

INSIDE: CENTURY CLUB | BOJI GROUP | TOP CORPORATE CULTURE AWARDS

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"If you need to work at home, if you've got a dishwasher being repaired or a daycare issue, or it's better for you to stay at home and work in your pajamas, we're pretty open about that kind of thing. We do what we can to please not only our clients, but our employees. We make sure they're comfortable, that they feel appreciated, and we try to help them be as successful as possible."

"As long as you get your work done, I'm fine. I, personally, do better working at a remote location."

At MacKellar, the flexibility refers to being able to switch between jobs rather than where employees do their jobs.

"Let's say you get hired in to be a screen-printer and that doesn't work out. We can move you to embroidery or customer service," Evans says. "We have so many different divisions and a ton of people who float from one job to the other, doing multiple tasks."

Since COVID-19, she says, the entire MacKellar sales team went to remote work. "That works out because our plant has grown so much we don't have

enough parking to accommodate them if they were all to come back. It's such an easygoing company. It's a joy to work here."

WORKPLACE LEADERSHIP

Pacing the Workplace Leadership category are Near Perfect Media in Bloomfield Township (small) and nearby Lormax Stern Development Co. in Bloomfield Hills.

"I tend to involve everyone working on a client in the strategy process, and help cultivate and grow their skill sets," says Justin Near, founder and president of Near Perfect Media, about his leadership philosophy. "Many other firms don't involve junior people in client meetings and strategy sessions. We put them in the mix right out of the chute, and get them exposure to not only the client, but also the strategy sessions that develop the communications plans."

Near also has established a commission program that encourages his staff to cultivate new clients.

"When someone brings in new business, they'll earn a commission off of that client, on top of their

MENTORSHIP CHAMPION

Under the glass on his desk at Globe Midwest Adjusters International in Southfield, CEO Ethan Gross keeps a quote from President John Quincy Adams: "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader."

That pretty much sums up the philosophy of Gross, the Mentor Champion of *DBusiness* magazine's annual Top Corporate Culture Awards.

"We mentor the company through leadership so that employees coming in see both management and ownership willing to do the work, put in the hours, do whatever it takes to get things done," says Gross, who adds that his firm also mentors in smaller groups and one-on-one.

"In group meetings, we're instilling the importance of honing your craft and trying to be the best at it through education. We constantly encourage employees to take classes, go to seminars, participate in anything where they can learn how to improve their craft. We also bring expert people in to talk to our employees."

In addition, Globe Midwest Adjusters has a built-in one-on-one mentorship program for new hires.

"We usually partner newer employees with an experienced person for a while, so they can learn from that person," he explains. "They'll go to all their claims and work on their claims with them. So, as they're doing their job, they have that person as their primary mentor, working side by side with them."

Gross also makes himself personally available for one-on-one mentoring. "Everyone knows my door is always open, so if there's a question on how something should be done, we'll work through it together."

A fourth-generation public adjuster with more than 25 years in the business, Gross was mentored by his father as well as his business partner, Bobby Levin, and the company veterans who were around when he was first starting.

Gross also works with the Jewish Relief Network Ukraine to ease the suffering of refugees fleeing Russia's February 2022 invasion of their country.

"I just felt like I had to do something to try to help," Gross says of his efforts to help displaced Ukrainians. "You've got so many people impacted, unlike anything we've seen since World War II. If I'm in a position where I can help in some way, I don't want to look back in a few years and say I should have done more."

— Tim Keenan

GRATITUDE

Small — Brooklyn Outdoor Advertising, Detroit
Brooklyn Outdoor is an advertising agency that specializes in connecting the communities and ideas that bring campaigns to life.

Large — The Perna Team — Keller Williams, Novi
The Perna Team is a real estate firm with a mission to minimize stress during the selling and buying process, while maximizing the client's return on investment.

