah's Casino and Hotel
- Booz Allen Hamilton
- Phelps Dunbar
- PetroCom
- Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group
- Peoples Health
- Dickie Brennan and Company
- Diamond Data Systems
- Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann
- Frilot Partridge
- Cox Communications
- Hilton New Orleans Riverside
- Peter A. Mayer Advertising
- Superior Energy Services
- Durr Heavy Construction
- Vinson Guard Services
- First NBC Bank

SMALL BUSINESSES

- PMOLink, Inc.
- Zehnder Communications
- Ellsworth Corporation
- Belladonna Day Spa
- Trumpet Advertising
- Chopin, Wagar, Richard and Kutcher
- River Marine Management
- Keating Magee
- Deveney Communication
- Robert Berning Productions
- Free Gulliver
- International House Hotel
- Loubat Equipment
- Industrial Products Ltd.
- Aesthetic Surgical Associates

2005

- Ochsner Clinic Foundation
- Adams and Reese
- Kenner Regional Medical Center
- West Jefferson Medical Center
- Zehnder Communications
- East Jefferson General Hospital
- Albert-Garudy and Associates
- Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group
- Omni Bank
- Deveney Communication
- Deutsch, Kerrigan and Stiles
- Hibernia National Bank
- FARA
- Apogen Technologies

- St. Tammany Parish Hospital
- Keating Magee
- McGlinchey Stafford
- River Marine Management
- Landscape Images
- Free Gulliver

2004

- Kenner Regional Medical Center
- Adams and Reese
- PMOLink Inc.
- Zehnder Communications
- Landscape Images
- Salco Management
- West Jefferson Medical Center
- Harrah's Casino New Orleans
- Banner Chevrolet
- PetroCom
- Gilsbar Inc.
- Peter A. Mayer Advertising
- McGlinchey Stafford
- Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group
- Cannon Cochran Management Services
- Free Gulliver
- Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann
- Edward Jones Investments
- Correro Fishman Haygood Phelps Walmsley and Casteix
- Banner Ford

2003

- Zehnder Communications
- Ochsner Clinic Foundation
- Kenner Regional Medical Center
- Newtown and Associates
- West Jefferson Medical Center
- Diamond Data Systems
- Peter A. Mayer Advertising
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- Salco Management
- PetroCom
- PMOLink
- Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group
- McGlinchey Stafford
- Francis's Athletic Club
- American Nursing Services Inc.
- Ruth's Chris Steak House
- New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Vinson Guard Service
- Lambeth House Continuing Care Retirement Community
- Harvey Press
- Omni Bank
- Hibernia National Bank
- Natives Landscape Corp.
- Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann
- Banner Chevrolet
- Entergy Corp.
- Mr. B's Bistro
- Eustis Engineering Co.
- Where Y'at Magazine
- Professional Construction Services
- The Rose Garden
- Our Lady of Holy Cross College
- Pel Hughes Printing
- Gage Telephone Systems of New Orleans



Photos by Frank Aymami

From left: Eagan Insurance Agency employees Jenna Dubroc, Erin Hampton, Zack Fanberg, Mallory Eagan and David Strassel show off their crazy socks in the company's new board room.

FOUR-TIME HONOREE

Eagan Insurance Agency

Pat Smith worked nearly every weekend at her former job. The constant stress finally landed her in the hospital, with a sudden dangerous spike in her blood sugar. That same day, she got an offer from Eagan Insurance Agency.

"It was a sign that I needed to make a change," Smith said.

She realized how much better her life had become when, a few months into her job as an Eagan account executive, she faced a dangling project that threatened to wreck her Friday off.

Smith felt compelled to finish the assignment, but a manager teasingly warned her away.

"If you come in, I'll have to write you up," she was told. "That's not how we work here."

"I was blown away," Smith said.

Eagan employees begin to enjoy Flex Fridays — working every other one — after only 90 days on the job.

On that particular Friday, another employee wrapped up the project for Smith, who recalls meeting a friend for lunch and capping the day off with a sno-ball.

"I hadn't been able to do that in the past," Smith said. "It solidified that I'd made a good move."

She credits Eagan's team environment — and paperless system — with lowering her stress level. Her blood sugar has reached healthy levels again, as well.

Karina Engert, a marketing representative, spends her Fridays off at her family's cabin in Mississippi. But it's a less joyful time that she singles out for getting the time off from work she needed. Engert was at work in 2006 when she got

the news that her grandmother had passed away.

"I was not good after that call," Engert said.

A coworker sat quietly with her until her husband arrived, and although she was gone a week, no one from the office intruded.

"They let me grieve," she said.

When she returned, company president Marc Eagan personally paid his respects with a few kind words.

Eagan had sat in on Engert's job interview only a few months earlier, a meeting she describes as surprisingly relaxed.

"I usually don't interview with a principal, but he cared enough to want to know each employee that well," said Engert, adding that working at the family-owned company is

Nature of business: insurance
Where based: Metairie
Employees: 72
Average starting salary: \$43,500 for staff; \$135,000 for producers
Median salary: \$46,500 for staff; \$170,000 for producers
Average time of employment: eight years
Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans
Wait time for benefits: 30 days
Other perks: continuing education program, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee orientation program, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program
Paid days off: 51 days up to five years; 54 days for six to nine years; 58 days for 10-plus years
Website: www.eaganins.com

like having “another 70 siblings.”

Eagan staffers are generally eager to spread the word about company perks, such as their yearly crawfish boil at the Bay-Waveland Yacht Club; Christmas dinner at the Southern Yacht Club, with chances to win free vacation days; a rotating onsite exhibit that lets employees showcase personal photos — and, of course, Flex Fridays.

“The insurance industry is very close-knit, and I’d heard a lot of good things about Eagan,” said Cindy Bodden, who became the company’s comptroller in 2008.

Despite the economy, Eagan has nearly doubled its work force in the past five years, growing so much that they have reclaimed much of the building space they previously rented. Once hired, employees tend to stay: nearly a quarter of Eagan’s staff have been with the company at least a decade.

Smith, for example, replaced a woman who retired after 18 years.

“In 2011, you hear about so many people hopping jobs,” Smith said. “But here, they’re careful about the personalities they select. A good attitude is a contagious thing.”

— Anne Berry





Photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

First NBC Bank employees, front row, Michael Sylve, left, and Kim Berry; and standing, Kevin Demouy, Heidi Gaitan, Vanessa Vitrano, Gabriela Ribas, Maxine Herbert, Brian Merriman, Robin Toliver and Uyen Dang.

FOUR-TIME HONOREE

First NBC Bank

As a member of First NBC Bank's Christmas Party planning committee, Thuy Ho knew to be excited about the annual event at Chateau Golf and Country Club with dancing and New Orleans-style fine dining.

"They want to make it nice and memorable," she said. "We're having a live band."

But the manager of recruiting and human resource operations since July said one of the bank's biggest perks is working for its president, Ashton Ryan Jr.

"He's all about the employee," she said. "It's a very cohesive environment."

Brad Calloway, executive vice president, said he has volunteered as an assistant softball coach at an area high school for four years and has had the flexibility to leave the office in the afternoons for practice.

"I never once was questioned or criticized by Ashton as far as being at work during those periods of time. He knew where I was and what I was doing," Calloway said. "He does promote that the most important thing is making sure you get your job done."

Nancy Rowland, director of security and the bank's

Secrecy Act officer, appreciates that the bank doesn't micro-manage.

"You get this feeling of respect, that you're appreciated. A lot of it is the people," she said. "It's a lot of intangibles that you don't get from other employers."

The bank holds an annual retail rally, a competition among branches that rewards production in various areas, such as the number of new accounts added. This year,

Nature of business: bank
Where based: New Orleans
Employees: 240
Average starting salary: \$46,556
Median salary: \$50,470
Average time of employment: five years
Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans
Wait time for benefits: first of the month after 30 days
Other perks: continuing education program, day-care options, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, subsidized meals
Paid days off: 39 days
Website: www.firstnbcbank.com

Rowland said, Ryan was so impressed with performance that he gave each of the bank's 13 branches and the retail administration office \$1,000 to spend as they wanted, in addition to the annual engraved plaques recognizing top performance.

Rowland's office will use its bonus to take the staff to dinner — twice.

"It was unexpected," Rowland said. "I've never seen one where everyone was just given \$1,000."

Ho has her heart set on a First in Service Award, a quarterly recognition based on the nomination of co-workers that recognizes service beyond the call of duty.

"It gives me an incentive to hopefully get one of those crystal plaques," she said. "You're recognized along with your peers as being a top performer."

And beginning in 2012, First NBC will change its 401(k) contribution system so that employees don't have to contribute a dime.

"Where else can you go to work and the company's going to give you 4 percent of your salary?" Calloway said. "We value every single one of our employees."•

— Diana Chandler

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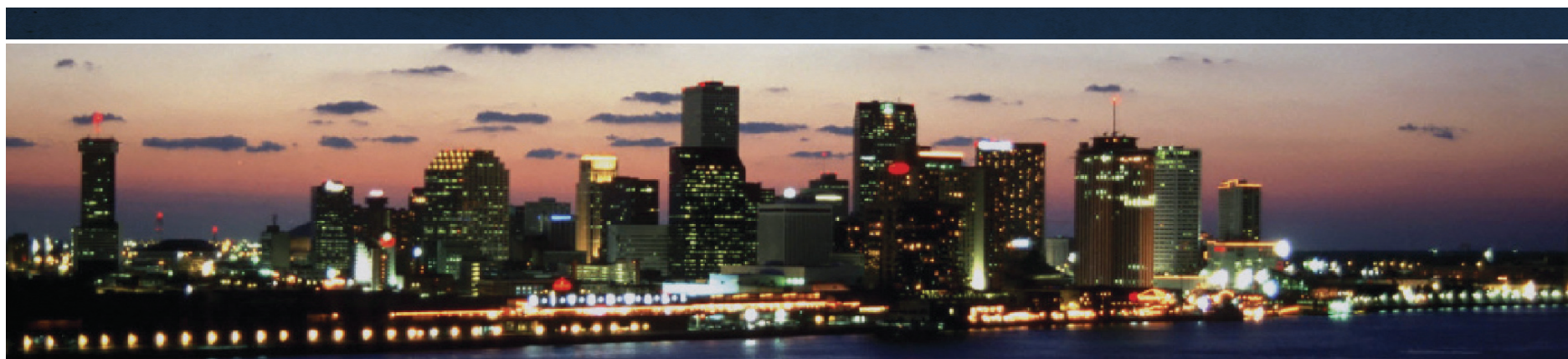
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Photo by Frank Aymann

Clockwise from front center: Fair Grounds Race Course & Slots employees Merly Robertson, Gary Palisamo, Cynthia Walker, Roy Leblanc, Brandon Carbo and Marcia "Precious" Silva.

Fair Grounds Race Course & Slots

The New Orleans Fair Grounds Race Course and Slots is a 140-year-old staple in the city that has provided entertainment for generations.

But employees also get a kick out of working at the Fair Grounds.

"I enjoy being here so it doesn't feel like work," said Brandon Carbo, a security officer for the past two years. "This is a racetrack and casino, so people of all types come

Nature of business: horse racing and casino

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 375-430 year-round; additional 250-350 during racing season

Average starting salary: \$14 per hour; \$35,000 for salaried

Median salary: \$20 per hour; \$45,000 for salaried

Average time of employment: two and a half years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: first of the month after 30 days for hourly; first of the month after hire for salaried

Other perks: continuing education program, day-care options, relocation assistance, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 24-34 days depending on tenure

Website: www.fairgroundsracecourse.com

here and there's a lot of energy and happy people."

Tim Bryant, Fair Grounds president, said employees thrive on the fun at the facility.

"This is a place that hosts horse races, betting, slots and games," he said. "It's an exciting atmosphere here. Our guests really get into the fun, and a lot of the times our employees do, too."

The Fair Grounds employs nearly 430 workers year round and making sure they're all appreciated isn't difficult, Bryant said.

"It's not about the huge things we do," he said. "It's the small touches that are meaningful to them. It's letting them know we appreciate them working on holidays by saying thank you for being here when we know they want to be home with family. It's about respecting them above anything else."

On Halloween not only were employees allowed to wear costumes, but Bryant walked the floor of the Fair Grounds, shaking hands with employees and handing them trick-or-treat bags as a sign of appreciation, said Eric Halstrom, vice president and general manager.

"It was to say thank you to all the employees who missed out being with their kids to work that day," Halstrom said. "We care about the people here. We want to make sure they always know that."

That appreciation goes beyond goodies and handshakes.

Carbo's apartment in Metairie burned down this past summer. He didn't have renter's insurance, but the Fair Grounds pitched in to give Carbo paid time off and a grant from the HORSE program, which stands for Helping Others Receive Services. It's an employee-funded initiative to help workers in need.

"Managers called me to check on me, and everyone really cared about me. It was unbelievable," Carbo said. "I never thought people you work with would care. ... It made me feel like I was part of a family."

Halstrom said the fund shows employees they're not alone.

"In times of a catastrophic situation, the fund kicks in," Carbo said. "We really pull together when the bad things can happen."

— Kyle Jackson



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Adams and Reese employees gather on the front steps at One Shell Square, where the firm's New Orleans office is located.

EIGHT-TIME HONOREE

Adams and Reese

Employees at Adams and Reese law firm take pride in the firm's deep-rooted commitment to the community through charitable involvement that goes beyond the legal realm.

That commitment began in 1988 when the firm's New Orleans office created the HUGS employee volunteer program, short for Hope, Understanding, Giving and Support.

Kirk Gasperez, a partner in charge of the New Orleans office, said HUGS was the firm's way of going beyond just a donation.

"The idea was to get staff members involved in these charitable groups that serve the human need," Gasperez said. "The firm is hands-on within these organizations, and the employees value the time spent giving back to the city."

Linda Soileau, human resources director, said employees who participate in HUGS help more than 50 charities and organizations in the greater New Orleans area including Boys Hope and Girls Hope, Children's Hospital, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and Odyssey House Louisiana.

"Employees at this firm just love to step up and help," Soileau said. "Many even get their families involved. There is one recent example where a group of 25 employees and family members spent time painting the library for Raintree Home for Girls. We have also had employees referee events at the St. Michael's Special School basketball tournament, which we have done for at least 20 years."

Gasperez said the firm orchestrates a variety of events to build employee morale. The New Orleans office recently wrapped up a "pink" dress down day as a fundraiser for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.

"Employees chip in a few bucks and they can avoid wearing suits for a couple days," Gasperez said. "We also held a live auction and other small events which amounted to more than \$8,500 for the foundation. The firm gives folks the opportunity to give back to the community in ways they wouldn't normally be able to."

Fun events the firm plans include reserving reviewing stands along St. Charles Avenue for Carnival parades, an annual picnic at Audubon Zoo, pizza parties, sno-ball

socials, fundraiser bowling events for community organizations, and pep rallies and tailgate parties for LSU and Saints games on the steps of One Shell Square.

Soileau said the firm shows a commitment to the well-being of its employees through an annual health fair and weight loss challenge.

"The weight loss challenge is a 10-week program where employees join teams with a goal of losing the most weight," Soileau said. "The top teams are awarded cash prizes and other things. Those employees that participate in the health fair get the chance to take advantage of various healthcare screenings. It means a lot to them."

Soileau said the firm has done a good job of building a culture of family that involves employees at all levels.

"New hires that come in to interview see lots of people who all take a moment just to greet them," Soileau said. "It is all genuine. Everyone is important and there is a lot of mutual respect."

Jennifer McDowell, a collections analyst who started with Adams and Reese six months ago, said the sense of mutual respect was evident on her first day.

"Everyone here just knows what they are doing and has an appreciation for what they do for a living," McDowell said. "No one blows anything off in favor of something else. Problems are approached head on and everyone makes sure things run smoothly." •

— Robin Shannon

Nature of business: law firm
Where based: New Orleans
Employees: 180 in New Orleans; 556 firmwide
Average starting salary: \$32,000 for staff; \$100,000 for attorneys
Median salary: \$43,000 for staff; \$175,000 for attorneys
Average time of employment: 11 years
Health care benefits: 75 percent covered; dental and prescription plans
Wait time for benefits: one month
Other perks: continuing education, telecommuting, employee assistance program, fitness program
Paid days off: 34 days
Website: www.adamsandreesee.com



Baker Donelson legal secretary Dianne Hammond makes waffles for a company breakfast.

TWO-TIME HONOREE

Baker Donelson

One Friday in February 2004, 17 people walked out of a law firm to open the New Orleans office of Baker Donelson — without knowing much about the Tennessee-based firm.

They only knew the promises of a family-oriented workplace, proper training and the ability to start something new.

“You could not not take the chance,” said Debra Yates, who is a recruiting coordinator and an assistant to office administrator Anne Leche. “I’ve never felt sorry for (leaving the previous firm).”

Nature of business: law firm
Where based: New Orleans
Employees: 90 in New Orleans; 1,237 firmwide
Average starting salary: \$52,559 for staff; \$141,800 for attorneys
Median salary: \$52,832 for staff; \$173,500 for attorneys
Average time of employment: four years
Health care benefits: 92 percent covered; unmarried partner benefits and dental, vision and prescription plans
Wait time for benefits: 30 days after the first of the month
Other perks: continuing education program, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program
Paid days off: 29 days
Website: www.bakerdonelson.com

About three weeks after opening, Yates’ father passed away. Yates said she was touched by the support from people she didn’t know at the funeral. She also won’t forget how the firm treated its employees during Hurricane Katrina.

“We never lost a paycheck,” she said. “If you didn’t have a place to go, they found one for you.”

She said those are just two events that make her job of recruiting attorneys easier.

Elizabeth Rivière recently was hired as an assistant to the office administrator and works in human resources and marketing.

“The last three years, I haven’t had a job that I really liked,” she said. “I hope to be here for the rest of my life.”

Her attraction to the firm began during the interview process. Early on she made her mark within the firm by winning its nationwide art competition for the health fair. Her boss encouraged her to enter.

“I’ve never had that support from upper management to take time out of their day and say ‘you should do this,’” Rivière said.

Shareholder Steve Griffith helped open the firm when he joined as an associate in 2004. He says the openness of the firm impressed him, adding that management let him

know exactly where he stood and provided feedback, mentoring and training programs, whereas many firms, he said, can keep the information confidential or away from associates.

Griffith’s role with the firm has grown into recruiting other attorneys and the firm looks for two qualities in new hires.

“We are looking for well-rounded people,” he said. “Academics and being bright are just prerequisites.”

He said they also look for people with the potential to become partners and a desire to perform community service and some type of pro-bono work.

“The firm is very strong in pro-bono activity and encourages its lawyers to do the same,” he said. “(Lewis Donelson III) taught me that being a lawyer isn’t just about representation of existing clients that allow you to make money, but lawyers have higher duties to the community as a whole.”

The firm’s community involvement initiative, Baker Cares, provides up to eight hours of paid time off for all employees to volunteer throughout the area.

“If they fired me tomorrow ... I don’t know what I would do,” Yates said. “I would come everyday and beg for my job — I can’t imagine working anywhere else.”

— L. Kasimu Harris



Photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Booz Allen Hamilton employees Angela Franzer, left, and Bruce France drop off goodies to Ronald McDonald House Executive Director Lynn Giuffria and administrative assistant Corey Staehly.

SIX-TIME HONOREE

Booz Allen Hamilton

At Booz Allen Hamilton, one can learn something new every day.

The professional consulting firm on St. Charles Avenue has 31 employees, and everyone is an expert in something different, said Scott Shoemaker, who has been an associate with the firm for two years. The added potential for every workday being a day of learning makes the job that much more fulfilling.

Ed Farrell, a senior associate of 10 years, left the firm in 2006, and said he realized the grass is not always greener

on the other side after a few years.

Farrell said not only are Booz Allen employees surrounded by experts in every field, but they gain experience in a variety of industries.

"It's such a wide variety of different things that you're involved with, it's pretty amazing," Farrell said. "That's one of the things that differentiates us."

Shoemaker said there's a strong sense of teamwork built into the company's identity.

"There's a real emphasis on core values; one is entrepreneurship and one is teamwork," he said. "I think there's a real consensus that we're working as a team."

Farrell said that mixed with the various types of clients the firm works with is what makes work enjoyable.

"Every single project team you're going to be on, it's going to be different," Farrell said. "It really is like you're going in on a day-to-day basis and learning new things every day."

