

Great occupation

The 25 best remodeling companies to work for

Colleagues who trust each other. Managers who mentor. The chance to develop new skills and advance professionally. These are just some of the basic elements of the price of entry on our annual Best Companies to Work For list.

Basic, you say? These are some of the hardest things in the world

BY KIMBERLY SWEET
Editor

"AN ALL-EXPENSES-PAID summer company trip is taken with all employees and their families. Last year we went camping and white-water rafting in West Virginia. This year we're taking them to Kentucky for a weekend to rock climb, hike, fish, and enjoy cabin camping. A company Christmas party is enjoyed by employees and their spouses at the owners' home. Christmas bonuses are distributed along with company-wide gifts such as new pullover jackets."

— **KELLY EGGERS**, marketing director, co-owner, Remodeling Designs Inc.



The owners of Remodeling Designs Inc. — Kelly Eggers, Erich Eggers, Mike Cordonnier and Joan Cordonnier — received this award from their employees after making the 2003 Best Companies list.

Research methodology

Over the past year, *Professional Remodeler*, *Professional Builder* and *HousingZone.com* have invited remodelers, builders and architects to nominate their companies as one of the best companies to work for in the industry. The nomination form was posted on www.HousingZone.com.

Nominated companies were asked to provide basic information, including employee statistics, offerings, benefits and reasoning on why they provide a good place to work. Employees from these companies were given the chance to weigh in by taking

a survey via the Internet or fax. The survey asked employees to rate their company based on rewards and recognition, professional development, leadership, communication, corporate culture and personal satisfaction. A total of 2,133 employees responded to this survey.

Through the collection of survey responses from both company management and employees, the staff at Reed Research Group spent months examining what makes these companies a great place to work. All of the information provided fac-

tored into ranking the companies. Employee opinion accounted for two-thirds of the final ranking score, while company submissions (including such data as diversity, benefits, offerings, vacation time and qualitative data) comprised one-third. To be included in this year's listing, companies had to provide both employee opinion response as well as information from human resources. The compilation of this data produced our listing of the Top 50 Builders and the Top 25 Remodelers to Work For.