TEAMWORK

Small — Apex Staffing Co., Clawson
Apex Staffing Co. is a full-service staffing and HR services provider that specializes in recruiting, staffing, direct hire, search, temp-to-hire, and contract labor. It also offers unique strategies and solutions for companies across Michigan, northern Ohio, and northern Indiana.

Large — DOBI Real Estate, Birmingham
Founded in 2018, DOBI Real Estate embraces "The DOBI Difference," which offers the services needed to enable growth and gives the agent, the buyer, and the seller the best experience.

WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

Small — Mario Morrow & Associates, Southfield
Mario Morrow & Associates offers marketing, crisis management, media training, law, public relations, graphic design, polling, economic development, and economic analysis that helps clients influence change, while enhancing their reputation and furthering their business objectives.

Large — MacKellar Associates Inc., Rochester Hills
MacKellar Associates was founded in 1923. It offers manufacturer representative services as well as promotional products, custom decorating, and hand-crafted, personalized blankets.

WORKPLACE LEADERSHIP

Small — Near Perfect Media, Bloomfield Township
Near Perfect Media provides comprehensive public relations and marketing solutions for corporations, professionals, and celebrities.

Large — Lormax Stern Development Co., Bloomfield Hills
Lormax Stern is a fully integrated commercial real estate firm that consists of ground-up development, leasing, property management, and acquisitions and financing.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Small — Wilshire Benefits Group, Troy
Wilshire Benefits Group helps its clients make appropriate business decisions regarding their employee benefit plans.

Large — Greenleaf Trust, Birmingham
Greenleaf Trust is a privately held and managed trust-only bank, with specialized disciplines in wealth management, trust administration, and retirement plan administration.



salary, as long as they stay with us and that client is with us, whether (that employee) works on the business or not."

Nichole Sleiman, controller and HR manager at Lormax Stern, says the employees at her company benefit from the longevity and patience of its management team.

"We have quite a few people — the people we have in place managing — who have been here a long time," Sleiman says. "They're mentoring rather than saying 'do this or do that.' The training is pretty specific and our people have an open-door policy. You can ask anything at any time. Management itself is structured pretty well. They're very qualified and very patient people, which I find helpful when you have new people."

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement is a priority at Wilshire Benefits Group in Troy (small) and Greenleaf Trust in Birmingham (medium-large).

"We believe in giving back to the community," says Mary Klott, vice president of human resources and a partner at Wilshire Benefits Group.

Wilshire gives its employees a paid personal day (or two half days) to provide a community service. "When they've completed that day or half day, we let them share their experiences at a team meeting so people can learn about it," Klott says

During the holiday season, Wilshire selects an

organization to assist. In the past, it has supplied hundreds of sets of linens to a group that provides beds to children who don't have beds. Another year, the company worked with a group that decorates homes for the homeless with donated items.

The Wilshire team also has participated in the Walk for Miracles at the Detroit Zoo, benefiting Beaumont Children's Hospital. "More than half of our organization attended that, and it was on a Saturday morning. And our owner matched whatever the team generated," Klott says.

Karen Baldwin, executive vice president and director of human resources at Greenleaf Trust, outlines her company's community engagement program: "We do a lot of different things within our community," she says. "One is a Greenleaf Trust Scholarship program that we run through Western Michigan University. There are currently 17 scholars and, from them, we choose four interns for a year-long internship."

Greenleaf also started a high school wealth development club that matches employee donations to nonprofits up to \$1,000, and promotes a company day of giving where employees paint houses, build fences, and complete other activities to benefit the community.

Baldwin estimates that 90 percent of Greenleaf's team members are engaged with a nonprofit organization as either a board member or a volunteer, and says the company donates an average of 3,000 hours of volunteer time per year as an organization. **IB**

GIVING THANKS

The team at Brooklyn Outdoor Advertising in Detroit awards "kudos points" to each other to recognize jobs well done and to show gratitude for assistance with projects.



COMPETITIVE EDGE
Emerge Consulting's office in Royal Oak features a sports bar that honors Detroit's sports heroes from the past.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Leading the way in the Diversity and Inclusion category are SGH Wealth Management in Lathrup Village (small) and MacKellar Associates in Rochester Hills (medium-large).

