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## Make someone happy

Having a great workplace can be financially beneficial.

Orlando Business Journal - March 31, 2006 by [Bob Mervine](#) Staff Writer

Keeping employees happy can do more than just provide a good feeling for the bosses -- it also can add to a company's bottom line.

In fact, research by Wichita, Kan.-based QMR Marketing Research shows that over a three-year period, 87 percent of the companies that scored the highest for employee satisfaction also experienced an increase in their sales, while 86 percent improved their market share, says Alan Goodnight, president of QMR, which surveyed Central Florida employees for Orlando Business Journal's annual Best Places to Work competition.

In addition, 57 percent of the highest-scoring companies had less employee turnover, he says.

It all starts with a corporate decision to determine goals, he says: "What are the one or two most important values for a company?"

He cites one company that believed throwing regular company parties was an important part of employee morale. However, when employees were surveyed, the company discovered that the parties had become an obligation for employees and not a motivator. "They discovered they were throwing too many parties and that those parties weren't much fun for their work force," he says. Cutting back on the number of parties saved the company money and improved morale.

Many Central Florida companies already know what it takes to provide a great work environment, as shown by the results of Orlando Business Journal's 2006 Best Places to Work competition.

Participating companies first were nominated online at the OBJ Web site. Next, the nominated firms were registered, and then the companies distributed an access code to all employees that allowed them to participate in an employee satisfaction survey. The survey contained 38 questions covering a wide range of topics such as team effectiveness, alignment with goals, trust with co-workers, individual contribution, manager effectiveness, trust in senior leaders, feeling valued as an employee, work engagement and people practices.

Employees answered the survey anonymously, and were allowed to write their own personal comments, good or bad, about their company.

Employees spoke with candor about the pluses and minuses of their workplaces. These comments also covered the gamut of feelings, including topics such as job flexibility, communication and working in a family-oriented atmosphere. Employees cited many specific instances in which management's methods made the difference in their lives and futures.

The 2006 survey is the third year for the competition. It included 126 Central Florida businesses, up from 100 in last year's survey.

QMR gathered the data and used its proprietary formula to rank companies based solely on the employee feedback. Participating companies that did not make the list of Best Places to Work winners are not disclosed.

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Companies were divided into four divisions based on the number of employees: small, 10-50 employees; medium, 51-150 employees; large, 150-300 employees; and giant, more than 301 workers.

**Five winners** -- the companies with the highest employee satisfaction scores -- were chosen in each of the four divisions for a total of 20 winners. (For complete list of winners, see Page 42.) The top scoring companies in each of the four categories were GrayRobinson, Wayne Automatic Fire Sprinklers, Williams Co. and **FBC Mortgage**.

For the first time, the winners will be recognized at a special Best Places to Work celebration, scheduled for March 31 at the downtown Orlando Marriott and sponsored by Fisher & Phillips LLP.

Consultant Goodnight points out that managing a successful workplace is not a simple endeavor. "However," he says, "it does include a great many simple things -- common sense things we do every day in our personal lives that need to be translated into policy."

He outlines actions such as asking employees how they feel and then responding to their answers.

"Many times, in all size companies, that fails to happen," he says. "Management will survey employees, determine what the issues are, and sometimes even act on them. But they don't take the time to report back and explain how they have reacted. That makes it an entirely wasted effort."

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