— Reed Research Group

Top 25 Remodelers to Work For — 2004

Rank	Company Name (Location)	Total Revenue 2003 (in millions)	Years in Business	EMPLOYEE INFORMATION					Average Employment (years)	BENEFITS										
				Employee Breakdown						Company Name	Stock Options	Job Sharing	Quarterly Bonuses	401(k)	Tea-commuting	Flex Work Hours	Tuition Reimbursement	Domestic Partnership	Profit Sharing	
				Number of Employees 2003	% Female	% Minors	% < 35 yrs	% > 55 yrs												
1	Bowa Builders Inc. (McLean, Va.)	\$21.5	16	74	19%	35%	31%	5%	4.25	Bowa Builders Inc.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2	Alpha Remodeling (Ann Arbor, Mich.)	\$2.0	15	20	25%	30%	20%	20%	5	Alpha Remodeling		X		X		X	X			
3	Harrell Remodeling Inc. (Mountain View, Calif.)	\$7.1	19	54	30%	28%	24%	13%	4.5	Harrell Remodeling Inc.				X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	Brindisi Builders* (Marlton, N.J.)	\$5.1	27	35	3%	3%	10%	2%	12	Brindisi Builders		X	X	X	X		X			
5	Plaskoff Construction Inc. (Tarzana, Calif.)	\$8.5	18	20	15%	65%	75%	0%	4	Plaskoff Construction Inc.		X	X	X		X	X			
6	Strife Design & Remodel* (Boise, Idaho)	\$2.5	29	11	18%	N/A	18%	18%	9	Strife Design & Remodel			X	X		X				
7	Minardos Construction & Associates (Santa Monica, Calif.)	\$3.5	13	15	20%	40%	40%	30%	6	Minardos Construction & Associates				X	X		X			
8	Bowers Construction Group Inc.* (McLean, Va.)	\$2.4	14	19	16%	16%	25%	19%	4.5	Bowers Construction Group Inc.		X	X	X	X	X	X			
9	Remodeling Designs Inc. (Dayton, Ohio)	\$1.5	14.5	13	23%	0%	15%	0%	6.3	Remodeling Designs Inc.				X		X	X			
10	Small Carpenters at Large Inc.* (Atlanta)	\$1.6	24	12	18%	8%	66%	0%	4.5	Small Carpenters at Large Inc.			X	X		X	X			
11	Power Windows and Siding† (Newark, Del.)	\$12.0	14	60	30%	15%	60%	5%	6.7	Power Windows and Siding	X		X	X		X				
12	Prestige Custom Builders Inc.† (Seattle)	\$2.5	23	20	7%	5%	40%	7%	7	Prestige Custom Builders Inc.				X	X	X	X			
13	Alure Home Improvements (Hicksville, N.Y.)	\$21.2	57	52	26%	N/A	6%	5%	6.5	Alure Home Improvements			X	X	X	X		X	X	
14	Daniels Design & Remodeling Inc.† (Fairfax Station, Va.)	\$1.1	7.5	10	10%	0%	50%	10%	2.5	Daniels Design & Remodeling Inc.			X			X	X			
15	DeClantis Construction LLC† (Storington, Conn.)	\$1.3	32	10	10%	0%	40%	10%	2	DeClantis Construction LLC				X	X		X			
16	McCutcheon Construction Inc.† (Berkeley, Calif.)	\$5.8	24	40	17%	10%	30%	0.08%	3	McCutcheon Construction Inc.			X	X		X	X	X	X	
17	Lee Kimball Kitchens* (Boston)	\$2.6	62	15	45%	0%	30%	1%	7	Lee Kimball Kitchens				X	X	X	X			
18	Finished Basement Company Inc.* (Denver)	\$5.5	7	22	1%	1%	50%	20%	2.5	Finished Basement Company Inc.			X	X	X	X				
19	Kirk Development Co.* (Phoenix, Ariz.)	\$2.2	26	12	18%	N/A	0%	42%	11.3	Kirk Development Co.			X	X		X	X			
20	Garden State Brickface, Windows & Siding (Roselle, N.J.)	\$9.0	51	112	12.5%	69%	17%	21%	13.5	Garden State Brickface, Windows & Siding	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	
21	Backdog Builders (Salem, N.H.)	\$5.4	14	41	25%	6%	45%	3%	5	Backdog Builders			X	X		X	X			
22	Custom Design & Construction* (Los Angeles)	\$3.3	17	6	3%	3%	2%	1%	10	Custom Design & Construction		X	X			X	X			
23	Brinkman Russell Inc.† (Dakota, Minn.)	\$1.5	15	18	12%	0%	28%	12%	5	Brinkman Russell Inc.		X		X		X			X	
24	NewDay Development (Encino, Calif.)	\$2.9	25	7	10%	50%	80%	10%	7	NewDay Development		X				X				
25	Westhill Inc.† (Woodinville, Wash.)	\$3.2	30	25	28%	8%	44%	12%	3.5	Westhill Inc.			X	X		X			X	

Source: Reed Research Group
*—third consecutive appearance, †—new to list

for a company owner to provide for his or her employees. Expensive, too. Yet all 25 remodelers on this list — ranging in size from 6 to 112 employees, from \$1.1 to \$21.5 million annual volume, from 7 to 62 years in business — achieved uniform respect and satisfaction among staff.

From the long list of ideas they have to offer, we've chosen to share the most tangible, specific strategies for training, benefits and recognition programs. Some can be implemented tomorrow; some might take 10 years to achieve. Just remember the end goal: Satisfied employees + lower turnover = satisfied customers + higher profits.

Home, health and wealth

"WE ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE good health and quality of life by paying for 100 percent of medical, dental and vision premiums in addition to supporting the efforts of employees to quit smoking and sponsoring personal counseling support."

— TERESA SANTEPPE, vice president, Prestige Custom Builders

"ALLAN BRINGS IN PROFESSIONALS to give presentations on the 401(k) plan and encourages everyone to join in that program, especially the younger people. Our insurance agent is brought in yearly to discuss the policy. Allan offers to pay for part

of the pre-paid legal service premium for those who want to join that program. Even if we never have need for a lawyer, at minimum we get a prepared will."