Of SGH's staff of 10 people, 40 percent are women, and there is Hispanic and African-American representation, as well.

"I've watched the banks all address this because diversity in this industry is just bad," says Sam Huszco, founder and CEO of SGH. "In my opinion, the (diversity) policies are just boxes to check. I don't feel like they've made the strides that need to be made, so I don't have a formal policy."

"We're a very differently structured firm than most financial services firms. That gives me a huge advantage to attract more diversity. Most other firms focus on hiring experienced, older advisers. We're going in a totally different direction, where the majority of our hires are straight out of college. In a college setting, I can get in front of more female candidates, more Hispanic, and more African-American candidates."

"And, when given a choice between candidates, we're going to prioritize our desire to be a diverse workplace."

MacKellar Associates' diversity came about more organically than through a policy, according to Tracy Evans, the company's office manager. Evans, who has 30 years of service with the firm, says the diversity comes from having a wide range of opportunities and a welcoming attitude.

"Our company has high-end corporate sales staff and employees who do embroidery and run screen-printing machines," she says. "The positions are diverse and the people are diverse."

"We've always been welcome to anyone working here, and it just so happens that we have a lot of different cultures."

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Sachse Construction in Detroit (large) and Stuart Mechanical in Auburn Hills (small) lead the way in the Compensation and Benefits category. Stuart Mechanical is owned by Sachse.

While competitive, the wages at Sachse and Stuart Mechanical aren't the reason for the seemingly happy employees at both companies, according to Myra Ebarb, vice president of people, perks, and empowerment at Sachse. It's the benefits, of which there are many.

Both companies offer three Blue Cross Blue Shield PPO plans, and 401(k), dental, and vision options. Beyond that, Sachse employees get unlimited paid time off.

"We trust people with millions of dollars," Ebarb says. "We can trust people on how to manage their time off. That really does tell people to take the time they need for rest and relaxation. We also make sure people take one solid week off each year just to get away."

Due to the nature of Stuart Mechanical's business, Ebarb says it can't offer unlimited paid time off.

Both companies participate in the Sachse Wellness Program, which is based on five pillars: Health, Wealth, Mind and Body, Community, and Connection. The company stages activity challenges throughout the year, there are gym memberships available, and financial workshops and guest speakers are brought in to boost knowledge.

Team members also are given the Calm app, which is a meditation app. In addition, there's what best can be called an internal charity, where team members contribute to a 501(c)(3) account that can be accessed by other team members facing a financial hardship.

"(Our benefits plan) focuses on the individual team member and where they are in life," Ebarb says. "We really do focus on the overall well-being of our team."

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

SGH Wealth Management also scored well in the Career Advancement category, as did The Perna Team - Keller Williams in Novi (medium-large).

"Ninety percent of the work structure at financial services firms are silos under an umbrella," Huszco says. "Their advisers are almost like independent contractors in competition with each other. There's little or no teamwork."

"We're structured more like a large law firm; they hire people right out of law school and develop them. We're trying to replicate that in financial services. We don't require these college graduates to do any sales for the first three to five years of their career. It allows us to train them. People get really excited about our job opportunity within this space."

"Overall, I want (them) to have a job they can be proud to tell their parents about."

Career advancement at the 120-person Perna Team depends on the kind of work an employee does.

"From an agent's standpoint (who are more like independent contractors), there are levels based on production," explains Charity McQuiston, director of operations. "The regular, full-time employees are promoted based on performance, time with the team, and needs of the team."

"Our philosophy is always to promote from within if the opportunity is there and we're able to. We do a lot of nurturing, guiding, and coaching the team to help them move forward and advance in their careers."

GRATITUDE

The Perna Team also excelled in the Gratitude category, as did Detroit's Brooklyn Outdoor Advertising.

"That's a huge part of our culture," McQuiston says. "We have the three Gs — grit, gratitude, and goals. We talk about it every morning."

