

# WASHINGTONIAN



## GREAT PLACES TO WORK

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# Great Places to Work

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Photograph by Chris Leahman

Not everyone is having a good year, but employees at these organizations are very happy—they earn excellent pay and benefits, do interesting work, and enjoy a nice work/life balance. How does your company compare?

There's nothing like a slow economy to separate a great place to work from an okay one.

Every two years, *The Washingtonian* publishes its Great Places to Work list. How do we choose the winners—especially in a year where many firms are hurting?

First, a company or nonprofit that wants to be judged fills out a survey telling us about its workplace. It then allows a random and sizable portion of its staff to be surveyed. The questionnaires were designed by Leora Lawton of TechSociety Research in Berkeley, California.

We considered more than 200 employers. Most strive to be good places to work, so decisions aren't easy. We compared like with like—large firms with other large firms, nonprofits with nonprofits, software firms with software firms. Just because a firm isn't mentioned here doesn't mean it's not a great place to work; many companies don't participate.

We reviewed more than 13,000 employee surveys. We weight employee scores heavily—nifty perks don't mean much if staffers aren't happy. Firms couldn't see responses from staff, so employees could be honest.

In the end, winning workplaces scored well on things that keep staffs satisfied: good pay and benefits, flexibility, challenging work, recognition and respect, chances to learn and grow. This year, measures such as a firm's financial stability and how well management communicates with staff turned out to be important, too. We didn't disqualify a firm that had trimmed staff or benefits, but we did look at how well the situations had been handled.

Not that every firm had a tough year. A good number of our winners are government contractors. Federal spending has kept these firms healthy—and employees happy. As with almost all our winning workplaces, they're hiring.

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## Treated Royally

This employer not only pays very well, but also offers terrific perks.

When surveyed, employees at 5AM Solutions were extremely happy with pay and benefits.

## Always Learning

This workplace keeps staff happy by offering chances to learn and grow—from classes to career coaches to challenging projects.

One way to keep employees happy? Allow them to learn and grow. Besides offering challenging work, that might mean giving people projects that stretch their skills, paying for advanced degrees, or keeping staff updated with the latest technology or industry knowledge.

## Healthy Glow

Looking for good work/life balance?

5AM Solutions received very high employee marks for flexibility.



**5AM SOLUTIONS**  
www.5amsolutions.com

Organization Location and Web Site What It Does	Full-Time Staff (Local/ Total)	How Flexible Is It?	Staff Score on Flexibility (7=Top)	Besides Work/Life Balance, What Makes It a Great Place to Work?
<b>5AM Solutions</b> Reston; <a href="http://5amsolutions.com">5amsolutions.com</a> Life-sciences software	26/31	Everyone telecommutes at least once a week.	6.94	Staffers love the mission: providing tools to help researchers, hospitals, and others fight diseases such as cancer. 5AM gives back in other ways: Everyone gets three paid days a year for volunteering, and the firm donates 5% of profits to charities chosen by staff.

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