— JOANIE PARIS, controller, Alpha Remodeling

"ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS, the company allows employees the opportunity to work from a home office. For example, many employees in the production department supervise jobs throughout the city and a distance from company headquarters. The company allows these employees to perform a large part of the administrative duties from home to mini-



Vice President John Coburn and co-owners Wilma and Bruce Bowers of Bowers Construction Group make an effort to train carpenters for life after the field.

"WE WORK WITH EACH EMPLOYEE to understand their career goals and develop a track of increasing responsibility and on-the-job training to help them achieve that goal. In the past year we've helped one employee start his own business. He is now a subcontractor to our firm. In addition, we have three carpenter level employees who are on a training/career track to become estimators and/or manage our kitchen/bath division. We recognize that we have an aging workforce, so we are developing strategies to change our business practices to allow them to manage more than do the physical labor themselves."

— **WILMA BOWERS**, marketing director, co-owner, Bowers Construction Group

mize drive time, increase efficiency and maximize the amount of time they can spend with their families."

— **WILL GARIN**, marketing manger, Finished Basement Company

"SPOUSES ARE INVITED to company meetings to share in what goes on within the company and keep them abreast of changes in insurance or benefits."

— **SUE TUGHAN**, director of administration and marketing, Westhill Inc.

"HEALTHY, HAPPY, SAFE Employee Program — In recognition of over 50 years in business, our employees have designed this program with 12 special themes each year. Clean-up, cross-training, drug and alcohol awareness, ESOP, I-Power, CPR/first aid, love thy fellow employee, safety awareness, stop smoking education, weight control and nutrition. There is an emphasis on the importance of health and safety in the workplace as well as at home."

— **JOE HELY**, marketing manager, Garden State Brickface, Windows & Siding

Training tips

"EMPLOYEES ARE CROSS-TRAINED in carpentry, painting and customer service. This expands their skill base, versatility, and value to the company and the client.

During challenging economic conditions, we were able to keep 95 percent of our staff working full time."

— **TERESA SANTERRE**

"WE OFFER CERTIFICATION to any employee who would like to go through training with NARI or the NAHB Remodelers Council."

— **TOM SERTICH**, CEO, Kirk Development Co.

"IN THE WINTER, when other companies are in down time, our installation staff is expanding their education during a six- to eight-week intensive training course. New sales representatives must attend an extensive three-week training program consisting of company history, product education and field training with the installation crew on each product to gain an understanding of the workflow."

— **JOE HELY**

"WE DEVOTE AT LEAST A WEEK of time on average each year for employees to further their own knowledge and value to the company. We offer in-house training through BOWA University. We offer tuition reimbursement for outside classes for everything from computer training to language training to job-specific training. We also spend a good deal of time and money investing in our management-

level employees with monthly training sessions and two off-site retreats each year. Our education and training has allowed a number of people to rise from the ranks of unskilled entry-level employees to the highest levels in management over the years. We currently have two owners of BOWA who have followed this path."

— **JAMES LITTLE**, chief knowledge officer, BOWA Builders

Rewards and recognition

"WE DO WHATEVER IT TAKES to make our company a great place to work for each and every one of them. Often that means understanding what motivates and/or means something to each individual, whether telecommuting, flex hours, increased responsibilities, invitations to supplier golf outings, or NARI monthly meetings or award dinners."

— **WILMA BOWERS**

"WE OFFER A PROGRAM called PartnerPoints, which enables employees to earn a trip to the Caribbean (all expenses paid for two) just for recommending Alure to their family and friends. We have a few incentive programs for work generated through the current customer base and for new employees brought in, with compensation in bonus money."

— **LISA DIFILIPPI**, controller, Alure Home Improvements

"EACH EMPLOYEE HAS 10 'DAYS-OFF' certificates to be awarded to co-workers who go above and beyond. When an employee receives 10, they receive a paid day off. At monthly staff meetings we hear about the month's mistakes. The one that we learn the most from receives \$100."

— **DENISE M. NOTT**, office manager, DeCiantis Construction

"EMPLOYEES CAN NOMINATE each other for a job well done using a certificate of appreciation. These certificates are tallied at the end of the month, and a four-pack of movie gift certificates is given to the team member of the month."

— **ANDREA BICKUM**, office manager, Lee Kimball Kitchens PR