In addition to the morning sessions, there are weekly meetings during which employees point out people who have helped them in the last week.

Alissa Wilde, executive director of finance and people operations, says employees are more than just employees at Brooklyn Outdoor Advertising.

"The work they do for us is just a small piece of who they are as individuals," she says. "We're here to be successful as a company, but also to play a part in improving our employees' lives."

Among the gratitude activities in place at Brooklyn are "kudos points," which co-workers can give to each other if they see a job well done. The kudos are then shared on an internal communications platform where other people can chime in.

TEAMWORK

Apex Staffing Co. in Clawson (small) and DOBI Real Estate in Birmingham (medium-large) were the top scorers in the Teamwork category.

"That company is truly unique," Alexandria Salvaggio, director of marketing for Koucar Management in Troy, which has an ownership stake in Apex Staffing Co., says of the teamwork displayed at Apex.

"They're years ahead of everyone else in terms of working as a team," Salvaggio says. "They support and build one another up rather than breaking them down. Part of it is organic and part of it is if you added up the years they've been working together, it comes out to more than 100."

Reina Snively, operations director at DOBI Real Estate, explains the teamwork at her company:

"We have a mix of real estate agents and office staff working in a big, open-concept area. We're all constantly working together, collaborating, and there's a really nice culture within the office."

Simon Thomas, CEO at DOBI, adds, "Our agents come in for two or three hours a day, they're sitting next to someone new every day, and they're talking to each other about their listings, their buyers. They're actually communicating with each other. They're learning from each other. It makes for an unbelievable culture and atmosphere."

"You have \$30 million agents sitting with \$5 million agents. That's very advantageous to the \$5 million agents. You have younger agents who are more savvy with social media sitting with older agents and teaching them things. There's coaching and mentoring going on."

WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

The small company honoree in the Workplace Flexibility category is Mario Morrow & Associates in Southfield. MacKellar Associates gets the nod for medium-large companies.

"Our culture is one of openness, fairness, and we try to be as convenient for our staff as possible," says Mario Morrow, CEO of the firm that bears his name.



OVERALL CHAMPIONS

Small — Emerge Consulting, Royal Oak
Emerge Consulting partners with businesses to develop long-term workforce strategies by helping them attract, develop, and retain talent.

Medium-Large — Entech Staffing Solutions, Troy
Entech Staffing Solutions has been sourcing short-term, long-term, temp-to-hire, contract, and direct hire positions for job-seekers and employers in Troy, Grand Blanc, and the surrounding areas since 2009.

WORKPLACE DÉCOR AND AMENITIES

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DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Small — SGH Wealth Management, Lathrup Village
SGH Wealth Management offers active investment management, retirement planning, retirement income tax planning, and other services.

Medium-Large — MacKellar Associates Inc., Rochester Hills

MacKellar Associates was founded in 1923. It offers manufacturer representative services as well as promotional products, custom decorating, and hand-crafted, personalized blankets.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Small — Stuart Mechanical, Auburn Hills
Stuart Mechanical offers solutions for HVAC service, control, maintenance, and installation.

Medium-Large — Sachse Construction, Detroit
Founded in 1991, Sachse Construction has built millions of square feet of commercial, retail, multifamily, and institutional space in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Small — SGH Wealth Management, Lathrup Village
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CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Winners of the second *DBusiness* Corporate Culture Awards are staying ahead of the business trends affecting employees and their work experiences.

BY TIM KEENAN

Attracting and retaining employees continues to be priority one for most companies, which means putting renewed focus on efforts to enrich compensation and benefits packages as well as increasing office amenities.

According to a new report by the management software provider TeamStage, 94 percent of entrepreneurs and 88 percent of job-seekers say a healthy culture at work is vital for success.

The TeamStage report also shows that 86 percent of job-seekers avoid companies with bad reputations, and millennials prioritize “people and culture fit” above everything else.