Angela Franzer, a senior strategic communications consultant who marked her first anniversary with the company in October, agrees with Shoemaker and Farrell, adding to that list the company's family-like atmosphere.

She said she first saw that when her grandfather passed away around Christmas 2010 after only two months with the company.

"I thought it was so great because I was able to go to the funeral and be with my family," Franzer said. "They let me work from my hometown in Ohio. If that had not been the case, I wouldn't have been able to help with the funeral."

Franzer said the company is also committed to employees' professional development.

"They invested their time and money to enable me to go to D.C. to take a training focusing on how to better communicate with your employer ... your fellow workers," Franzer said.

The company also makes sure to recognize its employees for hard work through four programs. The Made a Difference eCard is an electronic "thank you" that all staff can send to their colleagues. While there's no money involved in that program, the High5 award, worth \$100, is given to employees who go the extra mile on a short-term project.

There are also performance and team awards for exceptional leadership achievement on a project team that range in value from \$400 to \$2,000. But the big prize is the Values in Practice, or VIP, award for employees who are considered role models of the firm's core values. That recognition comes with two round-trip tickets to anywhere in the continental United States, Mexico, Hawaii or Canada or a Caribbean or Bahamian cruise, two paid days off and \$1,000 in spending money. •

— Travis Andrews

Nature of business: consulting

Where based: McLean, Va.

Employees: 31 in New Orleans; 24,000 companywide

Average starting salary: \$77,000

Median salary: \$88,000

Average time of employment: 5-10

Health care benefits: amount covered varies; unmarried partner benefits and dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, day-care options, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program

Paid days off: average of 21

Website: www.boozallen.com



From left: Bourgeois Bennett employees Aimee Willem, Sam Wheeler, Ralph Cox, Courtney Fox and Jared Fowler have a mid-afternoon ice cream snack in the company's breakroom.

TWO-TIME HONOREE

Bourgeois Bennett

Bourgeois Bennett recognizes the stress tax season takes on its employees by providing treats to help its accountants through the inevitably long days and heavy workloads.

A staff bingo game provides respite, with tax-related words emailed daily to fill in cards. Winners receive prizes such as event tickets or sweet treats. Managers may provide lunch, an afternoon snack or sno-balls during workweeks that often span 50 hours.

And Saturday mornings during tax season feature donuts, bagels and fresh fruit. One of the departments even provides a special Saturday brunch that includes eggs

Nature of business: accounting

Where based: Metairie

Employees: 63

Average starting salary: \$46,500

Median salary: \$67,100

Average time of employment: nine years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: first of the month after 30 days

Other perks: continuing education program, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program

Paid days off: 27 days for less than 10 years; 32 days for more than 10 years

Website: www.bb-cpa.com

Benedict, lox and bagels, bacon and other low-cal goodies.

"It's sometimes the highlight of my day," said Jennifer McGinnis, a tax manager who has been with the company 18 years. "It's fun and when you're working those long hours, you don't have a lot of silliness. I enjoy the fun."

But what McGinnis enjoys most about Bourgeois Bennett is the emphasis on work-life balance.

"I have stayed with them because they give me whatever I want," she said. "They've never told me no. That being said, I've always given them what they've needed."

The company allowed McGinnis to alter her work schedule to accommodate changes in her life. She chose to work part-time when her first son was born, putting in three 10-hour days per week. She switched to five, six-hour days when her second child was born.

The firm's Virgin Health Miles program encourages physical activity with cash bonuses, and each employer is given a pedometer to track activity.

"You can get almost up to \$300 in cash," McGinnis said, "depending on how many steps you take."

Senior auditor Michelle Ritchie joined the company a year ago and has already built close relationships she believes will become lasting ones. When her mother passed away recently, her coworkers helped with her workload.

"Just the heavenly outpouring of support and love from everybody was just beautiful," she said. "It's not just on a professional level. It's also personal."

She appreciates the team environment encompassing many specialties.

"A lot of upper management leads by example. We all work together on the same job," she said. "It's a really great team."

Managing member Ralph Cox began with the company 42 years ago when he was a junior in college and has always appreciated the company's respect for its employees.

"We want to try to get the best people we can," he said, "and then we want to make sure we hang on to them. We try to make sure our benefits and salary are at the top end."

When an employee received a cancer diagnosis recently, management kept her job available and encouraged her to stay with the company.

"It's a caring group of people," Cox said. "Several of our employees actually contributed some of their paid time off to give to her."

And the firm doesn't forget about administrative assistants, with supervisors taking them out for lunch and giving them personal time off and cash. They're also provided free manicures at the office. •

— Diana Chandler



Clockwise from front center: Brown's Dairy employees Keith Burke, Candace Rice, Javitz Metoyer, Willie Chess, Fred Smith, Calvin Rodriguez, Louis Williamson and Melvin White sample the company's chocolate milk at its Central City production facility.

TWO-TIME HONOREE

Brown's Dairy

Brown's Dairy is a New Orleans brand synonymous with New Orleans business. But the company is also known for its employee appreciation and activities that benefit the community.

Philip Albrecht, a cooler manager at Brown's for the past six years who oversees a staff of 40, said the company is a satisfying place to work because of its generosity.

"I enjoy this job," he said. "It's a good atmosphere. You can really tell here people do care about the job they do and who they do it with."

One example Albrecht cites is a recent charity event where he and other employees participated in a dunking booth to benefit the toy fund of the New Orleans Police Department's 6th District.

"It's a good trade-off. I must've gotten dunked maybe a hundred times that day," Albrecht said, adding that a sense of job security also exists at the business.

That spirit also exists among coworkers, he said. For example, colleagues routinely step up for a staff member with an ailment that makes it difficult for him to come to work.

"He wouldn't know when he gets an attack so it was hard for him to predict when he'd make it into work. ... So when he couldn't make it in, we'd have his shifts covered, and we'd

work extra and make sure he had a paid day," he said. "We pitched in and stayed late to cover his shift because we realize this could happen to anyone and we're all in this together ... like a family."

Kennon Davis, general manager for the past 19 years, said employees at Brown's Dairy are also given gift cards.

"We give out a lot of \$25 gift cards, kinda like a pat on the back to our employees," Davis said.

Employees also are provided a hot breakfast every Friday morning in addition to free dairy products in the lunchroom refrigerators. The company also provides workers with free

Nature of business: dairy manufacturing

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 252

Average starting salary: \$14 per hour; \$43,000 for salaried

Median salary: \$17 per hour; \$56,000 for salaried

Average time of employment: seven years

Health care benefits: 80 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: first of the month after 60 days

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, paid mileage,

employee recognition program, employee assistance program

Paid days off: 20 days

Website: www.brownsdairy.com

watermelons for the Fourth of July and hams at Christmas.

Management also recently created the Brown's Dairy All-Stars, an employee of the month program. Recipients receive 1,000 safety points, which equals \$100, and a hard hat with their favorite NFL or college team's logo.

Plant manager Fred Smith, who supervises 91 employees, said he purchased a new barbecue grill out of his own pocket to cook for his staff. On employee appreciation day, he cooked food for all three shifts in the plant.

Brown's Dairy also offers a Halloween event for employees' children called "Trick or Trunk," where employees decorate their vehicles in the company's parking lot and place candy within the trunks.

Aside from the events, gift cards and caring work environment, Davis said the one thing he likes about working at Brown's Dairy is simply based on the level of customer satisfaction.

"I like saying to people that I work at Brown's Dairy," Davis said. "And people look at me and say, 'I love your chocolate milk' or they point out a product they like that we make. That's a cool thing when you can say where you work and people enjoy and benefit from what you do." •

— Kyle Jackson



Randy Fortmayer III and Brooke Fortmayer enjoy the ConocoPhillips Alliance Refinery 40th anniversary picnic with father Randy Fortmayer Jr. and Allison Fortmayer.

ConocoPhillips Alliance Refinery

As he nears retirement, Dana Hanning looks back at a 35-year career.

"I wasn't here long before I realized that I didn't want to go looking for any other kind of job," Hanning said. "I enjoyed it from the very beginning."

Hanning is a lead operator with the ConocoPhillips Alliance Refinery in Belle Chasse. His duties have changed through the years as the refinery has changed owners. But through it all, he says the professionalism of

the operators and various engineers has been constant.

"This has always been a place where people know their jobs and work hard at them," he said.

Sara Miller, who started at ConocoPhillips this summer as an administrative assistant in the health, safety and environment department, appreciates the same work ethic. She works directly for and provides administrative support to each of the four superintendents in her department, as well as the manager.

"I soon found out that the people here are very committed to their jobs and work, which is something I really admire," Miller said. "They are committed to you here not just as an employee but as a person. I am still in school and have a family and commute three hours every day. If I ever need time to take care of something else, they tell me to do what I need to do."

With \$75,000 as the average starting salary and \$78,400 as the median, employees also enjoy myriad benefits.

Greg Lucchesi said the more than 400 employees at the refinery are well provided for because so much is expected of them.

"We can't afford mistakes," said Lucchesi, refinery man-

ager. "Our livelihood and our well-being, as well as the community's well-being, is at stake."

Hanning said that means the workplace can be intense.

"But it is also an environment where everyone works together and relies on each other, and I think the company knows that and appreciates it," he said.

Management shows their appreciation through several social and recreational activities including annual fishing rodeos, golf tournaments and a holiday party. In addition, safety and service award dinners recognize employees for their achievements. The company also offers employee discounts on automobiles, electronics and clothing.

Employees and their families were also invited to share in the refinery's 40th anniversary in October, an event featuring food, games and entertainment.

ConocoPhillips also rewards employees for their hard work through its variable cash incentive program, a profit sharing plan that pays out between 8 and 15 percent of annual pay to employees based on refinery and company performance.

That has resulted in a turnover rate of 1 percent and an average length of employment of 13 years. •

— Garry Boulard

Nature of business: refining

Where based: Belle Chasse

Employees: 428 in New Orleans; 29,500 companywide

Average starting salary: \$88,000 for professional staff; \$130,000 for management

Median salary: \$98,500 for professional staff; \$133,000 for management

Average time of employment: 13 years

Health care benefits: 80 percent covered; unmarried partner benefits and dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, paid mileage, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program

Paid days off: 29 days

Website: www.conocophillips.com



Members of the Dickie Brennan and Co. staff gather in front of the restaurant management company's Palace Café location on Canal Street.

FIVE-TIME HONOREE

Dickie Brennan & Co.

A terminal illness diagnosis has done little to slow Phil LeGrande from getting to his post as front of house supervisor for Dickie Brennan's Steakhouse in the French Quarter.

"Work fulfills my life," LeGrande said. "It's better than sitting on my butt doing nothing all day and letting this sickness get to me."

LeGrande, who said he was diagnosed with prostate cancer in June 2010, said management went out of their way to set his schedule around treatments.

"The level of kindness and caring from top to bottom was overwhelming," LeGrande said. "After my diagnosis, I was home from work for two weeks and it drove me crazy. Getting back into the restaurant has kept my mind off of what I'm going through. It keeps me going."

LeGrande, a 30-year veteran of Brennan family restaurants, said it is hard to match the value of the skills learned while working at one of the establishments.

"This is a people-friendly business and they teach you so many ways to deal with people," he said. "Not everyone can do that."

Ben Thibodaux, chef de cuisine at Palace Café, said the company shows a commitment to growing within the company and making sure staff sticks around.

"There are many cooks who have been with Palace

Café for more than four years," Thibodaux said. "I have about nine years myself. You don't see that many places. I can remember a time where I was job to job week-to-week. It's nice to come to a place where you can stay, get settled and get to know the people you work with, which is obviously very important in this industry."

Thibodaux and Dickie Brennan's Bourbon House waitress and captain Kristina Goebel said there's little to no mention of titles regardless of the restaurant. Employees work as a team, including the Brennans themselves.

"There are times where I can remember at least one or two within the main family jumping in and helping out,"

Goebel said. "You just don't see that at many other places."

Goebel said the Brennans treat employees with a high level of respect, which trickles down to the employees' families. She said the restaurants regularly hold family meals and there are several companywide parties outside the restaurants.

"They rented out Rock 'N' Bowl for a party on Labor Day," Goebel said. "There is also an offsite Christmas party with huge raffle prizes. It is a family business and they make sure the employees are part of it."

Thibodaux said other company benefits include a homebuyers' program in which the company pays a percentage of the purchase price.

"They work with you in establishing what you can afford when buying a home," Thibodaux said. "That kind of thing is unheard of for a restaurant group."

The company spent \$14,001 on the program in 2010 and has paid out \$7,350 so far this year.

Employees are also deeply involved in the community, supporting more than 100 fundraising events throughout the year with manpower, food and other donations.

The company has offered time to Kingsley House, the Salvation Army, the Contemporary Arts Center, Café Reconcile and edible schoolyards throughout the city. •

— Robin Shannon

Nature of business: restaurant

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: about 350

Average starting salary: \$26,000 for hourly; \$42,000 for management

Median salary: \$30,000 for hourly; \$50,000 for management

Average time of employment: five years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: six months for hourly; three months for salaried

Other perks: continuing education program, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 5-20 depending on tenure

Website: www.frenchquarter-dining.com



The Domain Cos. partners Matthew Schwartz, left, and Chris Papamichael chat about the firm's Gold Seal Lofts condo conversion project.

The Domain Cos.

It was Good Friday and Chris Papamichael, one of two principals at The Domain Cos., walked a job site with employee Emily Etland to help her with a presentation for school.

"It's not something I've ever seen before," said Etland, who was recently hired as regional vice president and is completing her undergraduate degree in urban studies and planning at the University of New Orleans. "They are giving me the time during the day, when it's more stressful for them ... to make sure I'm successful in school."

Nature of business: real estate development and management

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 58

Average starting salary: \$45,213

Median salary: \$41,288

Average time of employment: two years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Other perks: continuing education program, flexible hours, employee recognition program, on-site gym

Paid days off: 24 days

Website: www.thedomaincos.com

Etland said she has worked at other companies that merely said education was important, but the accommodations and actions by The Domain Cos. management is what keeps her happy.

Etland said even meetings and community service are done differently. One of their volunteer efforts is a community day, and, most recently in May, all employees met for breakfast, worked at the community garden across the street from the Preserve Location in Mid-City and then ate dinner together.

Fostering a team environment is one of the firm's goals, with quarterly meetings that include the entire company. Dinner is also brought in.

"I think when you work in New Orleans, food is always involved," Etland said.

Principal Matt Schwartz said the close-knit staff and volunteerism strengthens the company's goal of long-term community development.

That's why employees worked to renovate St. Patrick Park, have sponsored and helped with the city-sponsored Movies in the Park, work with the Mid-City Community Gardens and help out with Café Reconcile and Liberty's Kitchen, two programs that provide at-risk youth job train-

ing in the restaurant business.

"They (employees) are there because they have taken ownership and we as a company are looking to make the positive change," Schwartz said.

The company's goal of positive change turned a visit into a permanent residence for facilities director Stacey Whitney, who's been with the company since it started 10 years ago. In 2008, Schwartz and Papamichael told him he had a job if he wanted to work in New Orleans for six months to a year.

"I've been here three years and I don't plan on leaving," he said.

When he managed 27 employees at his previous job in New York, he woke up every morning wondering if all the workers would show up. In his current position with The Domain Cos., not one of the seven-man maintenance crew he oversees has quit in three years.

Whitney said he looks at the company's projects and knows there is nothing else like it in New Orleans.

"It makes you feel proud, to know that it's something I take care of," he said. "When you believe in something, it's not hard to show to your other employees."•

— L. Kasimu Harris



From left: Durr Heavy Construction employees Robbie Wooderson, Norman Ortiz, Ian Burkhamer, Dana Stumpf, Fredrick Anaje and “driver” Clifton Turner.

SIX-TIME HONOREE

Durr Heavy Construction

Durr Heavy Construction, a family-owned, faith-based construction company of about 150 employees, has been owned by the same family for three generations. Chief administrative officer Dana Stumpf said keeping a familiar culture is one of Durr’s main priorities.

“Essentially our culture is just based off of family, faith and I guess you could throw football in there,” Stumpf said. “Part of our strategic plan ... is to maintain our culture. If our culture isn’t maintained, we’re not going down that road. It’s what makes who we are, and it’s hard to find.”

Bill Johnson, a senior estimator for the past seven years,

Nature of business: construction

Where based: Harahan

Employees: 118

Average starting salary: \$31,200 for laborers; \$57,500 for management

Median salary: \$41,600 for laborers; \$66,000 for management

Average time of employment: 12 years

Health care benefits: 75 percent covered; dental and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program, on-site gym, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 17 days

Website: www.durhfc.com

said he agrees the culture is what makes the company tick. In addition to having a good time and feeling like a family, he said the company trusts its employees.

“They’re willing to listen to any ideas you come up with, no matter how crazy they might seem,” Johnson said.

Management also recognizes employees for hard work and safety through three programs. Employee of the month winners receive \$100 at the company’s quarterly safety meetings, while safety employee of the month winners receive \$40. The annual safety winner program recognizes all employees who are accident free and attended at least 90 percent of all weekly safety meetings by splitting \$10,000. There were 24 winners in 2010.

Johnson said that mixture is what makes the company special, specifically citing the company’s Thanksgiving dinner.

“We all brought a different dish, and I’m still a little sleepy from the big meal,” Johnson said. “You get a chance to catch up with people who work in the field who you don’t get to see that often. We consistently do things like that.”

Jan Aponte, an executive assistant for the past 13 years, said she’s involved with the companywide celebrations, and it’s one of the reasons she loves the company.

“I’m what they call the CFO — chief fun officer. ... I plan all the parties and the lunches we do here in the office,” she

said, adding that the company tries to have a party whenever possible: July Fourth, Cinco de Mayo, and during LSU and Saints season, among others.

Employees are also treated to casual Fridays, tickets to LSU, Hornets, Zephyrs and Jesters games, events at the Fair Grounds Race Course, monthly birthday parties, complimentary flu shots, a dedicated playroom for children who are brought to the office and cash prizes for slogan contests

Johnson said he thinks a reason the company is so close-knit is because of a strong sense of faith.

“The company being faith-based helps, because most of the people who are comfortable working in that kind of company, there’s a reason generally,” Johnson said. “You have a character reference about you that makes you want to be closer and caring.”

To that effect, the company’s headquarters built several years ago included a chapel for companywide services or just for a few moments of personal reflection.

Stumpf said when people arrive at Durr, they don’t want to leave.

“People get in and they are so thankful because it’s a breath of fresh air.”

— Travis Andrews



From left: 1st Lake Properties employees Oscar Aguilar, Abbi Domingue, Phyllis LeBlanc, Timothy Houin, Stacey Thibodaux and James Powell.

1st Lake Properties

Marilyn Trosclair thinks of opportunity when she looks back on her nearly three decades working for 1st Lake Properties.

"This is the kind of place where your skills are recognized and from there you are given the opportunity to enhance those skills," said Trosclair, who started out leasing apartments for the property management company and has worked her way up to director of education.

"I went from doing that to marketing and advertisement, then public relations, and finally what I am doing now," she said. "And every step of the way I felt like I was

being appreciated and that there were no boundaries stopping me from advancing."

That company emphasis on advancement takes many forms.

Miguel Ramos, general technician for 1st Lake Properties, handles air conditioning maintenance and repairs at the company's Windmill Creeks complex. He became an instructor along the way.

"I've never taught anything in my life," said Ramos, who has been with 1st Lake Properties for nearly six years. "But being that I have the background and experience in my field, they asked me to be a teacher here for other employees, which I took as a real compliment."

The company's emphasis on promotion and rewarding employees for work well done is a key component to what Wendy Sargent calls the "pride of community."

"They take pride in landscaping the property and in updating the exteriors and interiors," said Sargent, 1st Lake Properties' general manager who has been with the company for just more than a year.

"That is really reflective of the whole operation," she said. "People have come together here to successfully run

an apartment community, to successfully manage it not just for the owners, but for the customers."

For Ramos, that means the management department is interlocked in a team effort with the maintenance department to get things done.

"They screen our calls for us and tell us which are the most important," he said. "They tell us what calls came in in what order, but also help us to prioritize. That way, you're not running around like a chicken with your head cut off."

Trosclair said the work can be high-pressure, but the company regularly recognizes employee performance.

