

T Best Places to Work 2024

WorkL

From perks to bonuses, wellbeing to inclusivity...
Entries are now open for the UK's best places to work

Entries close on
March 17, 2024





SECRETS OF SUCCESS

Lord Mark Price on why happy teams make business sense

“It makes no business sense not to be a good employer: this is what we have learnt analysing 50,000 organisations globally, the leading ones of which are featured in The Sunday Times Best Places to Work. Across the board, these companies universally scored higher on every single attribute we measure. They had the best inclusivity, a lower percentage of employees planning to leave imminently (known as “flight risks”) and – in a period when the UK faces labour shortages with more than one million job vacancies and unemployment at 4.2 per cent – they attract and retain the best people. If you look at the data we draw from organisations around the world, 28 per cent of the workforce is looking to leave within the next nine months. But in the case of the Best Places to Work, this flight risk was single digit. Thus, these companies have much lower staff turnover, can train more, and consequently, their customers receive better service. There’s a correlation between staff wellbeing and the number of days people take off sick: better companies don’t incur that cost. By being inclusive, they maximise all talent across their business. Essentially, they are more sustainable businesses from a profit point of view because they’re getting these fundamentals right. When I put together this survey, it was not only heavily based on what I had learnt over my three decades with the John Lewis Partnership but also on what I had learnt from behavioural scientists and academics. At WorkL, we measure whether employees are engaged, have all the information they need and are paid fairly, then we give that information back to companies so that they can improve. These awards – which are now open to enter for 2024 – celebrate companies of all sizes that are doing that well. The companies that enter receive amazing data to help their organisations improve – granular data that will tell you, by demographics, where things are working well and where they are not. It’s inexpensive to enter, but a massive gain in terms of insight and making your employees feel good, promoting your business and boosting the UK economy. Being a Best Place to Work isn’t about huge investment either. These are simple things about how people are treated, how they feel, whether they feel part of the family or not. This is more about culture, not necessarily capital spending. So why do it at all? It’s better for individuals who work in a company that values and looks after them. Those companies that perform best in The Sunday Times list have lower staff turnover, lower sick absences and higher levels of productivity. It’s also good for Great Britain PLC. We see clear links between productivity and companies that are doing this well. The better a business does, the more tax it’s going to pay and the more we can invest in UK services. What we know in the UK is that productivity has been one of our great challenges. I was asked by David Cameron in 2010 to join the committee he was setting up to measure happiness. What that committee was able to draw out is that there are links between how a country feels – the happier it is – and its economic performance. These are hard, commercial measures and it’s only right that the best organisations are recognised for what they do.

“The secret isn’t about capital investment, it’s more about culture





‘YOU’RE RESPECTED’

There’s always a chance to upskill

Work is all about the stretch at David Lloyd Leisure, the gym chain that this year became a Sunday Times Best Place to Work. In addition to her role as crèche supervisor at the Bromsgrove club, Rachael Smith, 38, is sponsored as part of a “step-up” programme and was recently one of 160 team members of the year taken on an all-expenses-paid holiday to Dubai by her employer. “I’m currently enrolled on an apprenticeship working towards being a head of department,” she says. “I am part-time, at 20 hours a week, but you’re always respected, and are able to upskill and network with people from other clubs.” The Hatfield-based firm, with 103 clubs nationwide, found the independent feedback from WorkL invaluable to flexing its muscles as an employer. “We’ve dived into the data on learning and development, diversity and inclusion,” says Juliette Cattermole, HR director. “The more voices around the table, the better the innovation and business performance.”



ILLUSTRATION: ABBEY LOSSING

Winning the happiness race

The formula for engaging and retaining talent?
Making staff feel they are fully appreciated

“Rewarding performance acts as a motivator that helps build trust

Julie Adams (above) is passionate about sustainability, helping local authorities and private clients go greener as a regional partnership manager at water, waste and energy management company Veolia. But the 64-year-old also has ambitions to improve her parkrun personal best. Thanks to the flexibility of her employer, one of The Sunday Times (very big) Best Places to Work, she can now maintain a fulfilling career working three days a week. Recalling 16 years in the job, Adams says, “Going part-time means retaining a skillset that’s not only valuable to Veolia, which

gives me great purpose, but also allows me time to explore interests that I couldn’t concentrate on while I was working full-time.” After the pandemic, Veolia’s chief HR officer Beth Whittaker noted a change in the five generations of its 13,000 employees. “Covid led to this huge shift of priorities, and we were seeing the great resignation in our older, very loyal workforce,” she says, referring to the post-pandemic trend of people resigning from their jobs en masse. “We absolutely did not want that experience and knowledge to walk out of the door.” The result was a successful trial in job sharing, a graduate scheme partnering new recruits

with seasoned mentors, flexibility for retiree alumni to return for summer working, part-time options, and a fully inclusive push for career development. “For me, a good employer is one that can bend and flex,” says Whittaker, whose company won a Sunday Times commendation for supporting people over 55.