The report also shows where corporate culture can be improved. Team leaders, for example, have the highest impact on company culture, employees say. Sixty-nine percent say they would work harder if they received more recognition.

Happy employees are more productive, according to the TeamStage report. A highly engaged workforce can lead to exceptional outcomes and performance. In addition, a culture that attracts high-caliber employees leads to a 33 percent revenue increase.

Top-performing organizations tend to maintain a positive workplace culture with in-person, remote, and hybrid teams, but definitions and expectations are changing with the generations, says the 2022 Ernst & Young (EY) U.S. Generation Survey.

“Employee expectations have shifted over the course of the last 2.5 years and so have the ways people want to feel valued,” says Leslie Patterson, leader of U.S. diversity, equity, and inclusiveness at EY Americas. “They’re looking to be supported both professionally and personally. All four generations (baby boomers, Gen X, Gen Z, and millennials) in today’s workforce value different programs, policies, and benefits, presenting challenges and opportunities for organizations that are looking to attract and retain top talent.

“Company culture is largely centered around how someone feels — whether they feel valued, supported, and like they belong,” Patterson adds. “It manifests itself in different ways across the generations and dimensions of diversity. Culture isn’t static. Organizations need to regularly take a pulse check as to whether they’re continuing to align with the workplace desires and expectations of their people.”



FINALISTS

To get an idea of how metro Detroit businesses are handling these important employer-employee issues, *DBusiness*, for the second consecutive year, invited workers at small, medium-size, and large companies to fill out a personal survey with questions about their work experiences. The best-performing small and medium-to-large companies overall have been recognized as Corporate Culture Champions. The top-rated firms in each category also are recognized.

OVERALL CHAMPIONS

Local companies doing the best job in these areas, according to the *DBusiness* survey, are Emerge Consulting in Royal Oak in the small company category and Entech Staffing Solutions in Troy in the medium-to-large category.

Emerge Consulting’s team of five employees helps companies develop a pipeline of entry-level talent. The team spends a lot of time on the road at high schools, colleges, and trade schools, developing relationships with counselors, administrators, teachers, and students.

“We treat our employees like adults that know how to get their work done, and we give them the trust and freedom to do that,” says Joe Bamberger, managing partner at Emerge Consulting. “That means providing them the resources they need here, or letting them use resources at home. We’re very hands-off and low-key.”

Monthly pot-luck parties, weekly Costco lunch outings, and annual holiday and summer parties are just a few of the ways Emerge maintains company morale.

“We have a work-from-anywhere philosophy and a flexible in and out,” Bamberger says. “As long as the job is getting done, it doesn’t matter where you are.”

The key to a happy workplace, according to Bamberger, is the chemistry between the employees.

“The people we hire tend to become friends,” he says. “We do interviews all day and every day, so when we interview people to work here, it’s rather unconventional. We know all the cliché questions and all the cliché answers. We don’t ask any questions related to work or about past experiences. It’s all personality-based questions. We want to know who they are as people and their passions, what gets them excited, (and) their sense of humor.”

Diversity isn’t a major strength at Entech Staffing Solutions, since the entire company is comprised of women, but it checks a number of positive corporate culture boxes.

“We’re all about the work-life balance because a lot of our women have families and kids, so it’s a very flexible work environment,” says co-owner Kathy Camara. “We’ve set everyone up to be able to work from home,

so no one has to miss a school event or a doctor’s appointment. We have very little turnover.”

The average Entech employee has been at the firm for 15 years.

“We treat everybody well with benefits and bonuses and parties,” Camara says. “I think we compensate our employees over the average for their positions.”

Employee perks include a big off-site holiday party, baby showers, monthly birthday lunches, spa days on company time, and recognition of work anniversaries and college graduations. “Whatever you have going on in your personal life, we celebrate as a team,” Camara adds.

WORKPLACE DÉCOR AND AMENITIES

It shouldn’t come as a surprise that our two overall Corporate Culture Champions also scored well in the Workplace Décor and Amenities category.