"And that make our jobs easier," she said. "We have quarterly recognition meetings for our employees where they are praised for doing their jobs well, and I think that is the sort of thing that anyone enjoys hearing."

Of the 330 employees, nearly 10 percent have been with the company for more than 15 years, while the average length of employment is 12 years.

In addition to quarterly bonuses and other recognition, employees are given a minimum discount of 15 percent of the rent at any 1st Lake Properties apartment. •

— Garry Boulard

Nature of business: property management

Where based: Metairie

Employees: 330

Average starting salary: \$13 per hour; \$37,000 for salaried

Median salary: \$13 per hour; \$40,865 for salaried

Average time of employment: 12 years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: first of the month after 90 days

Other perks: paid mileage, employee recognition program, fitness program

Paid days off: 24 days

Website: www.1stlake.com



Clockwise from left: Geocent employees Christina Quijano, Michael Savoie, Alex Graham and Tiffany King display the company's past Best Places to Work recognitions.

SEVEN-TIME HONOREE

Geocent

Upper management at Geocent, a fast-growing Metairie-based information technology firm, has a strong devotion to employee morale, so deep that the firm felt the need to create recreational areas within the workspace.

"There are rooms between offices with an Xbox or Wii gaming system, even ping pong tables," said Chief Technology Officer Keith Alphonso. "After a large, consuming job is done, the rooms offer a place where employees can let off some steam and relax. Our people work hard and we recognize that they put in lots of hours."

Alphonso said employees know what is expected of them

Nature of business: information technology

Where based: Metairie

Employees: 191

Average starting salary: \$79,134

Median salary: \$80,000

Average time of employment: three years

Health care benefits: 79 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: first of the month after hire

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, on-site gym

Paid days off: 30 days

Website: www.geocent.com

and Geocent works to ensure that new hires and veteran employees are prepared to work to their strengths everyday.

"New employees are given one-on-one orientation sessions to make sure they are well versed on company policies and procedures and also the culture of Geocent," Alphonso said. "We also invest a substantial amount of money (more than \$180,000 in 2011) in training and cross training employees on new technology. Employees present things they may have learned at a class or conference."

Software engineer Nikola Kocic said the firm offers a dynamic work environment in which employees are encouraged to learn new technology whenever they can.

"Employees often get together for team-building events where employees in different divisions exchange information and knowledge to other teams," Kocic said. "There are also internal competitions where employees compete with each other to build something or perform a task."

Kocic said the access to education Geocent offers is valuable. The company offers \$2,500 for tuition assistance, training and certification.

"It's all paid for by the company," Kocic said. "We have so much access to the latest technology and new software. There is always something new to learn."

Ande Couvillon, an executive assistant who has been on

staff just nine months, said executive management shows a genuine care for the career development of employees. She said management makes sure employees are getting the most out their work.

"Executives take time out to meet and have lunch with employees to get a handle on what they like or don't like about what goes on throughout the day," Couvillon said. "They have follow-ups afterward to make sure all ideas are taken into account. It shows that they care to hear what employees want."

Alphonso added that Geocent also has a strong presence in the community and said management encourages participation in a range of events.

"We have groups that get together to run marathons for various events, we did a fundraiser to benefit tornado victims in Alabama and there was also one year where I ended up shaving my head as a fundraiser for breast cancer," Alphonso said. "The past two years we have been involved in the Wounded Warrior Project and Operation Homefront, both of which benefit the military either still overseas or returning home."

Employees bought T-shirts and held in-office parties with prize drawings, with the money going to the program. •

— Robin Shannon



From left: Harrah's employees Mario Andrade, Theo Lush, Judy Tervalon, Deanna Degrushe-Pagart and Michelle Dantoni play a game of air hockey in the employee lounge.

SEVEN-TIME HONOREE

Harrah's Casino New Orleans

Eglah Devezin began her new job with Harrah's New Orleans as a switchboard operator Sept. 19. A New Orleans native displaced since Hurricane Katrina, Devezin said she wanted to work for a good company with excellent benefits and one that was "not going anywhere."

She's received a whole lot more than she expected.

From the health care benefits, including an on-campus wellness center and employee discounts at various hotels and restaurants throughout the city to free downtown parking, Devezin said she has found a home at Harrah's, one that appreciates her voice and place in the company.

"They care tremendously," Devezin said "The compa-

ny had a meeting with the employees who had been there 30 days just to see how we were all doing. They do everything possible to make sure we're comfortable. The supervisors are helpful, everyone is upbeat and everybody in my department seems happy with what they're doing and this makes it a happy environment."

Harrah's has implemented many programs to make life simpler outside of the office. When Jil Greene relocated to New Orleans from Atlanta to begin her position with Harrah's as vice president of human resources, the company helped with the vast majority of associated costs.

"They gave us financial assistance to live comfortably while the house was situated in Atlanta. Storage space (and car transportation), that was taken care of," she said.

Greene said she immediately was attracted to the company when visiting the complex during the interview process.

That's not uncommon at Harrah's, which provides employees \$2,500 to help them purchase a home in Orleans Parish. The company has paid out \$15,000 toward the program in the past two years.

"From the employees to the executive leadership team, down to the customers, I thought, 'This is a place I can definitely call home,'" Greene said. "Everyone has real pride in the way they do their job."

But it is the benefits for all employees that really excite

Greene. She cites the unique benefits for Harrah's employees, which range from annual tuition assistance up to \$4,000 and the use of an on-site health clinic for employees and their immediate family members within 90 days of being hired.

Beginning this year, all employees, including on-call part-time employees, and their dependents will have access to health care benefits, either through coverage or the on-site clinic. Employees can buy RTA passes at a 50 percent discount, and management added a lactation room for new mothers.

There's also an employee appreciation program, where staff members accrue points based on performance that can be used to buy items such as laptops or save them for use later.

Randy Maneau, a seven-year member of the Harrah's New Orleans team, said he has experienced countless examples of the company's readiness to exceed traditional expectations of an employer.

One example was after Hurricane Katrina, when he was displaced until January and the company paid him the entire time. Starting out in the mailroom, Maneau has risen to become warehouse lead directly under the warehouse supervisor.

"If you perform you're able to move up. It's one of the things I love best," he said. •

— Jaime Guillet

Nature of business: gaming

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 1,639 in New Orleans; about 70,000 companywide

Average starting salary: \$9 per hour; \$69,965 for salaried

Median salary: \$9 per hour; \$53,445 for salaried

Average time of employment: five years

Health care benefits: 90 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, day-care options, relocation assistance, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program, on-site gym, subsidized meals

Paid days off: about 23 days

Website: www.harrah.com



Clockwise from bottom left: Hilton New Orleans Riverside employees Laurie Watt, Charlotte Shahlaei, Neely Brown, Loryn Cruz, Jeff Weller, Debbie Williams, Lisa Rosevally, Jonathan Laron and Sherie Bodemheimer.

SIX-TIME HONOREE

Hilton New Orleans Riverside

Lisa Rosevally, executive assistant to the Hilton New Orleans Riverside's general manager, said she can remember helping coworkers move, painting their houses and delivering homemade meals when they were sick.

She says none of that seemed out of place in her 22 years with the company.

"That's what we do because we're friends, not just coworkers," she said.

Debbie Williams, a food server who has been with Hilton for a little more than two years, agrees.

"They make you feel at home," Williams said. "They make you feel needed."

That appreciation is felt in the hotel's Spirit of Pride program, which recognizes two employees each month, one from the front of house departments and one from the internal operations departments, with a lapel pin, T-shirt, one month of garage parking, a plaque and \$200. Managers and supervisors are eligible for quarterly leadership and commitment awards, which recognizes two employees with \$350. The annual leadership and commitment award winners receive a trip for two, including airfare, for a five-night stay at any Hilton in the continental United States in addition to \$500.

Resident manager Jeff Weller, who has been with the New Orleans Hilton for eight months after working with the

company in Florida for six years, said an open door is key. "You can talk to me just like you'd talk to anybody else," Weller said.

Of the hotel's 800 employees, 11 have been with the company since it opened its New Orleans site 34 years ago. More than 250 have been there for 15 years or more.

The hotel recently embraced a Blue Energy culture, which focuses on guest, team member and community relations as well as sustainability efforts.

Williams is a member of the program's committee and recently helped brainstorm ideas of what to put in the lobby

Nature of business: hotel

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 800 in New Orleans; 130,000 companywide

Average starting salary: \$11 per hour; \$35,000 for salaried

Median salary: \$14.86 per hour; \$45,000 for salaried

Average time of employment: 10 years

Health care benefits: 90 percent covered; unmarried partner benefits and dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, on-site gym, subsidized meals

Paid days off: up to 32 days

Website: neworleans.hilton.com

for guests, such as blue lemonade, petit fours and petite cheesecakes.

"That's one of the most fun things we do at the hotel, and it keeps us close-knit," Williams said.

Rosevally said that fun element contributes to employees' overall happiness.

"You have to have fun while you're working," Rosevally said. "Otherwise, you'll go crazy. Ninety percent of getting up in the morning is (if) you like the people you work with or not."

That fun environment includes events such as a disco party, an Easter basket decorating competition, sno-ball days, an annual holiday party, overnight shift bingo breakfasts, gift cards for all staff members at Thanksgiving and community trash pickup days. Employees have free parking and eat for free in the hotel's staff cafeteria in addition to receiving discounts on cell phone plans, mattresses, computers, fitness equipment and at retailers such as Target, Sam's Club, Barnes and Noble, and Home Depot. Each team member also has received two tickets to a New Orleans Hornets game of their choice since 2008.

And by working at a Hilton property, they are eligible for special room rates at other Hilton locations starting at \$29 a night. •

— Travis Andrews



From left: HRI Properties employees Eddie Boettner, Tom Leonhard, Peggy Battle, Yelena Yershova, Debra Taulie, Pres Kabacoff, Roy Madding and Chris Clement atop the Whitney Bank Building, which the company is renovating into a mixed-use space.

TWO-TIME HONOREE

HRI Properties

Two months after Kimberly Kiger joined HRI Properties as an intern architect and interior designer, the company allowed her to work temporarily from Okinawa, Japan, to spend time with her husband, stationed there with the U.S. Marine Corps.

She has gone to Japan twice since joining the company in January, keeping all of her vacation time and using the Internet to continue working.

Such special exceptions for individual employees are typical of HRI, Kiger said, a company that appreciates talent,

commitment and hard work.

“If there’s someone who would be a valuable asset to the company, they’re going to find a way to make it fit,” Kiger said.

What’s more, the company supports employees in achieving their goals. Kiger found financial and professional support in earning her interior design license after joining the company and is now preparing to take a series of exams required for architectural licensing. The company will reimburse her the \$1,800 cost of exams and books.

Telecommuting, flexible hours and up to \$5,000 in annual reimbursement for tuition, books and fees are just a few of the perks HRI offers its employees.

For many HRI employees, the small perks and benefits make working there special.

Lior Sekler, vice president of revenue management in HRI’s lodging division, lives in HRI’s Nine27 Apartments building, where he’s not charged fees that other tenants must pay, such as deposits for the lease and pets. Sekler said lagniappe such as lavishly catered Saints tailgate parties and free tickets to Zephyrs games and other sporting events set the company apart from others.

David Abbernante, president of HRI Management, shares a similar story behind the company’s decision three years ago to add short-term disability to its slate of benefits.

When a young employee needed immediate medical treatment for a serious illness, she was in no financial position to wait for long-term disability that would have been available only after 90 days.

In the past year, HRI has added unmarried partners benefits and bonuses. In a slow economy, the company added 87 employees last year and gave raises of up to 5 percent. Employees also save 25 percent at HRI-owned hotels and restaurants.

Abbernante said one reason he has stayed with the company 15 years is because it opens doors for employees, allowing them to grow professionally.

“If I ever got bored, I could just walk down the hall and say, ‘Can I stick my nose into this,’” he said, “get really busy and get involved in something else?”

Room to thrive is also important to Sekle. He joined the company in March 2010 as corporate director of revenue, a newly created position, and moved up as HRI sought to utilize his skills.

“I’m able to develop and create a position from scratch,” he said. “I’m able to put my spin on it at a greater level and have more impact. The company recognizes performance and a strong skills set, and they reward for performance.”

— Diana Chandler

Nature of business: real estate development and management

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 321

Average starting salary: \$11.78 per hour, \$56,500 for salaried

Median salary: \$26,598 for hourly, \$73,780 for salaried

Average time of employment: nearly six years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; unmarried partner benefits and dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: 30 or 90 days depending on division

Other perks: relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 31 days

Website: www.hriproperties.com



Clockwise from lower left: International School of Louisiana employees Yutaka Hitomi, Sean Wilson, Claire Khulman, Nobert Estrella and Emily Thomas visit with one of the school's third grade classes.

International School of Louisiana

Kindergarten teaching assistant Laura Galindo has only been with the International School of Louisiana since August, but she has already been able to bring improvements to the school's new West Bank campus.

A few weeks into the semester, for instance, Galindo noticed that morning snack time was frenzied. The kids were bringing home-packed snacks, ranging in size and nutritional value.

At the next faculty meeting, Galindo suggested that one parent bring in 25 identical treats for the class. Other teachers got on board, and the principal sent out letters to parents.

A week later, snack time had become better organized

and more efficient, just the way Galindo had envisioned it.

"Everyone (here) is so open to hearing ideas, and they don't dismiss them because I'm young," said Galindo, who's taking night classes at Tulane University to earn her teaching certification. The school provides up to \$1,200 a year for tuition assistance.

Sean Wilson, ISL's chief executive and head of school, says everyone has a say in how things are run.

"I believe that a sense of ownership is intrinsic to moving organizations forward," he said.

Galindo spoke up again when a new student with behavioral issues entered the class.

"I felt like we needed as much support as possible — a speech pathologist and developmental specialist," Galindo said. "Within a week, I was in contact with everyone," including the child's parents. She soon saw improvements in the child's behavior and learning skills.

And when Galindo asked the student services department for three individual desks for students who worked better independently, she got them the next day.

Lilian Deltort, a kindergarten teacher from Toulouse, France, also appreciates the material support, and the administration's confidence in his judgment. After trying

to find quality books in French for his students, Deltort realized the best source was abroad. On his request, ISL shipped in dozens of books.

"Traditional stories by French authors," Deltort said. "They're the same kinds of books students have in France."

The school has supported Deltort's field trips throughout the city, including taking his students to hear Loyola University's symphony orchestra and to see what's growing at the Hollygrove Market and Farm. If he wants to take them to a neighborhood bakery and buy French pastries, the school would finance that, too.

"I never have to buy supplies," Deltort said. "(The school) provides them all."

Not having to worry about lacking something they need in the classroom frees Deltort and other teachers to focus on their students. It's the same with administrators, who can count on ISL's six supporting departments, ranging from food service to information technology.

"The principal's main responsibility is student growth and performance," Wilson said. "He won't have to worry about when the school building opens or when someone will clean the floors. That's taken care of." •

— Anne Berry

Nature of business:

education

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 105

Average starting salary: \$30,000 for professionals; \$40,763 for teachers

Median salary: \$42,412 for professionals; \$41,957 for teachers

Average time of employment: five years

Health care benefits: 80 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, paid mileage, employee assistance program

Paid days off: 41 days for faculty; 51 days for administration

Website: www.isl-edu.org



From left: Irwin Fritchie Urquhart and Moore employees Dow Edwards, John Garrett, Kathleen Johnson, Stephen Myers and Debra Robinson chat during an after-hours office party.

TWO-TIME HONOREE

Irwin Fritchie Urquhart & Moore

At the law firm of Irwin Fritchie Urquhart and Moore, business as usual can sometimes mean more than just handling depositions, typing briefs, negotiating settlements and meeting clients.

Sometimes it means just kicking back and having a good time in or out of the office.

"I'd only been practicing law for three years when I came here and I thought law firms were supposed to be stuffy and up-tight," said Darleene Peters, counsel at the law firm for the past 10 years. "But this place isn't like that. Open dialogue is encouraged, so is teamwork. It's very friendly. Law firms can be a stressful place to be, but there's a sense of efficiency here."

The firm opened in 2000 with just 13 lawyers wandering the halls at the time, said Gus Fritchie III, one of the founders of the practice. Since then, it's expanded to 82 full-time employees and practices a business casual code of dress, attitude and demeanor.

That laidback environment is what legal secretary Kathleen Johnson said she likes most.

"I've only been here since September and I feel like I'm part of the team," Johnson said. "I feel like I've been here

since the firm was established."

To boost morale, the firm has Black and Gold Fridays during the fall when employees are encouraged to wear their Saints garb. Employees also are allowed to leave early to prepare for Carnival festivities and are encouraged to attend musical events and festivals throughout the year.

"It's a laidback atmosphere here," Fritchie said. "We're casual, but we're professional with clients. We know how to take care of business, but we're not stuffy. It's a good

Nature of business: law firm
Where based: New Orleans
Employees: 82
Average starting salary: \$42,000 for staff; \$97,500 for attorneys
Median salary: \$55,000 for staff; \$127,000 for attorneys
Average time of employment: 10 years
Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans
Wait time for benefits: one month
Other perks: continuing education program, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee orientation program
Paid days off: 30-40 depending on tenure
Website: www.irwinllc.com

mix of good people that makes it all work."

The firm participates each year in the New Orleans Bar Association's law firm cooking competition, which benefits nonprofit organizations that provide law services to needy individuals, Peters said. Attorneys also are encouraged to volunteer their services to The Pro Bono Project, an organization that provides free legal aide throughout the New Orleans area.

"Here, they encourage people to do more than just work," Peters said. "They want you to have a life outside of the firm, to be out in the community and help out. I guess it's about instilling a sense of civic awareness, and the firm supports you when you want to do these things."

The firm also encourages employees to bring in canned goods for Second Harvest food drives and wraps gifts for children who benefit from the Louisiana State Bar Association's Secret Santa Program.

"The firm's lawyers are busy, yes, but we're also successful," Fritchie said. "I think it's our success that breeds more success and allows the chances to be happy around the office and ... do things to have fun with each other."

— Kyle Jackson



From left: King, Krebs and Jurgens employees Chantelle Haik, Christina Womack, Derek Larson and Aileen Manders show off some of the perks that come with working at the law firm.

TWO-TIME HONOREE

King, Krebs and Jurgens

The surprise for Richard “Dan” Serio was not that his coworkers at King, Krebs and Jurgens were throwing a shower but that the party was for him.

“That kind of thing goes on here all the time,” said the 29-year-old Serio, who started out as an intern at the law firm in 2008 and is now an associate. “But my wife was the one actually having the baby.”

The shower, normally an honor for expectant female employees of the firm, is actually reflective of something larger: a culture that makes working there fun.

Nature of business: law firm

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 58

Average starting salary: \$40,000 for staff; \$88,500 for associates

Median salary: \$48,000 for staff, \$100,928 for attorneys

Average time of employment: seven and a half years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: 30 days after the first of the month

Other perks: continuing education program, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program

Paid days off: 24–28 days

Website: www.kingkreb.com

“The bosses aren’t stuffy here,” said Becky Cowand, who started at the firm nine years ago as a secretary and is now a paralegal.

“I knew when I first came on board here that this must be a great place to work because the majority of the firm’s employees had been here for a long time,” Cowand said. “And now I’m one of them.”

Managing partner David Strauss, who joined King, Krebs and Jurgens 13 years ago, said the goal is to keep things as relaxed and friendly as possible for everyone at the firm.

“We invest in the people who work here at all levels,” Strauss said. “I know there are firms who really only do that sort of thing with their associates, but the view here is that associates are only as good as the staff members who are supporting them.”

That investment includes up to \$1,800 a year in tuition assistance, a continuing education program and paying cell phone bills for partners and providing associates with \$100 per month toward theirs.

The firm also provides a smoking cessation program to all employees with \$500 worth of assistance specific to that goal and \$500 to any employee who is smoke-free for six months.

“I got a good feeling the moment I came here,” Serio said. “It was a welcoming atmosphere. The associates made a point of getting to know you, after work where we might have parties and the like.”

Serio has been additionally impressed by what goes on during lunch.

“It’s a very common thing to see an associate, paralegal and secretary all eating together,” he said. “And I like that sort of thing. You feel that we are all on the same level and working together.”

In an effort to improve its community outreach, attorneys have committed to at least 50 hours of pro bono work per year, up from the previous 25. At the same time, the firm has enhanced its summer associate program to not only provide a more complete work experience for law students but, as Strauss says, “to give them the type of work they’re really interested in doing and learning about.”