ENTRIES OPEN
Entries are now open for The Sunday Times Best Places to Work Awards 2024, powered by employment engagement experts WorkL to highlight the UK’s top-ranking employers. The survey of 35 questions, created by behavioural scientists, data analysts, psychologists, business leaders and academics, ranks organisations in six key areas: reward and recognition, information sharing, empowerment, wellbeing, instilling pride, and job satisfaction. To make the list, each company must achieve a minimum response rate (based on its size) and be ranked above 70 per cent by its own workforce. Although the final listing is determined by an engagement score average, a highly engaged workplace must perform well in all six areas. Organisations looking to enter can complete a straightforward submission form to be analysed by The Sunday Times team, with the final ranking broken down by company size, from small organisations (10 to 49 employees) to very big (more than 2,000). The entry fee starts at £750 for small companies, increasing incrementally in a tiered system for larger companies.

COMMERCIAL SENSE
The data that entrants receive can be invaluable, says Lord Mark Price, founder of WorkL, former business leader and one-time government trade minister. “The survey measures tangible things that you can work on to drive economic improvement, reduce staff turnover and improve productivity,” he says. “We have something that we call an extra discretionary effort calculator that allows us to look at staff turnover, sickness and productivity of one business against its industry sector. And we find companies that perform best in The Sunday Times list have lower staff turnover, lower sick absence and higher levels of productivity. A finance director should read this and say: ‘This is great data and commercially very helpful.’” The entry includes results once the survey has closed, a customised dashboard on employee engagement, including a net promoter score (customer satisfaction), “flight risk” (the likelihood of employees leaving imminently) and the option to filter survey results by demographic.

MAKING THE GRADE
Data from this year’s Sunday Times Best Places to Work list, compared with WorkL’s benchmarking database of 50,000 firms across 26 sectors, suggests that the top-scoring employers are

A NUMBERS GAME



Sources:
WorkL analysis of The Sunday Times Best Places to Work 2023 finalists compared to a WorkL benchmarking database of 50,000 companies

particularly good at promoting wellbeing, sharing information and being inclusive. Female engagement, for example, stands at 88 per cent in the 2023 list, compared with 70 per cent in WorkL’s benchmarking companies, showcasing a significant improvement. Wellbeing scores in the top firms hit an impressive 85 per cent positive, compared with 67 per cent in the average UK company. Meanwhile, diversity and inclusion are challenging in many companies, resulting in a -11 per cent score, but in The Sunday Times Best Places to Work, companies score a neutral 0 per cent. In the construction and building materials sector in particular, the best companies score 23 per cent higher than the rest on diversity. “You want to maximise all talent across the business, whether or not they have a disability, whatever their age, gender or race,” adds Lord Price. “You’re missing out if you don’t do that.”

WINNING FORMULA
For organisations like Alzheimer’s Society, one of the Best (big) Places to Work 2023, the survey is a way to continually improve the employee experience and boost recruitment. Corinne Mills, director of people, says diversity is key to ensuring 1,800 employees and almost 8,000 volunteers can achieve the goals of supporting people affected by dementia. “We need to reflect the community we serve, and the benefits that people want are about being flexible,” she says – for example, giving paid carers leave in hours rather than whole days, and other measures recommended by employee-led networks. “Being in The Sunday Times Best Places to Work enables us to put firepower behind our ambitions. Not only are we getting significantly more people applying for roles but we are getting more choice – within 24 hours we have 300 applicants for roles that were hard to fill.” Lord Price points out that, alongside all the benefits of being a Sunday Times Best Place to Work, paying close attention to employee happiness makes good business sense. “There is a clear correlation between good results and the ability to attract and retain the best talent,” he says. “As a nation we have to get better at celebrating our successes.”

To enter The Sunday Times Best Places to Work 2024

Visit stbestplacestowork.co.uk, contact stbestplacestowork@workl.com or call 020 4576 1730 to find out more. Entries close on March 17, 2024

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‘FRIDAY IS ALL YOURS’

Flexible hours give staff time for the things they love

When 24-year-old Julie Heinisch (top) wants to visit her parents in Luxembourg, she doesn’t need time off work. Earlier this year, her employer, the travel PR company Lemongrass Marketing, implemented a four-day week. “At the beginning, you think about time pressures – you have to do a five-day workload in four days,” says Heinisch, who commutes from London to Lemongrass Marketing’s Bicester office on Mondays, working from home on the other days. “But I love having that extra day. You have Friday for yourself, then the weekend is the weekend.” Abi Best (above), managing partner, says the recognition from The Sunday Times helps the 13-employee business punch above its weight. “The tourist PR industry, and working in an agency, is notoriously stressful, so we were keen to make sure Lemongrass was different, and maintain the service to our clients,” she says. Since making the list, Lemongrass has seen an increase in people interested in working there. “People are coming from a wider area, and we have high staff retention. For team morale, the award was a huge boost.”





Let The Sunday Times work for you

Enter your company into The Sunday Times Best Places to Work Awards and show the top talent in your field why they should work for you. Any company, any size, can enter and it only takes a few minutes.

Entries for 2024 now open at stbestplacestowork.co.uk

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