Emerge has been in its 1,100-square-foot space off of Main Street in Royal Oak for about 18 months. It features a first-floor sports bar with murals of Detroit sports heroes like Isiah Thomas, Joe Dumars, Al Kaline, Barry Sanders, Steve Yzerman, and University of Michigan football legends Bo Schembechler and Anthony Carter on its brick walls.

“I give more credit to our landlord than ourselves,” Bamberger says of the building’s owner, former U-M quarterback John Wrangler. “They left everything when they moved into a larger building and we benefited.”

There’s also a 20-by-50-foot outdoor patio that gets a lot of use during the warmer months.

“We have clients who live in the area who have an open invitation to come and work on our patio if they like,” Bamberger says.

Entech Staffing Solutions’ 10,000-square-foot home is somewhat more traditional than that of Emerge, but no less comfortable for employees. It features a contemporary kitchen with a long granite island with chairs adjacent to a sitting area with couches and a fireplace. There’s also a garage that’s transformed into a group workout room, another room with treadmills, a shower facility, and a room for nursing mothers. Entech also has an outdoor space with patio furniture and picnic tables with umbrellas.

A chef comes in twice a week to cook lunch, refrigerators are stocked with food and drinks, and a trainer comes in twice a week. Food trucks also make the occasional visit.

Even the design of the work areas has a purpose, according to Camara. “Based on the way we have the cubes set up, (co-workers) can easily talk but have their own private space. All the offices have glass walls. And we give people all kinds of stuff to wear to work — jackets and sweaters, leggings, vests, and shirts.”

- AZMAC1, Belleville
- Advance Plumbing & Heating Supply Co., Detroit
- Apex Digital Solutions, Southfield
- Apex Staffing Co., Clawson
- Arrow Strategies, Southfield
- Blossom Children’s Center, Novi
- Blue River Financial Group, Bloomfield Hills
- Broder & Sachse Real Estate, Detroit
- Brooklyn Outdoor, Detroit
- Bush Seyferth, Troy
- Choice Telecommunications Inc., Clarkston
- Christensen Law, Southfield
- Citizens State Bank, Royal Oak
- Concetti, Detroit
- Darden Wealth Group Inc., Ann Arbor
- DesignTeam Plus Inc., Birmingham
- DOBI Real Estate, Birmingham
- Imagine Entertainment, Troy
- Emerge Consulting, Royal Oak
- Entech Staffing Solutions, Troy
- Farbman Group, Southfield
- Giroux Pappas Trial Attorneys, Southfield
- Globe Midwest Adjusters International, Southfield
- Jeff Glover and Associates, Plymouth
- Great Lakes Wealth, Northville
- Greenleaf Trust, Birmingham and Kalamazoo
- Greystone Financial Group, Bloomfield Hills
- International Strategic Management Inc., Troy
- Kapnick Insurance Group, Troy
- KW Domain, Birmingham
- Leonard’s Syrups, Detroit
- Lormax Stern Development Co., Bloomfield Hills
- MacKellar Associates Inc., Rochester Hills
- Mario Morrow & Associates, Southfield
- MassMutual Great Lakes, Southfield
- McKenna, Northville
- Michigan Head and Neck Institute, Warren
- Morrey’s Contracting, Detroit
- Nano Magic, Madison Heights
- Near Perfect Media, Bloomfield Township
- O’Keefe, Bloomfield Hills
- PathologyOutlines.com Inc., Bingham Farms
- Plunkett Cooney PC, Bloomfield Hills
- Sachse Construction, Detroit
- Securitech, Farmington Hills
- SGH Wealth Management, Lathrup Village
- Stuart Mechanical, Auburn Hills
- The Goddard School of Novi
- The Law Offices of Barton Morris, Royal Oak
- The Perna Team – Keller Williams, Novi
- Towne Mortgage Co., Troy
- Trion Solutions Inc., Troy
- Vision Computer Solutions, Northville
- Wilshire Benefits Group, Troy
- Zolman Restoration, Walled Lake