The general feel of that program, as well as the daily mood of the office, comes down to the same thing.

“People here have a sense of ownership in the firm,” Strauss said, “and not for just the moment, but for as long as they’re here.”

— Garry Boulard



Kushner LaGraize employees spell out the firm's initials in the lobby of their building at Casewey Boulevard and West Napoleon Avenue.

TWO-TIME HONOREE

Kushner LaGraize

A company luncheon at Drago's followed by a full day of Arest to celebrate the end of tax season is just one of the perks employees at the accounting firm Kushner LaGraize look forward to each year.

Employees say events such as the luncheon, the company picnic following the October tax deadline and the assortment of "tax treats" at work during the busier months are a testament to the positive attitude and welcoming environment the firm's upper management offers.

"When we get into March and April, most employees get bogged down by demanding clients and strict deadlines, and it leaves little time to break away," audit senior manager Cathy Nerin said. "The firm counters that by having lunches delivered, ordering in ice cream or sno-balls and other little things to help employees get through the busy weeks. The work isn't always fun, but the firm goes out of its way to show appreciation."

The firm hired Dean Martin, a tax manager, out of college about five years ago. He said the firm's flexible nature during slower months complements the benefits provided during the busy season.

"We aren't taking orders from a corporate office, and the partners are always open to suggestions on how to improve

what they do," Martin said. "There are many times where employees are free to come and go as they please as long as the work gets done. Right at this moment, I am fishing on my boat, but I have my work right here with me. That is how flexible they are."

Nerin said the firm pays out time-and-a-half for overtime during the busy months and offers two weeks of vacation and eight personal days. She said the nine partners are easy to work with and always available to chip in when needed.

"They recognize that the people put in a lot of hours for them," Nerin said. "They treat us like family because they

know that we have to spend so much time away from our own family."

Although she has only been with the firm since January, tax staff member Shari Sigur said Kushner LaGraize did quite a bit to make her feel welcome from her first day, even going as far as assisting her with her move from Lafayette.

"The partners and other employees had a constant interest in my life and what I was doing to get acquainted with the New Orleans area," Sigur said. "This is my first job in a CPA firm and that can be really intimidating, but people on every level were always there to help. It means a lot."

Sigur said employees make the effort to get together outside the office, adding that a handful play beach volleyball on weeknights. There are also picnics and holiday parties that are open to family members.

Martin added that employees also come together for community service events such as volunteering at the Second Harvest Food Bank's Harvest the Music concert series and contributing to holiday toy drives for Children's Hospital and Volunteers of America.

"We have fun as an employee group while helping others in the community," Martin said. •

— Robin Shannon

Nature of business: accounting
Where based: New Orleans
Employees: 50
Average starting salary: \$31,500 for staff; \$45,000 for accountants
Median salary: \$42,300 for staff; \$63,700 for accountants
Average time of employment: 10-plus years
Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans
Wait time for benefits: within two months
Other perks: paid mileage, flexible hours, employee orientation program
Paid days off: 25 and a half days
Website: www.kl-cpa.com



Landis Construction employee Christian Generes pushes Ken Nutter in a wheelbarrow at the Xavier University Convocation Center as employees, clockwise from left, Cathy Gathman, Brud Chiasson, Ryan Dufrene, Richard Parker, David Corona, Harry Walker, Brad Pizzo and Julie Kirkland cheer him on.

Landis Construction

Christian Generes' career track has embraced an old-school approach, one that doesn't involve the current trend of job hopping. He started working for Landis Construction right out of college 10 years ago and now leads business development for the general contractor.

And he says he has no desire to leave.

"Construction especially is one of those industries where it is rare for employees to stay for many years," Generes said. "(Competitive companies) will throw money at people to get them on board for new projects and people will say, 'Well the only way to move up in salary is change compa-

nies.' It's not a very loyal industry. We've had a lot of success with keeping people here."

Generes is on par with the average length of employment at Landis, which is 10 years. He said, without pause, that Landis' retention success is because of its "human resources." Although only about 40 percent of its total personnel is salaried, 100 percent of employees are offered benefits such as 99 percent paid health care coverage, six weeks paid maternity leave and up to \$1,200 a year for tuition reimbursement, among others.

The firm also started an alternate Friday off program this year, where employees work nine, 10-hour days during July and August to get every other Friday off. There also are quarterly employee and family events that have included a crawfish boil and a visit to Rock 'N' Bowl, and tickets to Hornets and Saints games on a lottery basis. Management also offers flexible hours, which allows employees to create schedules based on family and childcare needs.

"We're a very close-knit group," Generes said. "That's what got me to come to Landis. It wasn't a big corporation with your next task, your next quota. It's a different type of feeling and I don't see it changing."

J.C. McPherson understands the benefits of working at

Landis from a different perspective. McPherson, a carpenter who works as an hourly employee, started with the firm in 1994 but left in 2001 to work for another company where he made \$40,000 more a year.

He returned to Landis a year later, but left two more times before returning for good in 2008.

"I always came back because no doubt it's one of the best companies to work for," McPherson said, adding that while he left for more money, the loss of vacation time and health benefits negated the moves.

"If I look back in time (leaving) really didn't benefit me. If I had stayed I'd probably be making more money per hour by now," he said. "It was kind of a mistake, but you live and you learn. Plus, you can't beat the people here."

Michelle Ocampo started with the company less than six months ago and approached Landis about a job based on her sister's high praise and the benefits, namely health insurance.

"They're really good to my sister so it made me want to work for them more than any other company," Ocampo said. "Everyone is real nice. They're really respectful, and they treat you like people, not just like an employee," she said. "It makes you work harder to make their jobs easier."•

— Jaime Guillet

Nature of business: general contractor

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 80

Average starting salary: \$37,500 for hourly; \$40,000 for salaried

Median salary: \$42,000 for hourly; \$55,500 for salaried

Average time of employment: 10 years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee assistance program, fitness program

Paid days off: 21-31

Website: www.landisllc.com



From left: LaPorte employees Dawn Laborie with her dog, Blue, Anna Breau with her dog, Hank, and Daniel Simpson with his dog, Molly, at NOLA City Bark dog park.

FIVE-TIME HONOREE

LaPorte

Shelly Laborie expected to feel like a number when she went to work for LaPorte, which has nearly 150 employees. But shortly after starting work, she was walking down the hall when President Ted Mason ambled by and said, “Hey Shelly, how’s it going?”

“I could tell they were interested in their employees individually,” said Laborie, who has been with LaPorte, a CPA firm with offices in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Covington and Houston.

The company has an environment that leads to employ-

Nature of business: accounting

Where based: Metairie

Employees: 148

Average starting salary: \$30,000 for administrative; \$47,500 for accountants

Median salary: \$38,000 for administrative; \$71,000 for accountants

Average time of employment: six years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, day-care options, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program, on-site gym, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 34-58

Website: www.laporte.com

ees providing home-cooked meals, transportation and even donating sick leave to other employees, and Laborie said that family-like culture is an important factor.

Tommy Freel, a senior manager in tax services for nine years, said that interest in helping each other either professionally or personally is why he has stayed with the firm for so long.

“There are going to be times when we do work overtime,” Freel said. “And everybody’s here.”

Eric Bosch, an audit director who has been with LaPorte for 22 years, echoes that sentiment.

“Every time I’ve had an opportunity,” Bosch said, “it would always come back to ‘Why would I want to go?’ ‘Why would I want to leave?’”

The firm also has several programs in place to help employees advance in their career. Freel said the company has individualized personal growth plans that include evaluations from not just senior staff but colleagues, which are made available to all employees in addition to notes from annual coaching meetings.

LaPorte also rewards employees along the way for their growth with an end of year bonus program that pays an

average of \$2,000, quarterly practice development bonuses that pay of an average of \$3,000, referral recruiting bonuses of up to \$6,500, a CPA exam bonus of \$1,000 and management year-end bonuses of up to 15 percent of pay.

“Laporte pays for our CPA exam fees, and they’ll help out with review courses, which can be extremely expensive,” Laborie said. “And when you’re coming straight out college, you need all the help you can get.”

While CPA firms can often be characterized as stuffy, LaPorte goes the extra the extra mile to incorporate fun into the workplace.

“Baseball Fun Nights” include tickets and food for employees and their families to attend Zephyrs games in New Orleans; “Popcorn Days,” where employees gather for popcorn and drawings for free tickets to movies during the busy season; and “Crazy Hat Halloween,” where staff members compete in a hat-decorating contest for prizes and refreshments.

The firm also focuses on employee health through blood pressure screenings and chair massages for all staff, in addition to free flu shots and discounts for family members. •

— Travis Andrews



Registered Nurse Tasha Daniel, left, and Paul Hymel, senior vice president and chief nursing officer, chat during North Oaks Health System's employee ice cream day.

FOUR-TIME HONOREE

North Oaks Health System

Sarah Mitchell was working at North Oaks Health System as a rehabilitation technician in 1996 when she was initially denied admission to physical therapy school. Her director at the time, Lisa Smith, found her in tears and encouraged her to persevere.

"She cared immediately and saw my future. She believed in me," Mitchell said. "It was all about perseverance."

Mitchell reapplied and attended Louisiana State University with a stipend and scholarship from North Oaks, as long as she agreed to return to the hospital for 18 months

of employment after graduation. She returned in 1998 with a master's degree in physical therapy and has never left.

Now assistant vice president of clinics for North Oaks, Mitchell says that supportive atmosphere is typical.

"It's just how we treat each other," she said. "You're not a number. We're there for each other."

Jeff Schmitt, sports medicine supervisor and head athletic trainer, has works for the same company as his wife, Annie, who's also a physical therapist. Their two sons, 9-year-old Jonah and 10-year-old Dane, attended North Oak's onsite childcare facility.

Employees who have children have access to liberal family benefits of 16 weeks paid maternity and 12 weeks paid paternity leave.

When North Oaks hands out free tickets to Southeast Louisiana University football, basketball and baseball games — a benefit extended to all employees — Schmitt's entire family attends.

"I really enjoy taking my family to those events," he said.

As North Oaks' 2010 employee of the year, Schmitt enjoyed a year's worth of free meals in the employee cafeteria, a personal parking space for a year, an honorarium and recognition in the hospital's wall of fame.

"To be recognized like that," Schmitt said, "what else can you ask for?"

Amy Goll, who began in September as an employment specialist at North Oaks, appreciates the employer's stability and commitment to supporting the community.

"I'm a helper by nature," she said. "I like working for a corporation that helps people."

North Oaks' Hospital on Top Team rewards employees who volunteer for hospital and community events. Prizes include paid days off and an annual chance to win an all-expense-paid, four-night vacation anywhere in the continental United States.

"That's something that really speaks to me," Goll said. "Just that we even have a team for community involvement is a big deal."

The hospital's 2011 HOT Team of 351 members contributed 3,609 hours of volunteer service at 69 events, a 20 percent increase over 2010, according to hospital figures.

"It gives us an incentive to help our community," Mitchell said. "If North Oaks isn't a sponsor of an event, we haven't been asked. I actually have a tremendous amount of pride for where I work."•

— Diana Chandler

Nature of business: health care

Where based: Hammond

Employees: 2,297

Average starting salary: \$56,285

Median salary: \$48,152

Average time of employment: seven years

Health care benefits: 72 percent covered; dental, division and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, day-care options, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program, fitness program, on-site gym, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 48 days

Website: www.northoaks.org



Maida Jones is greeted on the “red carpet” as part of the employee orientation program at Ochsner Health System’s Main Campus.

SEVEN-TIME HONOREE

Ochsner Health System

Reputation is one of the main reasons employees enjoy working at Ochsner Health System.

“You say you work at Ochsner and people know what it is, what it does, and they’ve probably been there and they know you work at a quality hospital,” said Nancy St. Germain, a senior physician liaison since 2006. “The employees, the physicians, from the bottom to top, this is a place I’m proud to work at. Everyone here is professional but also happy. Everyone gets support from management.”

Nature of business: health care

Where based: Jefferson

Employees: 10,121

Average starting salary: \$46,706

Median salary: \$57,149

Average time of employment: nearly seven years

Health care benefits: 79 percent covered; unmarried partner benefits and dental and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: first of the month after 30 days

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program, on-site gym, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 26-36

Website: www.ochsner.org

Warner Thomas, president and chief operating officer since 2005, said the warm feeling of genuine happiness employees can sense among their coworkers is a benefit that comes from healthy relationships among staff.

“When you walk into this hospital, you get a, ‘Hi, how are you.’ People smile at you and it’s real. You can feel the energy, and they’re glad to be here,” St. Germain said. “We don’t just make relationships and connections with patients; we make them with each other, from employee to employee.”

Patricia Phillips, a certified diabetes educator and nurse at Ochsner, who has only been employed there since July, shared those thoughts.

“I feel like I’m a part of something great here,” Phillips said. “I was welcomed with open arms. I’ve made friends in the short period of time I’ve been here. We go to Saints games and I’ve met their families and eaten dinner at their homes. It’s like a community.”

To facilitate that feeling of welcomeness, the hospital implemented its Red Carpet Experience, which immerses new employees in the Ochsner culture, history and expectations through a two-day orientation. But the program also includes an element of fun, with a red carpet leading into

their workstation on their first day in addition to a welcome banner signed by team members.

The hospital holds an annual employee appreciation week that includes a barbecue, ice cream socials and other surprises. Employees are also honored by way of Spirit and Caring and the Spirit of Leadership awards, both of which are peer-nominated, Thomas said. That’s just two of many employee recognition programs the hospital offers.

“There’s a sense of family here,” Thomas said. “This is an intense job (working in health care) and it can bring out a lot of emotions. You can see who people really are and it can either take its toll or bring you closer together. We do things to make sure it doesn’t take too much of a toll, but our employees come together.”

Thomas said another reason why employees work efficiently and in a congenial nature is because of a sense of job security, adding that the company hasn’t laid off employees like many other large hospitals throughout the country.

“We don’t lay people off,” Thomas said. “We haven’t had a reduction in force in longer than I can remember. People want stability and that’s a big deal.”

— Kyle Jackson



Peoples Health employees and their families play in an inflatable play area during the company's annual picnic at the Audubon Zoo.

SIX-TIME HONOREE

Peoples Health

Shortly after Linda Melerine went to work for Peoples Health as a family nurse practitioner in the health services division, she realized she learned more about the company in a shorter time than any other place she had worked.

"They want it that way," Melerine said of her early orientation. "They had me going into different departments that I might in reality have little contact with in the future just so that I would get to know the whole company before I got out there to represent them."

Nature of business: benefits provider

Where based: Metairie

Employees: 600

Average starting salary: \$52,000

Median salary: \$62,000

Average time of employment: four years

Health care benefits: 95 percent covered; unmarried partner benefits and dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Other perks: continuing education program, day-care options, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program, on-site gym

Paid days off: 27-37

Website: www.peopleshealth.com

Melerine's initial exposure to the way things are done at Peoples Health isn't unique.

"We do everything that we can think of to make it possible for our employees to succeed," said Greg Ruppert, vice president of human resources. "And that very much means making sure that our employees know everything about what kind of company this is and have the tools and training that they need to do their jobs well here."

Those tools also include sharing the company's devotion to quality health care.

"That's from the top down," said Chrystal Harry, a registered nurse and quality improvement manager. "We are told all the time to remember the bottom line. That's not the dollar, but the member."

By so doing, Harry said, employees are inspired to do the best they can.

"This is not typical of the entire health care industry," Melerine said. "Other places emphasize cost to the point where it can be depressing for an employee who wants to do everything they can for a member."

Employees also appreciate the pay and benefits, which include a 5 percent 401(k) match, a free fitness center

membership and a subsidized Weight Watchers' program.

"We pay well," Ruppert said. "In addition, we have made a point of not increasing the premiums that employees pay for medical insurance for the last 10 years, even as health care costs have continued to rise."

To offset the cost of employee childcare expenses, Peoples Health matches up to \$1,500 for day care costs. The company also offers 12 paid weeks of maternity and paternity leave and additional 12 weeks of unpaid time off.

"We try to make sure our employees are getting what they need," Ruppert said, adding that there is a less than 3 percent annual turnover rate among the company's nearly 600 employees.

The low turnover rate is not an accident, Harry said, who started with Peoples Health in 2003.

"People stay here," she said, "because they like working here."

Employees also are treated to a family picnic, holiday party, Thanksgiving feast, Halloween costume contest and party, and free tickets to Saints, Hornets, Zephyrs and LSU games and Jazz Fest. •

— Garry Boulard



Peter A. Mayer employees Paulina Nguyen, Neil Landry, Shannon Fazande and Jay Winn show off some of the public relations and advertising agency's creative wares.

FIVE-TIME HONOREE

Peter A. Mayer Advertising Inc.

At Peter A. Mayer Advertising, a full-service agency on Camp Street, staff members say the creative sparks fly, ideas are solicited and respected, and opportunities to learn new skills abound.

"People hired here are nice and smart, not just smart people with big egos, and that helps us collaborate and work as a team," account director and vice president Jay Winn said.

That's just one reason the firm has maintained long-term relationships with clients, as opposed to the turnover often seen in the industry, he said.

"Employees are where the ideas come from, and they can be from anyone here," he said. "Everyone has an equal voice in this creative environment. This is definitely not a sweat shop."

All employees receive annual bonuses based on individual and agency performances. They also receive a half-day of vacation for their birthday.

"People here are really smart, talented and driven, and are nurtured and allowed to grow to become their best," said account supervisor Dianne Mikeska, who has been with the firm for three and a half years. "We have a pretty comprehensive employee review program that sets milestones, and management checks back on our progress and key developments during the year."

Mikeska enjoys the firm's in-house lunch and learn program that focuses on media trends, various facets of advertising and how to interact with clients.

"This is a small but growing company that has allowed me to learn a lot of new skills," said Rachael Greer, who leads the project management department. "Having come from a job in New York, it has let me develop in ways that I couldn't in a large market."

She added that the firm allows a good-work life balance,

Nature of business: advertising

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 138

Average starting salary: \$45,584 for nonexecutive management; \$142,500 for executive management

Median salary: \$48,200 for nonexecutive management; \$145,600 for executive management

Average time of employment: seven years

Health care benefits: 92 percent covered; unmarried partner benefits and dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: first of the month after hire

Other perks: Continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program

Paid days off: 30-plus days

Website: www.petermayer.com

something that was missing in her previous job.

"Our owners do their best to treat us like extended family, and you don't find that in larger ad companies," she said.

This year, the firm launched a mentorship program for employees of all levels of experience to share ideas and experiences. Thirty-five staff members signed to mentor and be mentored, and they met monthly in pairs over lunch, coffee and drinks.

But the firm focuses on more than just professional development by making time for fun. The office closes the first day of Jazz Fest every year and each employee is given a ticket to the festival. There's also the annual crawfish boil featuring the Peter Mayer Olympics and a Halloween costume party with prizes for costumes such as "Best Advertising Icon." Management also has morale boosters such as surprise cupcake deliveries, taco truck visits, and candy and fruit bowls on every floor. Employees and their families are also treated to a night at a Zephyrs game every summer.

Mikeska said she enjoys the firm's community service, including gardening at City Park's Peter A. Mayer grove in front of the New Orleans Museum of Art. •

— Susan Buchanan



Phelps Dunbar employees gather after participating in the Walk to Cure Diabetes at Audubon Park in November.

FIVE-TIME HONOREE

Phelps Dunbar

After three decades, eight new offices and a roster of 250 additional lawyers, Tom Mitchell, firm administrator at Phelps Dunbar, says everyone is still on the same page.

He said the lawyers are constantly on deadlines and people who pull the papers from fax machines are as important as anyone because they are all an integral part of the process.

“If you look at a firm or a company that has a lot of long term employees, that generally tells you something about how they treat their employees,” said Kim Boyle, a partner who started with the firm 10 years ago. Her secretary has been with Phelps Dunbar almost 24 years, almost double the 12-year average most employees stay with the firm.

Boyle said some of the reasons for that average tenure is employees enjoy the work environment, which she describes as diverse. But the support among employees is key.

“When I couldn’t be there for something, the other lawyers in my group immediately stepped in ... to make sure our clients would be served and to make sure I was still able to fulfill my obligations,” said Boyle, referring to her term as president of the Louisiana State Bar Association.

Support also comes in the form of resources and accommodations for employees.

