

A better workplace

Which are the 100 best companies to work for? Every year in the UK, there is an annual award to find out the answer to this question. Can the ideas generated by this competition help other companies create a better workplace?

1 Which do you think is the 'best' company to work for? Why is working for them so good? Compare and discuss your answer with a partner. Use some of the words and phrases in the box below.

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| work-life balance | challenging | training |
| holidays | days off | management incentives |

2 Study the paragraph headings (a-d) below. Skim the article and match them to the correct paragraphs (1-4).

- (a) Promotional film (b) Innovative ideas (c) Assessment (d) Annual competition

[1] Every year, a company called 'Best companies' and the well-known Sunday newspaper, the Sunday Times, announce the winners of a competition to find the best 100 companies to work for in the UK. There are three lists: firstly for small companies, with between 50 and 249 employees; secondly, for medium-size companies; and finally, for large companies with over 5,000 employees. The winner of the best large company to work for in 2009 was the auditing firm KPMG.

[2] How are these so-called 'best' companies assessed? Employees are asked how they feel about five areas: the management; their work-life balance; the company itself; how much they feel the company puts back into society; and finally, whether they feel challenged by their work. Results show whether staff feel proud to work at that company, and if the company makes a positive difference to the world.

[3] This competition has produced a wealth of ideas for improving life in the workplace. Stress reduction ideas include shortening the working day by half an hour; closing early on Friday and offering six months of unpaid leave after working for one particular company for three years. One firm invests heavily in training, running lunchtime sessions. Another offers employees free fruit, cereal bars and herbal teas, as well as corporate gym membership. One company recently gave everyone a day off to do charitable work.

[4] This year, the winning companies in the final three lists are being given the opportunity to create a four-minute video outlining the qualities that make their organisation a good employer. Clearly, these videos can then be used to promote the company on its website. Getting on the Top 100 list is becoming desirable, and something a firm can be proud of.

3 Read the article. How are the best companies assessed? What ideas are mentioned to improve the workplace?

4 Complete the grid below. Create sentences using some of these words about your own workplace.

| Noun | Noun (person) | Verb |
|-------------|---------------|-----------|
| competition | (a) | (b) |
| (c) | manager | (d) |
| (e) | (f) | challenge |

| Noun | Noun (person) | Verb |
|------------|---------------|--------|
| (g) | / | employ |
| investment | (h) | (i) |
| (j) | auditor | (k) |

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups. Be ready to report your findings to the class.

- (a) Which ideas do you like and dislike in the article? Would any of them work in your company?
- (b) Add two or three more ideas which would make life better in the workplace.
- (c) If you created a corporate video about your own company, which three qualities would you highlight?