Employees are recognized through a variety of programs including staff appreciation day, which means a catered

luncheon — this year’s was done by Superior Grill — and gifts for all non-attorney staff.

The firm also encourages staff members to bring in new employees and offers a referral bonus of up to \$1,000 for successful hires.

Tessa Vorhaben, who joined the firm just more than a year ago, has a two-year-old child and says the firm’s inclusion of family is paramount.

Vorhaben said the annual attorney retreat in Sandestin, Fla., which is a two-day, two-night, all-expenses-paid trip for all attorneys and their families, was a chance for lawyers to get to know each other while spending time with their families

Nature of business: law firm

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 223 in New Orleans; 583 firmwide

Average starting salary: \$41,468 for staff; \$95,000 for attorneys

Median salary: \$51,000 for staff; \$102,000 for attorneys

Average time of employment: nearly 13 years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: first of the month after one full month

Other perks: 26-31 for staff; 20-25 for attorneys, who have unlimited sick days

Paid days off: continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program

Website: phelpsdunbar.com

“It was their way of saying thanks for your work and long hours,” she said.

In addition to talking shop, everyone is treated to golf and tennis tournaments, fishing excursions, dinners and cocktail parties, a 24/7 hospitality suite stocked with food and drinks and child care.

Attorneys and their families also are treated to a holiday movie each December, when the firm rents out a theater. The 2010 movie was “Tangled,” and the more than 250 people who attended received holiday treats.

Phelps Dunbar also has Saints season tickets and a suite in the New Orleans Arena, which in addition to being used to entertain clients, is available to attorneys, staff and their families.

All employees also receive discounts on AT&T services and products, and because they are located in Canal Place, receive discounts at select merchants in the building, including PC Mall and Brooks Brothers.

Vorhaben also said she appreciates the flexibility to work from home if her son is sick or has or has a doctor’s appointment and once even brought him up to work for a few hours.

“They do understand that you have a life outside of the office,” she said. •

— L. Kasimu Harris



Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group team members Lewis Smith, Joshua McKnight, Haley Buhr, Tyrone Clofer and Executive Chef Chris Montero raise a glass at Café B on Metairie Road.

SIX-TIME HONOREE

Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group

It's pretty common for people who were born and raised in New Orleans to have spent time working in a restaurant or know someone who has. The industry is full of lucrative jobs but oftentimes falls short when it comes to benefits such as health insurance, 401(k), bonuses and a fitness program.

The Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group goes against the latter part of that culture.

"We're in the business of making people happy, which is so exciting," said owner Ralph Brennan. "That's two-fold: our customers and the way we treat our staff (who) we try

to treat with respect and dignity."

Rebecca Schneider has been with the Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group for 13 years, starting as a server at Red Fish Grill before moving to her current positions of server, trainer and party captain at Ralph's on the Park.

"They are one of the few restaurants that offer benefits," Schneider said. "Paid vacation, health benefits, taking personal leave — they are very understanding."

Schneider said she loves where she works for many reasons, not least of which is working for such a well-known family.

"For me, it's a sense of pride. (The company) has a lot of stature and reputation," Schneider said. "I always feel proud to say where I work."

Nunzio Marchiafava has been with the company since March, working as a server and catering captain at Heritage Grill in Metairie, though he's no stranger to the Brennan family, having previously worked at Mr. B's, and, before that, in the kitchen at Arnaud's.

"It seems like I haven't gone a year-and-half without working in some restaurant," Marchiafava said, laughing. "The benefits (at RBRG) are great, more than any other."

Marchiafava cites the health insurance and benefits,

which are available after 12 months of employment, and the paid vacation days that are available after one year. But the tangible perks are not at the top of his list. That's reserved for his coworkers.

"I work with some very talented people. They have real passion for what they do, and it makes the environment really positive," Marchiafava said.

As a single father, the easy environment Brennan encourages — whether it is flexibility in scheduling or the ease of approaching executive management — makes Marchiafava's life less stressful.

"If I have to pick up my kid after work, I've been able to do that which has helped me tremendously," he said. "Everyone's approachable, all the way up to the administration."

As another benefit, Brennan said he will dole out 27 tenure bonuses this year to employees who have been with the company for five or more years. Eight of those bonuses will be for employees who have been with the company 10 years or longer.

The company also offers employees a free membership to the Downtown Fitness Center and 50 percent off at all Ralph Brennan properties. •

— Jaime Guillet

Nature of business: dining

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 342

Average starting salary: \$51,000

Median salary: \$47,000

Average time of employment: three years

Health care benefits: 70 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: three months after hire

Other perks: Flexible hours, employee recognition program, fitness program, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 15 days

Website: www.neworleans-food.com



From left: Randa employees Milton Bhjnaudh, Phang Vu, Quy Nguyen and Cindy Dufresne show off some of the accessories the company produces.

TWO-TIME HONOREE

Randa Accessories

When the New Orleans Saints won the Super Bowl, Wanda Andrews designed a one-of-a-kind shirt: white with a black collar and cuffs, accented with a drawing of the Saints making a field goal and a picture of a Saints ring. She put Reggie Bush's number on the back.

"It was so creative it got me first prize," said Andrews, who pocketed \$50 for her creativity as Randa Accessories' spirit shirt design winner. Andrews' second-place finish this year in the Halloween T-shirt competition garnered her another \$30.

"It's the little things that count," said Andrews, a distribution center associate who began at Randa Accessories 30 years ago and plans to stay until retirement.

Other employee recognition perks include an annual \$1,000 Christmas drawing, \$25 birthday checks and \$5 on-the-spot performance awards.

"Managers have \$5 gift cards they carry around and if they see an associate doing something extra, they recognize them on the spot and give them a \$5 gift card," said Randy Kennedy, senior vice president of corporate relations.

Perfect attendance earns associates \$5 a month, with accumulated winnings given in annual gift cards.

The company also gives performance bonuses depending on how its production compares to the employee average. Salaried employees receive annual bonuses, and every

employee receives a turkey at Thanksgiving and a ham for Christmas.

Kennedy began working at Randa 26 years ago sweeping floors. Even then, he said, he had a desire to rise to the executive ranks, so he attended night school to earn his bachelor's degree in general business.

At the time, Kennedy worked for Wembley Neckties, which Randa acquired in 1997.

"Everybody was helpful. If you prove yourself, you are able to move up," he said. "It's not a mystery of what needs to

be accomplished. We move people up from within."

To help employees move up, the company has implemented the Randa University Training Program to allow associates from out-of-state offices to train in the New Orleans area. It also provides up to \$2,500 a year in tuition assistance for continuing education.

Kennedy appreciates the family day company picnic, as it includes employees at all levels and retirees from a decade past, many of whom nurtured Kennedy as he rose through the ranks.

Jim Gore, senior materials management manager, chose Randa for an opportunity to stay close to home and family, leaving a job that kept him on the road.

"They know that each of our employees has family, and they know that the family is important to the employee," Gore said.

One perk Gore and others enjoy is the employee sale held a few times each year. Employees and their families can buy Randa products at discounted prices, snagging such accessories as \$45 belts for as little as \$3.

"Anybody that goes shopping at the sale has a chance to save," Andrews said. "You don't have to go to the store to get (the deal)."

— Diana Chandler

Nature of business: lifestyle accessories

Where based: St. Rose

Employees: 247

Average starting salary: \$9 per hour; \$40,000 for management

Median salary: \$11 per hour; \$55,000 for management

Average time of employment: 12 years

Health care benefits: 90 percent covered; unmarried partner benefits; dental and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Other perks: continuing education program, relocations assistance, paid mileage, employee recognition program, employee assistance program

Paid days off: 19 and a half days

Website: www.randa.net



From left: ReadSoft employees Jay St. Marie, Robby Melancon, Susan Brantmeyer, Kelly Spear, Jourdan McCullough and Dawn Barnett cut the company cake during the office Halloween party.

FIVE-TIME HONOREE

ReadSoft

ReadSoft is not what most people would normally think a software and technology development company would be.

Bob Fresneda, president and CEO of Metairie-based ReadSoft North America, said it's not about being typical or simple but about success and motivating employees to achieve it.

"It's a positive work environment here," said Annie Schrenk, director of Systems, Applications and Products business development at ReadSoft. "I've only been here a year so far, and there's already talk of my moving up through the company."

Dan Andersson, vice president of professional services,

Nature of business: software development

Where based: Metairie

Employees: 67 in North America; 500 firmwide

Average starting salary: \$70,000

Median salary: \$86,000

Average time of employment: more than five years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, fitness program, on-site gym

Paid days off: 35 days

Website: www.readsoft.com

said employees have a lot of flexibility in their schedules and how they work. He cited the company's medical and dental plan, which provides 100 percent coverage for employees and their family so they don't even have a co-pay or deductible.

"This allows us to focus," he said. "I have a wife and kids and it's great to not have to worry about medical bills so you can focus on work and family."

Outside of tangible benefits, employees are taken on corporate outings to exotic destinations. In January ReadSoft held a companywide conference in Athens and members of the ReadSoft New Orleans team were flown there for an all-expenses paid, three-day conference celebrating the company's anniversary. In August, employees were taken to Orange Beach, Ala.

The company is currently planning a cruise to Cozumel, Mexico, in 2012.

"We take trips around the world," Schrenk said. "And I think it speaks volumes to how highly the company values us as employees."

Fresneda, however, sees the trips as a part of building success within employees and for the corporation as a whole.

"I don't see it as a perk," Fresneda said. "I just want to make sure my team is successful, and sometimes it involves taking them out of the same setting they're usually in and

getting them out of the office. ... But it's not a perk. The trips are more like a reward for hard work and success."

Some of the amenities at ReadSoft include fresh fruit in the company's kitchen, which can double as a media conference center and game room, and the office's fitness center, where employees are encouraged to clock hours that can translate to bonuses and prizes.

"I want them to make a good living and live healthy," Fresneda said.

Another benefit of the company's global presence is a free-of-charge house-swapping program, where employees can swap homes with other ReadSoft employees anywhere in the world from Sydney to Stockholm, Sweden, for vacations.

"There's a lot of camaraderie here," said Dawn Barnett, who works in accounts payable. "The benefits are great, the pay is great and the environment is excellent. I don't know anyone who works at a place like this."

Fresneda is also looking to the future of ReadSoft by offering a paid college internship to employees' children.

"This helps us get ready the next wave of employees ... the next generation, and what better place to start than right here?" he said. •

— Kyle Jackson



From left: The Receivables Exchange employees Robert Piper, Michael Thriffley, Cuyler Stone and Jesse Henry.

TWO-TIME HONOREE

The Receivables Exchange

Vivian Jackson is the first to admit she works in a fast-paced, challenging environment.

“We are not only responsible for the accuracy of the transfer, but the accuracy of every report,” said Jackson, who signed on with the company in the fall of 2009 as a trade services associate with The Receivables Exchange, an online marketplace for the real-time trading of accounts receivable. “It can be intense.”

But Jackson said she can air whatever concerns or suggestions she has about her job or department in weekly meetings that are designed, she said, to be a part of the overall learning environment.

“The lines of communication are open,” she said. “In our meetings, if someone feels that they have an idea that might make things work better, the company is always open to their suggestions.”

In the past year, the company has started quarterly town hall meetings to improve communications and hosts lunches and dinners with the CEO so small groups of employees can share their thoughts.

Brian Laiche, senior director and head of recovery and

default management at The Receivables Exchange, is similarly impressed.

“We have a group of senior managers who get together in an informal meeting setting a minimum of once a month to have an open forum to talk about how things can be improved,” he said. “It doesn’t matter if it’s something on the sales or marketing side, operations, or how our telephone system works. It’s a totally open forum.”

Nature of business: financial exchange
Where based: New Orleans
Employees: 70
Average starting salary: \$45,000
Median salary: \$60,000
Average time of employment: two years
Health care benefits: 100 percent; unmarried partner benefits and dental, vision and prescription plans
Wait time for benefits: none
Other perks: relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, on-site gym
Paid days off: 27 days
Website: www.receivablesxchange.com

President and co-founder Nic Perkin said he has tried hard to nurture what he calls a “culture of collaboration” from the moment the company was incorporated in the spring of 2007.

“At the end of the day this is work, so it is not always fun or easy, and building a business like ours is distinctly difficult,” he said. “But by creating a collaborative and cooperative environment where every person ... is encouraged to think about things in an innovative way and contribute to the culture of innovation that we have.”

And to recognize employees for that hard work, staff members are allowed to wear jeans and flip flops most days, in addition to a monthly rewards program that comes with free parking and two weeks paid leave for any employee who goes on their honeymoon.

“It’s just exciting to be a part of a young company and watch it grow,” Jackson said. The company has grown from nearly six people when it started in 2007 to 75 now.

“When we reach a milestone, we are all a part of it, and you really feel that we are helping to change the shape of New Orleans,” he said. •

— Garry Boulard



St. Tammany Parish Hospital Chief Operating Officer Sharon Toups, left, Board of Commissioners member Pizzie Romano and CEO Patti Elish lead staff members in a second line through the hospital.

SEVEN-TIME HONOREE

St. Tammany Parish Hospital

Employees give St. Tammany Parish Hospital high marks for its collegial atmosphere, staff appreciation, and health and family benefits.

Job satisfaction means a lot to oncology nurse Susie Stoulig, who went to nursing school at the age of 50 and graduated five years ago.

"I came to St. Tammany a year and a half ago from a much larger hospital in Baton Rouge," said Stoulig, who works in the infusion unit administering chemotherapy. "The difference

here is that when you walk down the hall, nearly everyone, including the administrators, knows your name and says hello."

Through the hospital she participates in volunteer events such as the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure and helps to raise awareness for breast and ovarian cancer. Stoulig appreciates the hospital's inclusion of family members in many of its employee functions.

Michelle Fell, a 15-year veteran who manages the physical therapy department, said she likes that the hospital makes patients and customer service its top priority, while also providing cutting-edge care. Those two attributes go hand-in-hand, as patients are sent a survey about their care, which translates into bonuses for employees based on the scores.

The hospital also has a Caught in the Act program in which anyone — patients, visitors, volunteers and physicians — who observes an employee doing a good deed can report it, and the staff member is commended.

Similar recognition systems include the Ambassadors Program, which singles out employees who personify service standards, and Above and Beyond cards, which recognizes staff members for doing more than their everyday responsibilities.

"We have lots of celebrations of milestones and events, and like to give recognition to individuals," said Chief Operating Officer Sharon Toups.

That includes a dinner every fall for employees who are celebrating another five years with the hospital. Those who are marking 10 years or more are invited to an off-site evening event, while employees celebrating five years are treated to a luncheon event at the hospital.

The hospital also has monthly birthday luncheons, where employees with a birthday in that month are invited to a steak and cake lunch with the president, and socials throughout the years include smoothies, pastries, ice cream, root beer floats, sno-balls and other treats to thank employees for quarterly patient satisfaction results.

Management also hosts an annual incentive payout day, where employees receive bonuses based on patient survey result scores and the hospital meeting its goals.

Toups also likes the hospital's retirement plan, which places funds equal to 6 percent of an employee's pay into a 401(a) retirement plan. Employees are vested after five years. •

— Susan Buchanan

Nature of business: health care
Where based: Covington
Employees: 1,299
Average starting salary: \$57,158
Median salary: \$60,174

Average time of employment: seven years
Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans
Wait time for benefits: first of the month after hire

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program, on-site gym, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 45 days
Website: stph.org



Photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Superior Energy Services accounts payable representative Vicki Roberts hugs Zephyrs mascot Boudreaux during a company lunch.

SIX-TIME HONOREE

Superior Energy Services

Superior Energy Services employs more than 6,500 workers worldwide and, like other large corporations, offers a 401(k) plan, health care benefits, maternity leave, sick days and vacation days.

But Superior also offers something that's not in the new hire packet: a great family atmosphere.

"The company sponsors a lot of events that employees benefit from," said Brady Bordelon, an executive receptionist for the past three years.

As a sponsor of Celebration in the Oaks, employees receive free tickets to the event as well as any activity held at

Nature of business: oilfield services

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 1,600

Average starting salary: \$54,000

Median salary: \$68,000

Average time of employment: eight years

Health care benefits: 98 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none for tier one employees; 30-60 days for tier 2

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program

Paid days off: 37 days

Website: www.superiorenergy.com

the New Orleans Museum of Art. Superior also rents a private patio with food and drink for employees and their families at two Zephyrs games each year.

The company also offers voluntary programs such as 10 in 10, which helps employees lose 10 pounds in 10 weeks, as well as a smoking cessation assistance.

Both programs are part of Superior's 10-part well-being plan that also includes a nutrition program, stress management, diabetes support, self-help for depression and sleep improvement.

Giving employees the opportunity to grow within the company is also at the forefront.

Bordelon will be promoted to the marketing department in January where she will be responsible for internal communications and website content. She has spent the past three years at the University of New Orleans working on her MBA, which she received in August.

"They allowed me to work while I was going to school," Bordelon said. "Managers gave me advice while I was taking classes, and they didn't mind my books being out while I was working to better myself. I feel at home here. There's a team spirit here and everyone pulls together."

That growth is one of Superior's goals, Senior Executive

Vice President Pat Bernard said.

"I've watched employees blossom and grow beyond their positions and take on more challenging roles. And we need to give them room to blossom," Bernard said. "We're just a large corporation that tries to run itself like a family-owned, private business. We just put people first."

That includes giving employees an 8 percent monthly discount on AT&T services, free nutritious meals each week as part of the Just for Fun Monday Lunches and paying entry fees for the Crescent City Classic and YMCA Corporate Cup run for employees and their families.

The Superior Champions club also recognizes six employees annually with \$1,000, a trip for two, special parking and special recognition at an annual banquet hosted by CEO David Dunlap.

Joe Parks, corporate HSE lead compliance auditor, said it's the company's sense of community that makes Superior a great place to work. Managers, executives and even the CEO converse with employees on a first-name basis, he said.

"It means a lot to see a guy, an executive, having a genuine conversation with people who work for them," Parks said. "That means a lot. It means they're listening."•

— Kyle Jackson



Taste Buds Management employees, seated from left, Mary Neal, Gerald Ulmer, Courtney Bivalacqua, Kevin Hoda and Jaime Usey, and, standing, Chris Rodrigue, Keyana Thornton, Paul Hutson, Jen Noble, Fredric Woods show off some of the restaurant company's products.

THREE-TIME HONOREE

Taste Buds Management

Mary Neal is married with two children and in four years has moved up the ranks to service manager with Taste Buds Management without compromising her family life.

"They care; it goes beyond what happens at work everyday," Neal said. "And management, all the way up to our CEO, genuinely cares about everyone."

When her mother died, Neal immediately returned to work. She said her general manager approached her and was trying to figure out why she was still at work before telling Neal to take a week off.

"You're crunching the numbers all day long, you're doing everything you need to do, but at the end of the day you're still treated as a person — not just an employee," she said.

Last year, a dishwasher's apartment went up in flames two weeks before Christmas and he and his family lost everything.

"Everyone chipped in, from hourly employees all the way up to management," Neal said.

One of the company's values is to seek first to understand.

"We don't just assume somebody is not doing something because they don't want to put forth the effort," Neal said.

Darryl Askins, a manager in training who was hired in

October, said he discussed business philosophy and benefits during his second interview with Paul Hudson, vice president of operations.

"When we got down to salary, (Hudson) said when making a decision it should never be about money, it should be about your work environment and what you believe in," Askins said.

Askins said compensation was obviously important, but what Hudson said gave him a level of comfort with the people he'd be working with.

Although he had worked in the food service industry for

Nature of business: restaurant management

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 857

Average starting salary: \$9.62 per hour; \$45,000 for management

Median salary: \$20,280 for hourly; \$52,724 for management

Average time of employment: 13 months for hourly; four years for management

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: 90 days for hourly; 30 days for management

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 18 days

Website: www.zearestaurants.com

25 years, that was the first time someone stressed the importance of a work environment.

"Everyday I come to work, I'm happy," he said. "It's all because of the culture and atmosphere of the job, which is fulfilling."

Chris Rodrigue, CEO of Taste Buds, said it's very challenging to attract and keep good employees. In an industry that is known for high turnover, Taste Buds has a 50 percent rate.

"Our philosophy is take care of the people that take care of the customers and the rest of the business issues generally take care of themselves," he said.

While the company doesn't provide tuition assistance for college courses, it does spend money for continuing education and industry seminars, having shelled out \$7,000 this year alone.

All management-level employees also are part of an incentive program.

Meanwhile, all employees are eligible for a new bonus program if they can help the company save money. For any cost savings idea that results in a successful change, the employee would be paid 10 percent of the savings the first year and 5 percent the second year. •

— L. Kasimu Harris

NINE-TIME HONOREE

Zehnder Communications

There aren't many advertising agencies that host scavenger hunts in limousines, allow dogs in the office and provide beer for employees on Friday afternoons.

But Zehnder Communications does.

Based in New Orleans with offices in Baton Rouge and Nashville, Tenn., the agency opened in 1996. While it's grown over the years, founder Jeff Zehnder said it's all about cultivating smart and creative people and keeping them happy to deliver results.

"Life's too short to be unhappy," Zehnder said. "When I started this company, I knew I wanted to create an environment that I would want to be in."

Part of that environment includes the VAN policy, or vacation-as-needed, which means employees have unlimited time off.

"If they need to take off to recharge their batteries, then they can do that," Zehnder said. "The last thing I want is them to burn out."

Joann Habisreitinger, vice president of media services, said it's the little things job managers do for employees that make the agency a great place to work.

"Jeff will ask what employees want or need around the office," she said. "He'll listen to their concerns. Any little thing you need they'll get it to make you happy and more productive. Whereas some jobs have big banquets every year honoring employees and then it's back to the same grind until next year, here it's the little touches that happen every day."

On one occasion, employees were asked to email suggestions for what they wanted to see in the office, Habisreitinger said.

"No one complained about more pay or an office with a window," she said. "You'd be surprised, but people just wanted new chairs. And not simple chairs. Nice

Nature of business: public relations and advertising

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 40

Average starting salary: \$43,333

Median salary: \$42,065

Average time of employment: more than five years

Health care benefits: 50 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: 90 days

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program

Paid days off: no set limits

Website: www.z-comm.com

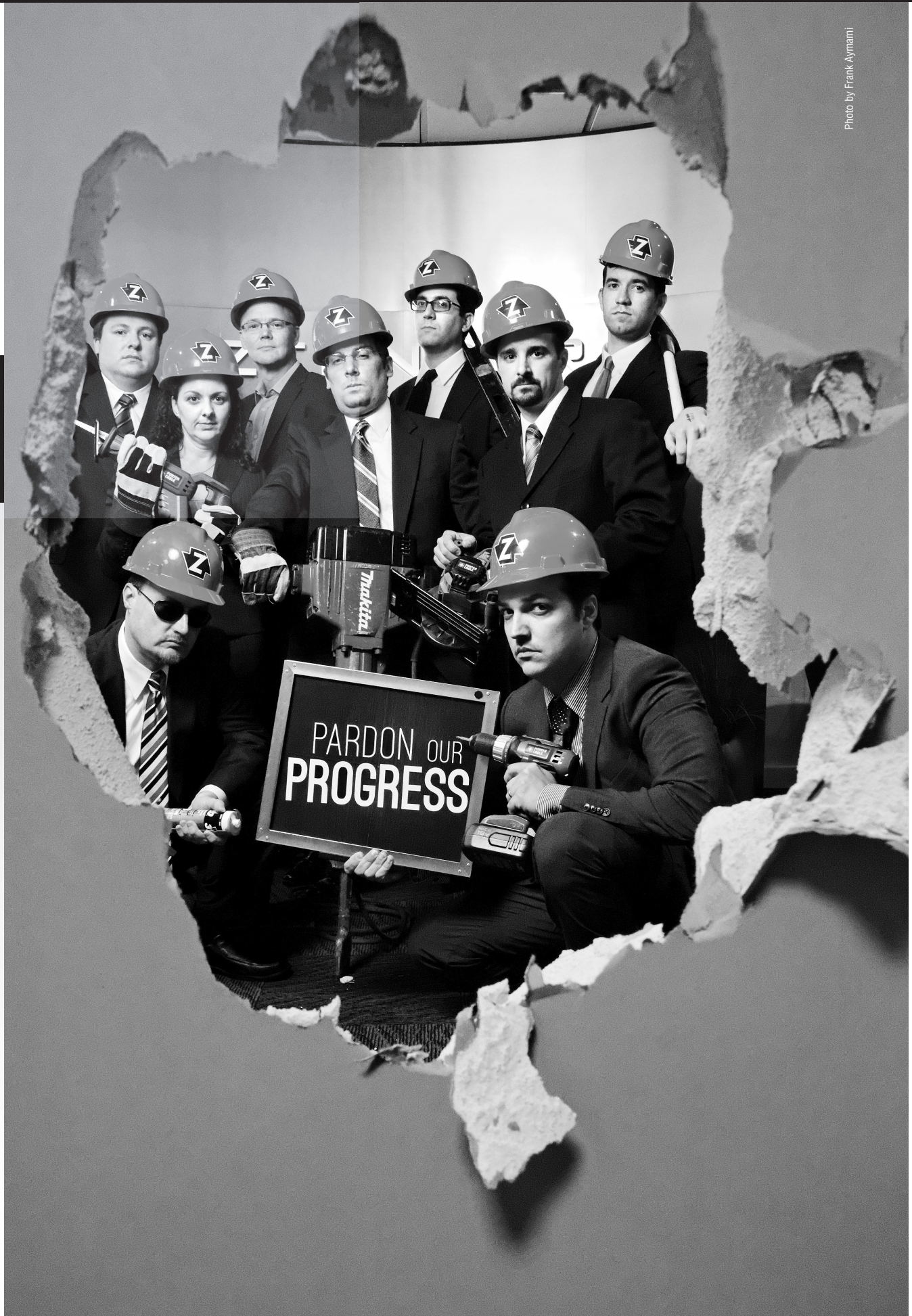


Photo by Frank Aymant

Clockwise from lower left: Zehnder Communications employees Michael Rainey, Dave Maher, Joann Habisreitinger, Jeffrey Zehnder, Craig Shultz, William Gilbert, Shea Duet, Blake Killian and Rob Hudak have a little fun office renovations.

chairs. And Jeff went out and bought new chairs for people who wanted them.”

Habisreitinger pointed out a situation where two employees shared an office in the building and complained to Zehnder that they couldn’t work productively because of the noise each one created. She said Zehnder soon had a construction crew in the office to build a wall to create two offices to help improve their productivity.

“It’s a caring environment here,” Project Manager Craig Shultz said. “We do the best we can and when you know you’re being listened to it makes you want to work harder.”

Free Beer Fridays are a hallmark at Zehnder, allowing employees to grab a beer around 3:30 p.m. and mingle with each other before getting back to work.

“It’s a good way to unwind, but we don’t take advantage of it,” Habisreitinger said. “We don’t have anyone here who just keeps knocking them back.”

Dogs are allowed at two of the three Zehnder offices, but not the New Orleans location, which is in a high-rise building in the Central Business District. It’s an issue Zehnder said he is petitioning to change.

“It creates a family kind of feel when you hear the pitter-patter of little dog paws on the floor while you’re working,” Zehnder said. “It relaxes you when you feel a little dog’s head against your leg while you work.”

In addition to employee retreats to strategize about the future and have fun, the firm also has a 1980s-themed Christmas party complete with an employee band of musicians and karaoke, a scavenger hunt throughout the city in limousines and a spa day in the office with free massages.

“The truth is we ... have to take our work seriously, but we can’t take ourselves too seriously,” Zehnder said. “You can work hard, but you don’t have to work hard all the time or you’ll damper that creativity.”

— Kyle Jackson



Above: Art Directors Shea Duet, left, and William Gilbert, imitate a scene from the movie “Office Space” on the company’s printer.

Right: From left: Employees Joann Habisreitinger, Rob Hudak, Craig Shultz and Dave Maher.

Below: From left: Employees Jerilyn Frazier, Alexis Preis, Jesse Reilly, Allison Stiel and Courtney Harper share drinks during Zehnder’s “Free Beer Friday” routine.





Ericksen, Krentel & LaPorte employees show their Saints spirit on the streetcar tracks in front of their Canal Street office.

TWO-TIME HONOREE

Ericksen, Krentel & LaPorte

Senior accountant Andrew Berkheimer's first day at Ericksen, Krentel and LaPorte was unique, coinciding with the firm's annual employee appreciation day, which took place this year at Shamrock, an adult indoor playground with games including pool, ping pong, darts and foosball.

"I said, 'I can get used to this,'" said Berkheimer, who started in September. "It definitely made it easier in a casual and relaxed setting to meet all my coworkers and the partners that way for the first time."

Employee appreciation day is one of several events Ericksen, Krentel and LaPorte holds throughout the year for its employees. Other outings include an annual crawfish boil on Tax Day with employees also getting the next day off.

Staff members are also treated to a Zephyrs Night Out for families and regular ticket drawings for Saints and Hornets games, a family picnic at Lafreniere Park and holiday gatherings.

This year's Christmas party is for employees and their spouses at Pat O'Brien's.

"We realize that our employees have a life outside of their work, so we accommodate them in many ways to make them feel rewarded, happy in their job and proud of what they're doing for our company and our clients," said partner Ronnie Dawson, who started in 1981 as a senior accountant and is one of four partners who have been with

the firm for more than 25 years.

The firm provides continuing professional education, pays for CPA exam review courses and finances out-of-town CPE seminars if needed.

"We give them the tools to learn everything and we're constantly encouraging professional development within their job," Dawson said.

Accountants are allowed to arrive at work anywhere between 6:30 a.m. and 9 a.m. and leave anytime between 3:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m., as long as they log eight hours for the day.

When employees work overtime, such as during tax season, they can choose to turn the overtime into vacation

Nature of business: accounting

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 31

Average starting salary: \$23,000 for clerical staff; \$42,000 for professional staff

Median salary: \$35,000 for clerical staff; \$58,000 for professional staff

Average time of employment: eight years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 25 days

Website: www.ericksenkrentel.com

hours or get paid for it.

Ericksen has an employee liaison committee that meets quarterly to discuss employee needs and wants. This year, management changed its insurance plan by decreasing its employee deductibles by \$600. The firm also set up a health care savings account for each employee and contributes up to \$700, when needed, for out-of-pocket medical expenses.

Ericksen uses a Client Relations and Bonus System, CRABS for short, that provides incentives based on new business, community and civic involvement, writing an article in the firm newsletter or an outside publication, attending a seminar, participating in a sporting activity or sending firm brochures and personal notes to people or businesses of interest.

Kelly Cantwell, an audit supervisor who has been with the firm since 2008, earned CRABS points earlier this year when she conducted a financial literacy day at the Louisiana Children's Museum and taught with Junior Achievement at a local elementary school.

"It shows they want their employees giving back to the community, and they reward us for giving back, which they don't have to do," Cantwell said. "They always recognize the little things, and that makes you feel important."•

—Tommy Santora

Blitch Knevel Architects

William Keeley says one of the things he most enjoys about working at Blitch Knevel is the daily relaxed working relationships between the firm's principals and support staff.

"This is an office where people take the time to get to know you and even have a little fun and down time together," said Keeley, who is a staff architect. "And I just think that's the sort of thing that makes for a much more enjoyable and productive work place."

That free-flowing environment isn't an accident.

"We decided some time ago that what we wanted to do the most was enjoy our work here, have fun and revel in our success," said partner Ron Blitch.

Blitch and partner Ken Knevel came to that conclusion after reviewing findings from consultants who told them there was no reason why the successful workplace couldn't also be a happy one.

That's when the firm created a mission and values team composed of both long-standing and newer employees who adopted the phrase "listen, design and delight" as their mantra.

"We do designs that are fun and don't take ourselves too seriously," Blitch said.

Not taking things too seriously means employees are constantly talking to each other, meeting for Greek, Japanese and Italian-themed lunches and after-hours matches at Rock 'N' Bowl.

That team spirit also applies to how the firm works.

Nature of business: architecture

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 21

Average starting salary: \$45,268 for intern architects; \$34,754 for administrative

Median salary: \$96,118 for project architects; \$48,938 for administrative

Average time of employment: 13 years

Health care benefits: 80 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: first of the month after hire

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 25 days

Website: www.blitchknevel.com



Clockwise from left: Blitch Knevel Architects employees Ken Knevel, Bill Keeley, Shannon LeBlanc, Eileen Dooley, Lindsay Allen, Ron Blitch, H.V. Nagendra, Sarah Gonzales and Steve Templet.

"It's collaborative," said associate and project manager Steve Templet. "We realized a long time ago that every person who works here is different, and by recognizing that it has allowed us to let people do the kind of work they like to do the most. If people are allowed to do their best jobs, they are more than likely going to be happy, and that very much positively affects the work itself."

The firm's investment in its employees is also evident in the size of its staff, which remains steady in both good

times and not so good times, and the average length of employment, which is 13 years.

"Other firms will bring in a bunch of people for a particular project and then once that project is finished, let them go," Keeley said. "That is not the style here at all."

Blitch said he'd rather the firm be lean and efficient and have people work more hours than to hire even one additional person and have to let them go.

— Garry Boulard



Photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Beau Button leads Archon Information employees, from left, Chris Lynch, Alex Dragoset, Chad Lee, Tony DeFelice and Marcel Mata, in a training session.

Archon Information Systems

There's nothing sexy about Archon Information Systems, a software development company that helps city governments with online property tax auctions and delinquent tax collections.

But Emily Coia, marketing manager, said the company's allure for job seekers is "the young and fresh entrepreneurial environment that is revolutionizing what Louisiana governments can do through software and technology."

Coia should know. To become part of a rapidly growing young company is what swayed the marketing professional this past July to switch from the restaurant indus-

try to software development.

"It's the constant growth that excites me, and contributing to a company that is continually developing new and improved software to improve the way our governments function makes it fun and challenging," Coia said.

Archon has added 36 employees since its founding in 2008 by New Orleans natives Bryan Barrios, Beau Button and William Sossamon.

To promote team building and efficiency, the company has a Bug Bounty program, which provides bonuses to employees for reporting typos, bugs or broken links.

"This enables employees to navigate through the company's software and become more familiar with the platforms," operations director Ingrid Abud said.

Kudos awards or bonuses are given at quarterly meetings for exemplary work. There also is a "Call Center Agent of the Month" award with bonuses given to employees who meet certain goals and a "Weekly Call Center Competition" that comes with two \$50 gift cards for standout performances.

Archon provides its software developers with annual upgrades of their dual 24-inch monitor workstations, and they can order supplies as needed, such as books and software.

There is a 55-inch flat panel screen for presentations and

teleconferences, and a development room with three of the four walls covered in white boards where employees can write notes and plans.

"We have the latest equipment always available to us. You tell them what you need for your job and you often get it to do your job better," said Marcel Mata, a software developer who started in 2008. "We have a creative freedom available to us."

Employee social events include a cocktail hour after staff meetings, holiday parties, Zephyrs games, employee outings at Rock 'N' Bowl and an annual post-tax season lunch and day in the French Quarter.

In the community, Archon donates computers and equipment to local schools and charities, and pays for its employees to participate in various community fundraisers.

Abud participated in the Nike Half-Marathon for Women this October in San Francisco, which benefited the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

"You don't realize the impact you have on other people's lives until you do an event like that," Abud said. "I was grateful to Archon for helping me do that fundraiser, and they're always encouraging us to do things within the community and give back." •

— Tommy Santora

Nature of business: software development

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 39

Average starting salary: \$25,826 for hourly; \$59,486 for salaried

Median salary: \$24,960 for hourly; \$65,000 for salaried

Average time of employment: one year

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: 30 days

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, on-site gym

Paid days off: 19 days; 24 days after five years

Website: www.archoninfosys.com



Deveney Communication employees Dawn Emery, Laura Fidelman and Taylor Finchum race to the “prize” during boot camp with the help of, from left, Van Gallinhouse, John Deveney and Chris Costello as Jesse Delerno, Ellie Rand, Rachel Bosworth, Ashley Dwyer and Giselle Caamano cheer them on.

SIX-TIME HONOREE

Deveney Communication

When Ellie Rand decided to sign on as an account supervisor with Deveney Communication, the public relations firm John Deveney started in 1996, she came with a resume that included running her own business.

In addition to knowing Deveney’s work ethic, Rand was also immediately taken with the atmosphere inside the renovated one-time apartment complex that serves as

Nature of business: communications firm

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 10

Average starting salary: \$46,000

Median salary: \$75,000

Average time of employment: five years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 11 days

Website: www.deveney.com

the firm’s home in the Marigny.

“It is very entrepreneurial,” she said. “The hallmark of a successful agency and place to work is one where the employees — the account executives — are not only encouraged to think creatively and develop plans and approaches to the challenges and problems of the client, but are also given the freedom to act creatively.”

And that’s what it’s like to work at Deveney, Rand said.

Senior Vice President Van Gallinhouse agrees.

“We all know what the expectations for us are here,” he said. “John doesn’t micromanage us. He gives us the opportunity to grow within the organization and allows us to express ourselves in ways that other firms or organizations might not.”

The firm’s emphasis on fostering an open environment for communication and creativity is further bolstered by the open-air feel of the renovated building.

“It never even crossed my mind of saying no, in terms of not working here,” said Ashley Dwyer, who started out as an intern at Deveney before becoming an

account coordinator. “I could tell even from my first days here as an intern that this is a place where people are very pro-active about fostering new ideas, and that is incredibly important in an industry where things are constantly changing.”

Staff life at Deveney Communication also is enhanced by a recently developed corporate wellness program that offers one-on-one consultations, exercise sessions and nutritional advice. Part of the program had employees submitting their favorite lunch plates to be examined for healthy alternatives.

Another part includes meeting with a trainer for an hourlong after-hours workout on Tuesdays and Thursdays and on Saturday mornings.

And in addition to not putting a limit on the number of sick and vacation days an employee can use each year, Deveney thanks employees who mark 10 years of service with four weeks of paid vacation to spend on their personal “trip of a lifetime.”•

— Garry Boulard



Photo by Frank Aymann

“Judge” Patrick Callahan listens to testimony from “witness” Alex Gonzalez in Gauthier Houghtaling Williams’ conference room. The “jury” consists of employees, sitting from left, Jamie Bairnsfather, Melissa Pierce and Pam Cotton, and, standing, Jennifer Catalano, Laura Rodrigue and Kim Breaux.

THREE-TIME HONOREE

Gauthier Houghtaling Williams

Employees at Gauthier, Houghtaling and Williams law firm say the Metairie firm is nothing like the stuffy law offices of yesteryear.

“This is a laid-back, relaxed but very professional office, where people go to great lengths to explain things to coworkers if necessary,” legal assistant Kim Breaux said. “It isn’t one of those law firms where attorneys yell and scream.”

Breaux has been with the firm for the past two years of her 27-year career and considers it the best firm she has ever worked for.

The staff is encouraged to balance work with family life, which is evident in the 44 paid days off each year.

“If you have a personal or family problem, that comes first here,” Breaux said.

Legal assistant Pam Cotton said things get hectic preparing for trials and meditations, but teamwork helps alleviate the pressure.

“That’s part of the fun of it all,” said Cotton, who has been with the law firm for 21 years. “It’s a very caring firm and because of that, I couldn’t think of any place I’d rather be.”

The fun includes catered lunches upon employee request

when they are preparing for trials and daquiris on Friday.

“Everyone here works very hard and it can be intense, but the firm’s view is that staff are most effective when they’re relaxed,” said Chief Financial Officer Chuck Jouandot, who has spent 20 years with the firm.

Breaux said she enjoyed the LSU-Alabama tailgate party held the Friday before the November football game in the office kitchen. Jouandot said the firm has office parties before Saints games and casual-dress Friday, when employ-

ees wear team jerseys during football season.

All employees also are given two tickets each season to attend a Saints game at the firm’s suite in the Superdome.

On Administrative Professionals Day, all employees are taken out to lunch and then spend the rest of the day in the French Quarter.

The perks don’t stop there, with community service being a big incentive for employees.

“I like what we do for others on the outside, especially children,” Cotton said.

At last year’s holiday party, 25 children from the Good Shepherd School, which serves at-risk kids from low-income families, joined the festivities. Employees from the firm’s Houston office were flown to New Orleans for the party where the students received gifts from Santa Claus and plenty of attention.

“It was wonderful to see their happy faces,” Cotton said.

For the past two Christmases, employees have gone to Build-a-Bear Workshops, made teddy bears and taken them to children in hospitals, Cotton said. •

— Susan Buchanan

Nature of business: law firm
Where based: Metairie
Employees: 30
Average starting salary: \$47,000 for staff; \$250,000 for attorneys
Median salary: \$47,000 for staff; \$400,000 for attorneys
Average time of employment: 10 years
Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; prescription plan
Wait time for benefits: none
Other perks: continuing education program, day-care options, paid mileage, employee recognition program
Paid days off: 44 days
Website: www.ghwlegal.com



Hartwig Moss Insurance Agency employees celebrate the company's 140th anniversary during an office reception.

FIVE-TIME HONOREE

Hartwig Moss Insurance Agency

It may be surprising that in 2011 paid maternity leave remains largely absent from a company's benefits. Federal law requires only employers with 50 or more employees to provide up to 12 weeks leave unpaid.

Hartwig Moss Insurance Agency, a firm of 44 employees, didn't just settle for the bare bones minimum. The company provides two weeks paid leave for mothers who started working for the firm on or after January 2010.

Nature of business: insurance

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 44

Average starting salary: \$44,021 for staff; \$131,524 for producers

Median salary: \$43,869 for staff; \$104,130 for producers

Average time of employment: 10 years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: first of the month after hire

Other perks: continuing education program, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, employee recognition program, employee assistance program

Paid days off: 28 days

Website: www.hmia.com

Employees hired before then are grandfathered into the former policy of six weeks.

Although the company has downgraded its package for post-birth mothers, the benefit still leaves other companies in the dust, President Robby Moss said. He added that any business decision is made with consideration for how it will affect employees.

"If we consistently consider our staff, our customers, our insurance partners (when making decisions) that is only going to help us meet or exceed our goals as a business," Moss said.

To do that, Hartwig's leadership revisits its benefits packages annually.

Sabrina Boyles, an eight-year veteran with the firm who is now a claims supervisor, said the company is generous with its bonuses. She said the company gives employees an annual holiday bonus in January, another during Thanksgiving week and referral bonuses for new business.

The firm also provides a quarterly "3G" bonus, which stands for "gas, groceries and Good Friday," a reference to the inaugural bonus given several years ago. Boyles said that

bonus is meant to help with inflation and shows the dedication Hartwig Moss has for its employees.

"It's an actual check for around \$250, and it always seems to come around at a very handy time," Boyles said.

Bonuses, 100 percent coverage of health care benefits, a 3 percent 401(k) contribution and flexible scheduling are selling points, employees say, but the quality atmosphere also is a draw.

New employee Michel Gilberti said the firm exceeds in creating a place people want to go to every morning. Formerly self-employed in real estate and finance, Gilberti took some time gaining experience in the insurance industry before approaching Hartwig Moss.

"I'm as happy as I can be," Gilberti said. "Robby ... is more like a coworker than a boss. I haven't used my benefits all that much, but they seem to take very good care of their people. They're not all about the bottom line even though we're a business and out to make a profit. I definitely feel like growing old with this company."•

— Jaime Guillet

iSeatz

It's "Release Night" every three weeks in the iSeatz office as employees rush to meet the deadline of releasing new software and technology that will improve service to clients.

"You know it's going to be a late night and an early morning," said Dominique Saulet, software developer. "There is a real sense of urgency to meet all of our deadlines. It's a fast-paced intense atmosphere where everybody comes together, pays strict attention to detail and we get the software released. It's quite a rush."

And then employees can relax for a bit, maybe venture off into the iSeatz "Fun Zone." Amenities there include couches where employees get a game in on the Xbox on the 50-inch flat-screen television, or they can play the old tabletop Pac Man and Galaga arcade game.

They also have access to the massage chair, the makeshift, 15-foot long Crescent Bar and the company's pet crawfish named Fred.

"We have an office that lends itself to a creative, relaxing and open environment of working, learning and making it fun every day, and our employees know when to turn on and off the switch of work and play," iSeatz CEO and Founder Kenneth Purcell said.

Founded in 1999, iSeatz was launched on the premise of creating a technology platform to offer online restaurant reservations. By 2002, iSeatz expanded its technology to offer city tours, show and theme park tickets, hotel and car rentals, and airport shuttle services.

"We deal with a lot of well-known clients and suppliers nationwide, and the nature of our work sparked my interest to move from a company in Chicago with hundreds of employees to iSeatz with 40 employees," said Angela Craig, director of global supply partnerships for the past three years. "And it was the best career choice I ever made. I can have a hand in all different aspects of the business, and at the end of the day, when we do well as a company, I feel like

Nature of business: software development

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 35

Average starting salary: \$40,000

Median salary: \$74,000

Average time of employment: four years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: flexible hours, on-site gym

Paid days off: 32 days

Website: www.iseatz.com



iSeatz team members, kneeling from left, Kenneth Purcell, Sharky, Michelle Whitney and Colin Gagon, and, standing, Jason Diano, Rebecca Snook, Dominique Saulet and Starr Geary.

I made an impact to that success."

All employees with more than a year of service participate in a stock option plan, so they can benefit from the company's growth. Company financials are presented to employees during quarterly meetings.

There is a monthly "Special Events" afternoon to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, family events and welcome new employees. Every quarter, each department, including the executive team, takes a turn organizing a happy hour with food and drinks for the office. Employees also regularly convene at Capdeville, the bar downstairs from the office in the Intellectual Property Building in the Warehouse

District, and have access to the building's gym.

The office is also dog friendly and a lax dress code means employees can wear shorts.

In the community, iSeatz partners with Idea Village for New Orleans Entrepreneur Week and participates in the University of New Orleans' 3-Day Startup Program to help students create, incubate and launch their business ideas.

"We were founded on the same principles of entrepreneurship," Purcell said. "We're heavily involved in helping other people start their businesses and overcome the challenges associated with being successful."•

— Tommy Santora



Clockwise from bottom left: McDonnell Group employees Bill McDonnell and Deanna LaFrance play a reverse tug-of-war with Andy Rredmon and Tricia LaFleur on a concrete column at the St. Margaret's Daughters Home, which the firm is renovating.

The McDonnell Group

Allen McDonnell started his company with the philosophy that if someone comes to work for him at the 12-year-old McDonnell Group, it's because they genuinely enjoy the work they'll be doing.

McDonnell also knows that personal lives can become hectic and has taken steps to accommodate that, particularly around the beginning of August when the back-to-school rush has everyone rushing to the store for school supplies.

Nature of business: general contractor

Where based: Metairie

Employees: 45

Average starting salary: \$28,000 for hourly; \$68,000 for salaried

Median salary: \$38,000 for hourly; \$72,000 for salaried

Average time of employment: six years

Health care benefits: 90 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, employee recognition program, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 22 days

Website: www.mcdonnell.com

McDonnell said he was ordering supplies for the office when it hit him that many of the items were the same that employees' children needed. So he decided to make a bigger order and take that simple stress out of their lives.

Now, every employee with children in school gives the company their school supply list. They come in a few days later and pick up all the school supplies, compliments of the company.

That allows his employees to focus on the job they came there to do, he says.

"Most of the people here, at the end of the day, would have a pretty empty feeling if they just (screwed) around all day," McDonnell said. "You can spend 10 percent of the effort up front or 100 percent of the effort cleaning up."

John Manion, a project manager with McDonnell for 10 years, said doing each job correctly and fully is the company's top priority.

"Doing the right thing by the job is the company culture," Manion said. "You can look at the owner and say, 'Whatever happens, I'm gonna do what's right for this job.'"

Work hard and get rewarded is the philosophy at

McDonnell. Employees earn a paid day off per quarter if they have no absences or safety infractions during that period, and they can gain an additional day off if they go the whole year incident-free.

It doesn't hurt that the company also reaches out to a younger demographic. Andy Redmon, an estimator with the company for one year, said the company is more willing to accommodate their needs.

"They understand the younger generation a little better (than most construction companies)," Redmon said. "They make you feel right at home. It's not like they shun you."

The McDonnell Group hired a full-time marketing director this year who doesn't just focus on external communications but on things such as how to have more events that bring employees together, such as this year's Rock 'N' Bowl event. That event, in addition to a crawfish boil earlier in the year, was open to employees and their families.

McDonnell said the reason for all of this is simple.

"We all got a lot of respect for each other."•

— Travis Andrews



Mouledoux, Bland, Legrand & Brackett employees have fun role playing in a mock courtroom in One Shell Square. Pictured from bottom left are Renee Hymel, Beth Bernstein, Amy Cisneros, André Mouledoux and Alan Brackett.

Mouledoux, Bland, Legrand & Brackett

Peggy Van Matre is a 47-year veteran of the law industry. She started when manual typewriters ruled the office.

For the past decade, she has worked for Mouledoux, Bland, Legrand and Brackett and says the company stands miles above previous employers with regard to workplace environment.

No moment was clearer than earlier this year when tragedy struck Van Matre's family. After fighting a 10-year

battle with breast cancer, her daughter-in-law succumbed to the disease. Van Matre traveled to Atlanta to support her son and grieve the loss of his wife.

"The company was absolutely great," Van Matre said. "I didn't feel any pressure to hurry up and get back."

Van Matre said that's just one example of a prevalent atmosphere at the firm; one in which employees are trusted to get their work done and time is flexible.

"The company is very liberal with time," Van Matre said. "If you have a doctor's appointment, it's not like you have to take a vacation day. Some employees have children and they have to pick them up from school and the firm understands that, and this is not abused. You can go pick up your kid and no one is going to sneer about it."

Much of that is done on purpose, founding partner Alan Brackett said.

"We wanted to create a place where we wanted to go to work, where we didn't dread going into the office," Brackett said. "It was really important for us to create a culture of being good to each other. We don't have an 'us versus them' mentality."

Besides incorporating fun, inclusive events such as office competitions based on "Top Chef" and "American Idol," Brackett said the partners wanted to provide benefits that would take care of their employees. That includes 100 percent coverage on health care premiums, 29 days of paid personal time, merit-based bonuses and a 3 percent 401(k) gift regardless of the employee's contribution.

"We want to make sure we are giving everyone the opportunity to take care of themselves down the road," Brackett said.

Patrick Babin joined the firm after graduating from law school in 2008 and has never regretted the decision. Beyond the casual atmosphere and benefits, Babin said the firm's bonus program is helping him solidify his financial future.

"The bonus structure here is very lucrative, and the base salary is very competitive with other firms in the city," Babin said. "You can do very well if you're able to bring in clients. Loyalty is a big thing here and they make it so that there is an incentive to stay. It makes me think about staying here the rest of my life." •

— Jaime Guillet

Nature of business: law firm

Where based: New Orleans

Employees: 30

Average starting salary: \$38,000 for staff; \$80,000 for attorneys

Median salary: \$49,800 for staff; \$90,000 for attorneys

Average time of employment: 10 years

Health care benefits: 80 percent covered; dental and vision plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, telecommuting, flexible hours, employee assistance program

Paid days off: 29 days

Website: www.mblb.com



PMOLink employees watch Angela Nelson play a round of golf on the company's PlayStation 3 as Geoffrey Hingle points out tips.

EIGHT-TIME HONOREE

PMOLink

PMOLink employees often work at client sites for long stints but say the company has a cooperative spirit that helps them grow in their careers.

Project manager Angela Nelson, a nine-year PMO veteran, appreciates the firm's emphasis on professional development and training.

"We're reimbursed 100 percent for all work-related certifications, and they get the books for us," she said.

Nature of business: consulting

Where based: Mandeville

Employees: 18

Average starting salary: \$93,411

Median salary: \$105,525

Average time of employment: nearly four and a half years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, relocation assistance, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, job sharing, employee recognition program, employee assistance program, fitness program, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 36 days

Website: www.pmolink.com

Employees can receive up to \$1,500 for tuition assistance and a \$500 bonus for passing the Project Management Professional exam.

There's also a strong sense of trust and teamwork among management and employees.

"I was diagnosed with breast cancer last year, and no one in the company questioned whether I'd be able to do my job," said Courtney Rive, a senior consultant. "Everyone supported and helped me, and that gave me a special, protective aura."

During her stretch of chemotherapy, Rive worked at her job remotely while waiting to be treated.

"We have a great group of kind people and terrific benefits, which pulled me through my ordeal," she said.

As part of the firm's fitness program, employees and contractors are encouraged to walk 10,000 steps a day for a month with a company-issued pedometer. The company also offers a \$1,000 bonus for recruiting new employees, a \$1,000 Christmas bonus, monthly cell phone reimbursement, unlimited snacks, soft drinks and coffee at the office and quarterly lunches at Commander's Palace.

While the staff can oftentimes be scattered because of

site visits, they maintain close ties.

"But we have social activities where we relax, just enjoy being together and don't talk about project management," Rive said.

Some of those activities include an annual picnic, a crawfish boil and the annual holiday party. Employees also receive VIP passes for the N'Awlins Air Show in Belle Chasse. When they do talk about work during staff meetings, pizza and beer are on the menu.

Former U.S. Navy Cmdt. Don Roy, the company's vice president for resource management, develops government business and does recruiting and hiring.

"I feel empowered because I'm trusted to do my job, with my boss supporting me in every way needed," he said, adding that one of the perks of working at PMOLink is the office — the 200-year-old Justine Plantation on Lakeshore Drive in Mandeville.

The company offers online training, commuter benefits, a credit union affiliation, on-site showers, a college savings plan, marriage counseling, family leave, free legal advice, adoption assistance and bereavement leave. •

— Susan Buchanan



Photo by Frank Aymann

The Rose Garden owners Joey and Vita DiMaggio, seated, are surrounded by employees, from left, Harriet Lucas, Jody DiMaggio, Keith Biordelon, Mike Uli, Harvey Choina and Christi Vicknair.

The Rose Garden

In 1972, 23-year-old Vita DiMaggio threw a wedding reception with 400 guests for one of her cousins. Since then, she said, not a week has gone by that she hasn't thrown a party.

Thirty-nine years later it all has worked out for the 62-year-old DiMaggio and her husband, Joseph DiMaggio, 64, who run the family catering business at The Rose Garden, a reception facility in River Ridge that opened in 1995. The couple did off-site catering events from 1972-95 and have since added on-site catering for a range of events. Their son, Joey DiMaggio, has served as general manager since 1996.

Nature of business: reception hall

Where based: River Ridge

Employees: 28

Average starting salary: \$40,000

Median salary: \$80,000

Average time of employment: 15 years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; prescription plan

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, telecommuting, paid mileage, flexible hours, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 35 days

Website: www.therosegarden.com

"We're a three-person board," Vita DiMaggio said. "We treat people fairly, work with them, respect them, and, in turn, they respect you and give you their all."

The Rose Garden employs 25 part-time employees, including bartenders, dishwashers, servers and prep workers. In 15 years, Vita DiMaggio said she has only lost two bartenders, both because of the military. The prep worker has been there for 22 years and the function manager has been there for 15.

"There is almost no turnover because of the way the DiMaggios treat their employees; they're fair, honest and they train people enough for them to do their jobs without being micro-managed," said Kathy Lefebvre, a part-time bartender and manager for 13 years who also is a secretary at St. Edward the Confessor in Metairie. "If I had to work part time, I wouldn't work anywhere else. It's just the little things they do."

A couple of months ago, Lefebvre was on her way to work a bridal show with Vita DiMaggio when she got a flat tire. Vita took Lefebvre to the show, while Joe DiMaggio took Lefebvre's car to the shop. He got all new tires and surprised Lefebvre after the show.

"I feel like I'm a part of their family," she said. "They're

just good-hearted people."

Head bartender Kevin Manning felt that family aspect of the business when his mother passed away in 2004. The DiMaggios provided all the food for the get-together after the funeral. Manning has worked for the DiMaggios for nearly 20 years and said what makes the business so successful is "every event is so detailed and special."

"They always cater to the clients' needs, down to every detail, that the guests are enjoying themselves and the employees are enjoying themselves, and it's one big successful party every time out," Manning said. "That kind of feeling makes you want to be there and work your hardest for them."

In the community, The Rose Garden donates food to and staffs functions for the Notre Dame Seminary, Ozanam Inn, De La Salle High School and St. Patrick's Church. Any staff member of who agrees to volunteer to work a charity event is paid their regular salary.

The company's holiday party is held at The Rose Garden after Mardi Gras, and the senior staff goes to lunch every Christmas at Antoine's. There are also staff outings at restaurants throughout the city every six weeks. •

— Tommy Santora

THREE-TIME HONOREE

Schafer Group

At the public accounting firm Schafer Group in Metairie, employees value independent, working conditions in what they say is a comfortable and caring environment. Management has an open door policy for reviewing directions and consulting on problems but staff members do their jobs with little intervention. Schafer specializes in tax accounting, financial analysis and management consulting.

"You can kind of work on your own, and it's a pretty easy-going place for an accounting firm," said Gwen Dargis, a staff accountant who has been with the firm for 26 years. "I'm the longest, but not the oldest employee."

The sometimes-grueling nature of tax accounting is punctuated by the firm's after-tax-season party in April. The firm also hosts holiday gatherings, functions at restaurants and office luncheons throughout the year.

As for other benefits and perks, Dargis said paid hospitalization has been a big help over the years, and she appreciates the company's free tickets to Hornets, Zephyrs and Saints games.

The company also gives semi-annual bonuses in mid-April and late December, and offers commissions for new clients employees bring in.

"With 15 people, we're not a big company with a hierarchy," said audit manager Lacey Shipp, adding that her boss, Kernion Schafer, is very supportive of employees' needs.

Nature of business: accounting

Where based: Metairie

Employees: 15

Average starting salary: \$55,000

Median salary: \$65,000

Average time of employment: more than 13 years

Health care benefits: 100 percent covered; unmarried partner benefits; dental and prescription plans

Wait time for benefits: none

Other perks: continuing education program, day-care options, telecommuting, paid mileage, job sharing, subsidized meals

Paid days off: 28 days

Website: schafergroup.net



Photo by Frank Aymann

Clockwise from top left: Schafer Group employees Annette Thomas, Flora Burchardt, Lacey Shipp and Paul Huner.

"For instance, I'm pregnant with my first child and he's been understanding about my desire for maternity leave."

Shipp, who has been at Schafer for six years, said clients come in all shapes and sizes so it's never cookie-cutter work. Solving problems for an array of clients, she said, has challenged her more than some other auditing jobs would.

"As you can imagine, it gets pretty crazy here from January to April and during other tax deadlines," said two-year staff account veterans Annette Thomas. "But we help one another and have great support staff, so that

pulls us through tax season."

One treasured perk, she said, is massages at the office during the busy season.

Schafer employees donate time and money to Brother Martin High School, Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, Operation Smile, St. Jude Children's Hospital, Friends of City Park and other national and local charities.

And because of the size of the firm's employee roster in relation to its office, many staff members have their own offices. •

— Susan Buchanan



Photo by Frank Aymann

Susco Solutions and Touch Studios employees gather on the front steps of the New Orleans Museum of Art.

Susco Solutions

Susco Solutions' team-building exercise during their employees' lunch hour once a week is similar to a scene straight out of an episode of "The Office." Employees team up to play a first-person shooter video game.

Susco's game of choice is "Unreal Tournament," and project manager John Bolles Jr. warns his colleagues that even though he's older than most of them, he's getting better at the game with more practice.

"I don't have the background of playing first-person shooting games as everybody else, so I just do my best to hang in there," Bolles said. "Since we are a software company, we have

some very nice computers and hardware. Video games are a fun way for everyone to relax and spend time together."

Marketing Director Kris Gabik says Mario Kart is more her style, but she also enjoys the quarterly Trivial Pursuit game nights at CEO Neel Sus' house.

Founded in 2005 by Sus, Susco Solutions is a custom web and database developer that specializes in providing solutions for small to medium-sized businesses by developing web applications and desktop software for their use. Susco has also developed an electronic system that allows for central tracking of all licenses, property tax and utility account management information for residents and businesses.

In 2010, Sus and chief operations officer Jameson Quave noticed a niche in custom application development for the smartphone and tablet computer industry and launched Touch Studios. In a year, the company has developed dozens of apps, spanning all areas of mobile functionality, including the Miles Method iPad app where LSU fans can stream sports video, follow social media outlets and get a behind-the-scenes look at the football program and any team news.

"All the data across both companies is here under one central location and we work as one cooperative set of companies. We like to think of Touch Studios as the more playful brother

of Susco," said Ashton Stockman, director of operations for both companies.

Stockman started with Susco two years ago as software developer, was promoted to project manager one year later and became director of operations in October.

"There is tremendous ability to expand within your role here. Everything is performance-based, and they value the person and the job you do over outside experience," he said.

Susco offers performance-based bonuses for employees and weekly lunch-and-learns on software and other job skills employees may be interested in. The company offers flex time options, and employees can work from home when needed. Susco pays 100 percent of employees' premiums for health insurance.

In the community, Susco developers often do presentations for high school and college students studying computer science. Bolles recently presented to a class of computer science students at Southeastern Louisiana University on how to build mobile websites.

"We are always interested in higher learning within the community and letting students know what to expect and prepare for in the real world," he said. •

— Tommy Santora

Nature of business: software development
Where based: New Orleans
Employees: 11
Average starting salary: \$35,000
Median salary: \$50,000
Average time of employment: two years
Health care benefits: 100 percent; prescription plan
Wait time for benefits: none
Other perks: telecommuting, flexible hours, employee recognition program
Paid days off: 15 days
Website: www.suscosolutions.com



U.S. Risk Management environmental consultants James Laws, left, and Jeff Chimento check out the Grand Palace Hotel on the corner of Canal Street and Claiborne Avenue in preparation for its demolition.

TWO-TIME HONOREE

U.S. Risk Management

U.S. Risk Management is a cadre of employees who can work upwards of 18 hours a day, exposing themselves to hazardous chemicals and dangerous situations. Sometimes they even jump out of a plane on their day off.

“Some of us have worked together for 10 or 12 years,” said Tracy Dodd, principal of U.S. Risk. “We work hard and we play hard.”

A few weeks ago, four employees went sky diving during a trip to Las Vegas and sent videos back to the office.

Nature of business: environmental consulting
Where based: New Orleans
Employees: 32
Average starting salary: \$40,000
Median salary: \$55,000
Average time of employment: eight years
Health care benefits: 80 percent covered; dental, vision and prescription plans
Wait time for benefits: 30 days
Other perks: continuing education program, telecommuting, flexible hours
Paid days off: 25 days
Website: www.us-risk.com

“We happen to like each other and are fortunate to work in the same place,” Dodd said.

That camaraderie is both organic and encouraged.

“We believe that our most important (factor) is our people,” Dodd said, adding that if U.S. Risk employees are happy, it means their work product is good. With so many long-tenured employees — the average length of employment is eight years — the firm maintains continuity by pairing new hires with veterans.

Charlie Tauzin, an environmental scientist who has worked with the company since 2005, started with the company after college before leaving to work in construction.

“It wasn’t the same. It was just go to work and that’s all,” said Tauzin, adding that he missed the flexibility at U.S. Risk and workplace friendships. “I was very fortunate I got a chance to come back.”

Aside from the friendships, Tauzin is most impressed by the company’s support, both personally and professionally. He said going through a divorce was taxing, but the company allowed him all the time he needed.

U.S. Risk has also helped him pay for continuing education, which is reimbursed based on grades earned, and attaining additional certifications.

“If you show that you are interested in trying to better yourself, then they will definitely put forth the effort to make sure you succeed,” he said.

James Laws, an environment consultant, had prior experience in his field and previously worked with many of the employees in Baton Rouge.

“I’ve told Tracy (Dodd) in the past that I’m sure I could make more money elsewhere,” said Laws, who’s been with the company for six years. “But I feel that I’m wanted at this place and it’s a better atmosphere than other places.”

Toward the end of Laws’ first year of working at U.S. Risk, he got to thinking about the bonus he received at the office Christmas party and the trust his coworkers had in him.

“I knew that where this company was heading, I was going to be here for the long haul, he said.”

— L. Kasimu Harris

Best Places to Work: Large companies

(Top three based on judging; rest listed alphabetically)

Name Address	Telephone Fax	Nature of business Website	Average starting salary Median salary	Employment length for benefit eligibility Employees	Health care benefits Dental Vision Prescription Employee recognition program	Paid maternity Daycare options Telecommuting Flexible hours 401(k)	Relocation assistance Job sharing Continuing education Fitness program Subsidized meals
1. Eagan Insurance Agency 2629 N. Causeway Blvd. Metairie 70002	836-9600 836-9621	insurance www.eaganins.com	\$43,500 for staff; \$135,000 for producers \$46,500 for staff; \$170,000 for producers	30 days 72	Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y Y	N N Y Y N
2. First NBC Bank 210 Baronne St. New Orleans 70112	566-8000 671-3484	banking www.firstnbcbank.com	\$46,556 \$50,470	first of the month after 30 days 240	Y Y Y Y	N Y Y Y Y	Y N Y N Y
3. Fair Grounds Race Course and Slots 1751 Gentilly Blvd. New Orleans 70119	944-5515 948-1261	horse racing and casino www.fairgroundsracecourse.com	\$14 per hour; \$35,000 for salaried \$20 per hour; \$45,000 for salaried	first of the month after 30 days for hourly; first of the month after hire for salaried 375-430 year-round; 250-350 during racing season	Y Y Y Y	N Y N Y Y	Y N Y N Y
Adams and Reese 701 Poydras St., Suite 4500 New Orleans 70139	581-3234 566-0210	law firm www.adamsandree.com	\$32,000 for staff; \$100,000 for attorneys \$43,000 for staff; \$175,000 for attorneys	one month 180 in New Orleans; 556 firmwide	Y Y N Y N	N N Y N Y	N N Y Y N
Baker Donelson 201 St. Charles Ave., Suite 3600 New Orleans 70170	566-5200 636-4000	law firm www.bakerdonelson.com	\$52,559 for staff; \$141,800 for attorneys \$52,832 for staff; \$173,500 for attorneys	30 days after the first of the month 90 in New Orleans; 1,237 firmwide	Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y Y	N N Y N N
Booz Allen Hamilton 201 St. Charles Ave., Suite 2500 New Orleans 70170	330-5494 524-7979	consulting www.boozallen.com	\$77,000 \$88,000	none 31 in New Orleans; 24,000 companywide	Y Y Y Y	N Y Y Y Y	Y Y Y Y N
Bourgeois Bennett 111 Veterans Blvd., Suite 1700 Metairie 70005	831-4949 833-9093	accounting www.bb-cpa.com	\$46,500 \$67,100	first of the month after 30 days 63	Y Y Y Y	N N N Y Y	N N Y Y N
Brown's Dairy 1300 Baronne St. New Orleans 70113	529-2221 592-3619	dairy manufacturing www.brownsdairy.com	\$14 per hour; \$43,000 for salaried \$17 per hour; \$56,000 for salaried	first of the month after 60 days 252	Y Y Y Y	N N N Y Y	Y N Y N N
ConocoPhillips Alliance Refinery 15551 Highway 23 Belle Chasse 70037	656-7711 656-3000	refining www.conocophillips.com	\$88,000 for professional staff; \$130,000 for management \$98,500 for professional staff; \$133,000 for management	none 428 in New Orleans; 29,500 companywide	Y Y Y Y	N N N N Y	Y N Y Y N
Dickie Brennan and Co. 605 Canal St. New Orleans 70130	521-8313 523-1633	restaurant www.frenchquarter-dining.com	\$26,000 for hourly; \$42,000 for management \$30,000 for hourly; \$50,000 for management	six months for hourly; three month for salaried about 350	Y Y Y Y	N N N Y Y	N N Y Y Y
The Domain Cos. 643 Magazine St., Suite 201 New Orleans 70130	301-0014 (646) 285-0003	real estate development and management www.thedomaincos.com	\$45,213 \$41,288	30 days 58	Y Y Y Y	N N N Y N	N N Y Y N
Durr Heavy Construction 817 Hickory Ave. Harahan 70123	737-3205 737-3905	construction www.durrhc.com	\$31,200 for laborers; \$57,500 for management \$41,600 for laborers; \$66,000 for management	30 days 118	Y Y N Y Y	N N Y Y Y	Y N Y Y Y
1st Lake Properties 4971 W. Napoleon Ave. Metairie 70001	455-5059 455-8764	property management www.1stlake.com	\$13 per hour; \$37,000 for salaried \$13 per hour; \$40,865 for salaried	first of the month after 90 days 330	Y Y Y Y	N N N N Y	N N N Y N
Geocent 111 Veterans Blvd., Suite 1600 Metairie 70005	831-1900 831-1901	information technology www.geocent.com	\$79,134 \$80,000	first of the month after hire 191	Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y Y	Y N Y Y N

Best Places to Work: Large companies

(Top three based on judging; rest listed alphabetically)

Name Address	Telephone Fax	Nature of business Website	Average starting salary Median salary	Employment length for benefit eligibility Employees	Health care benefits Dental Vision Prescription Employee recognition program	Paid maternity Daycare options Telecommuting Flexible hours 401(k)	Relocation assistance Job sharing Continuing education Fitness program Subsidized meals
Hilton New Orleans Riverside 2 Poydras St. New Orleans 70130	561-0500 584-3861	hotel www.neworleans.hilton.com	\$11 per hour; \$35,000 for salaried \$14.86 per hour; \$45,000 for salaried	none 800 in New Orleans; 130,000 companywide	Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y	Y N Y Y
HRI Properties 909 Poydras St., Suite 3100 New Orleans 70112	566-0204 525-3932	real estate development www.hriproperties.com	\$11.78 per hour, \$56,500 for salaried \$26,598 for hourly, \$73,780 for salaried	30 or 90 days depending on division 321	Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y	Y N N Y
International School of Louisiana 1400 Camp St. New Orleans 70130	654-1088 654-1086	education www.isl-edu.org	\$30,000 for professionals; \$40,763 for teachers \$42,412 for professionals; \$41,957 for teachers	none 105	Y Y Y N	N N N Y	Y N Y N
Irwin Fritchie Urquhart and Moore 400 Poydras St., Suite 2700 New Orleans 70130	310-2100 310-2101	law firm www.irwinllc.com	\$42,000 for staff; \$97,500 for attorneys \$55,000 for staff; \$127,000 for attorneys	one month 82	Y Y Y N	N N N Y	N N Y N
King, Krebs and Jurgens 201 St. Charles Ave., 45th floor New Orleans 70170	582-3800 582-1233	law firm www.kingkreb.com	\$40,000 for staff; \$88,500 for associates \$48,000 for staff, \$100,928 for attorneys	30 days after the first of the month 58	Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y	N N Y N
Kushner LaGraize 3330 W. Esplanade Ave., Suite 100 Metairie 70002	838-9991 833-7971	accounting www.kl-cpa.com	\$31,500 for staff; \$45,000 for accountants \$42,300 for staff; \$63,700 for accountants	within two months 50	Y Y Y N	N N N Y	N N N N
Landis Construction 8300 Earhart Blvd., Suite 300 New Orleans 70118	833-6070 833-6662	general contractor www.landisllc.com	\$37,500 for hourly; \$40,000 for salaried \$42,000 for hourly; \$55,500 for salaried	none 80	Y Y Y N	N N N Y	N N Y N
LaPorte 111 Veterans Blvd., Suite 600 Metairie 70005	835-5522 835-5535	accounting www.laporte.com	\$30,000 for administrative; \$47,500 for accountants \$38,000 for administrative; \$71,000 for accountants	none 148	Y Y Y Y	N Y Y Y	N Y Y Y
North Oaks Health System P.O. Box 2668 Hammond 70404	(985) 345-2700 (985) 230-1038	health care www.northoaks.org	\$56,285 \$48,152	none 2,297	Y Y Y Y	N Y N Y	Y Y Y Y
Ochsner Health System 1514 Jefferson Highway Jefferson 70121	842-6897 842-2297	health care www.ochsner.org	\$46,706 \$57,149	first of the month after 30 days 10,121	Y Y N Y	N N Y Y	Y N Y Y
Peoples Health 3838 N. Causeway Blvd., Suite 2200 Metairie 70002	849-4500 849-6963	insurance www.peopleshealth.com	\$52,000 \$62,000	30 days 600	Y Y Y Y	N Y Y Y	Y N Y N
Peter A. Mayer Advertising Agency 324 Camp St. New Orleans 70130	581-7191 671-8262	advertising www.peteramayer.com	\$45,584 for nonexecutive management; \$142,500 for executive management \$48,200 for nonexecutive management; \$145,600 for executive management	first of the month after hire 138	Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y	Y N Y N
Phelps Dunbar 365 Canal St., Suite 2000 New Orleans 70130	566-1311 568-9130	law firm www.phelpsdunbar.com	\$41,468 for staff; \$95,000 for attorneys \$51,000 for staff; \$102,000 for attorneys	first of the month after one full month 223 in New Orleans; 583 firmwide	Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y	Y N Y N
Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group 550 Bienville St. New Orleans 70130	539-5515 539-5538	dining www.neworleans-food.com	\$51,000 \$47,000	three months after hire 342	Y Y Y Y	N N N Y	N N N Y

Best Places to Work: Large companies

(Top three based on judging; rest listed alphabetically)

Name Address	Telephone Fax	Nature of business Website	Average starting salary Median salary	Employment length for benefit eligibility Employees	Health care benefits Dental Vision Prescription Employee recognition program	Paid maternity Daycare options Telecommuting Flexible hours 401(k)	Relocation assistance Job sharing Continuing education Fitness program Subsidized meals
Randa Accessories 20 James Drive E. St. Rose 70087	712-7179 712-7101	lifestyle accessories www.randa.net	\$9 per hour; \$40,000 for management \$11 per hour; \$55,000 for management	30 days 247	Y Y N Y Y	N N N N Y	Y N Y N N
ReadSoft 3838 N. Causeway Blvd., Suite 2400 Metairie 70002	841-0100 841-0144	software development www.readsoft.com	\$70,000 \$86,000	30 days 67 in North America, 500 firmwide	Y Y N Y Y	N N Y Y Y	Y N Y Y N
The Receivables Exchange 935 Gravier St. New Orleans 70112	(800) 658-5880 (800) 513-1352	financial exchange www.receivablesxchange.com	\$45,000 \$60,000	none 70	Y Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y Y	Y N N Y N
St. Tammany Parish Hospital 1202 S. Tyler St. Covington 70433	(985) 898-4000 (985) 898-4394	health care www.stph.org	\$57,158 \$60,174	first of the month after hire 1,299	Y Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y Y	Y N Y Y Y
Superior Energy Services 600 Poydras St., Suite 2400 New Orleans 70130	587-7374 362-1818	oilfield services www.superiorenergy.com	\$54,000 \$68,000	for tier one employees; 30-60 days for tier 2 1,600	Y Y Y Y Y	N N N Y Y	Y N Y N N
Taste Buds Management 8301 Oak St. New Orleans 70118	486-4570 520-8426	restaurant management www.zearestaurants.com	\$9.62 per hour; \$45,000 for management \$20,280 for hourly; \$52,724 for management	90 days for hourly; 30 days for management 857	Y Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y Y	Y N N N Y

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Best Places to Work: Small companies

(Top three based on judging; rest listed alphabetically)

Name Address	Telephone Fax	Nature of business Website	Average starting salary Median salary	Employment length for benefit eligibility Employees	Health care benefits Dental Vision Prescription Employee recognition program	Paid maternity Daycare options Telecommuting Flexible hours 401(k)	Relocation assistance Job sharing Continuing education Fitness program Subsidized meals
1. Zehnder Communications 650 Poydras St., Suite 2450 New Orleans 70130	558-7778 558-7779	public relations and advertising www.z-comm.com	\$43,333 \$42,065	90 days 40	Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y Y	Y N Y N N
2. Ericksen Krentel and LaPorte 4227 Canal St. New Orleans 70119	486-7275 482-2516	accounting www.ericksenkrentel.com	\$23,000 for staff; \$42,000 for accountants \$35,000 for staff; \$58,000 for accountants	none 31	Y Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y Y	Y N Y N Y
3. Blitch Knevel Architects 757 St. Charles Ave. New Orleans 70130	524-4634 524-5128	architecture www.blitchknevel.com	\$45,268 for intern architects; \$34,754 for administrative \$96,118 for project architects; \$48,938 for administrative	first of the month after hire 21	Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y Y	Y N Y N Y
Archon Information Systems 935 Gravier St., Suite 1700 New Orleans 70112	267-0065 267-0067	software development www.archoninfosys.com	\$25,826 for hourly; \$59,486 for salaried \$24,960 for hourly; \$65,000 for salaried	30 days 39	Y Y Y Y Y	N N N Y Y	Y N Y Y N
Deveney Communication 2406 Chartres St. New Orleans 70117	949-3999 949-3974	communications firm www.deveney.com	\$46,000 \$75,000	none 10	Y Y Y Y Y	N N N Y N	N N Y Y Y
Gauthier Houghtaling Williams 3500 N. Hullen St. Metairie 70002	456-8600 456-8624	law firm www.ghwlegal.com	\$47,000 for staff; \$250,000 for attorneys \$47,000 for staff; \$400,000 for attorneys	none 30	Y N N Y Y	N Y N N Y	N N Y N N
Hartwig Moss Insurance Agency 2626 Canal St. New Orleans 70119	569-9909 569-9900	insurance www.hmia.com	\$44,021 for staff; \$131,524 for agents \$43,869 for staff; \$104,130 for agents	first of the month after hire 44	Y Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y Y	N N Y N N
iSeatz 643 Magazine St., Suite 100 New Orleans 70130	586-1234 544-7642	software development www.iseatz.com	\$40,000 \$74,000	none 35	Y Y Y Y N	N N N Y Y	N N N Y N
The McDonnel Group 3350 Ridgelake Drive, Suite 170 Metairie 70002	219-0032 219-0095	general contractor www.mcdonnel.com	\$28,000 for hourly; \$68,000 for salaried \$38,000 for hourly; \$72,000 for salaried	none 45	Y Y Y Y Y	N N Y N Y	N N Y N Y
Mouledoux, Bland, Legrand and Brackett 701 Poydras St., Suite 4250 New Orleans 70139	595-3000 522-2121	law firm www.mblb.com	\$38,000 for staff; \$80,000 for attorneys \$49,800 for staff; \$90,000 for attorneys	none 30	Y Y Y N N	N N Y Y Y	N N Y N N
PMOLink 2001 Lakeshore Drive Mandeville 70448	(985) 674-5968 (985) 674-5968	consulting www.pmolink.com	\$93,411 \$105,525	none 18	Y Y Y Y Y	N N Y Y Y	Y Y Y Y Y
The Rose Garden 5616 Citrus Blvd. River Ridge 70123	737-1300 737-9884	reception hall www.therosegarden.com	\$40,000 \$80,000	none 3	Y N N Y N	N N Y Y N	N N Y N Y
Schafer Group 701 Aurora Ave., Suite A Metairie 70005	837-6573 837-6570	accounting www.schafergroup.net	\$55,000 \$65,000	none 15	Y Y N Y N	N Y Y N Y	N Y Y N Y
Susco Solutions 1215 Prytania St. New Orleans 70130	264-9343 264-9345	software development www.suscossolutions.com	\$35,000 \$50,000	none 11	Y N N Y Y	N N Y Y N	N N N N N
U.S. Risk Management 365 Canal St., Suite 2760 New Orleans 70130	561-6563 561-6624	environmental consulting www.us-risk.com	\$40,000 \$55,000	30 days 32	Y Y Y Y N	N N Y Y Y	N N Y N N

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851 Harrison Ave.
New Orleans, LA 70124
504-671-3520

Veterans Office
521 Veterans Memorial Blvd.
Metairie, LA 70005
504-671-3530

Terrytown Office
2021 Carol Sue
Terrytown, LA 70056
504-651-3550

Manhattan Office
1855 Manhattan Blvd.
Harvey, LA 70058
504-252-4315

DeGaulle Office
4100 General DeGaulle
Office Suite B-7
New Orleans, LA 70131
504-252-4300

Elmwood Office
1105 S. Clearview Parkway
Jefferson, LA 70121
504-671-3510

Kenner Office
3535 Chateau Blvd.
Kenner, LA 70065
504-671-3540

Transcontinental Office
4900 Veterans Memorial Blvd.
Metairie, LA 70006
504-671-3425

Carondelet Office
233 Carondelet Street
New Orleans, LA 70130
504-671-3560

St. Charles Office
3335 St. Charles Ave.
New Orleans, LA 70115
504-252-4330

Read Office
5733 Read Blvd.
New Orleans, LA 70127
504-671-3875

Lapalco Office
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