



2015 BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR IN ALABAMA



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BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR IN ALABAMA

Employees like open communications, the feeling that they can make suggestions and be heard, and the knowledge that their job makes a difference to the company and the communities in which they take part.

Each year, the Best Companies Group offers Alabama businesses a chance to evaluate how well they measure up as great employers — both in the eyes of their employees and in comparison to other companies across the state.

Best Companies Group surveys officials and employees at participating companies, then evaluates the responses and helps management learn their strengths and weaknesses.

Employers are asked to provide basics about their company, such as average

salaries, jobs added recently, layoffs and voluntary departures by staff members, benefit plans and policies regarding vacation time, sick days and personal leave days. The company also answers questions on topics like incentives, community service initiatives, fitness facilities, telecommuting, business dress and training.

Employees take a shorter survey, ranking their reactions to statements such as, “The leaders of this organization are open to input from employees,” or “Safety is a top priority with this organization.” Employees are asked about benefits, plans for staying with the company and whether they would recommend the company to a friend.

Employees also have open-ended questions that cover such ground as “What

makes this a good place to work?” and “What would you do to make working here more satisfying?”

The results of the survey go back to the businesses, so company officials can compare their results — based on anonymous surveys of employees and leaders — to benchmarks for the region and make sure managers and employees are on the same wavelength.

More than a learning process for participating firms, the evaluations are also used to select “The Best Companies to Work for in Alabama,” and awards are presented to the companies in August in a ceremony at the Hyatt Regency Birmingham – The Wynfrey Hotel. Business Alabama introduces this year’s winners on the following pages.

USING THE SURVEY TO CREATE A BETTER WORKPLACE

The survey is the most valuable aspect of the Best Companies program, says Dennis Sherrin, managing shareholder at Hartmann, Blackmon & Kilgore PC. “The survey provides valuable information telling us where we are a ‘hit’ and where we ‘missed.’ Being responsive to survey feedback is an overt way to respond to our team’s point of view.”

Virginia Bridges, vice president of human resources at Bayer Properties LLC, agrees. “We use the information to quantitatively assist us in acknowledging what we do well but more importantly, identifying opportunities to improve.”

“The executive team at Golden Construction takes the data from the survey and reviews all areas where we need to improve,” says President Geoff Golden. “We determine the most critical items that affect morale and make a plan to address these items effectively.”

Jamison Money Farmer uses the survey process and results in several ways. “Externally we will use it to leverage communication and relations with clients, our community and prospective employees,” says Managing Shareholder Bryan Chan-

dlar. “Internally we will drill down into the survey to analyze what we are doing well and where we need to do better.”

“The information from the Best Places to Work survey helps us keep our finger on the pulse of our employee engagement,” says TQL President Kerry Byrne. “This helps us to continuously create the best work environment for our employees.”

“We use the results mostly for recruiting,” says Jason Kozon, a financial advisor with Edward Jones. “We are constantly growing and our high rankings help us tell the story about why Edward Jones is a great place to work.”

Construction firm Gray finds a two-fold benefit from the survey. “First it’s reassurance that we’re doing things right,” says Brian Jones, vice president for the Southeast. “And second it’s part of our continuous improvement model. We use the results to see where we fall short and what we can do to improve.”

“It’s always great to get the recognition, but as a company it’s far more valuable to get that type of in depth feedback from your employees,” says CTS CEO Larry Lilley. And the survey led to changes in-

cluding improvements in the 401k policy and time off for community service.

At Alabama Credit Union, the survey is “part of our strategic plan, we use it to gauge our employee satisfaction and build on our self-improvement capabilities,” says President Steve Swofford.

And survey results translate to action at Wilkins Miller. “We subscribe to the belief that you can’t survey folks and not act on the results,” says Managing Partner Allen Carroll. Recently, for example, the firm began a reimbursement program for CPA licensing and certifications. “We know that this organization is not perfect — no relationship is ever perfect — but it’s my hope that we never stop being interested in improvement.”

Previous Page Photos
Holiday festivities and family time are high priorities for most companies’ employees, so these firms that ranked high in this year’s the Best Companies to Work For in Alabama competition make time for such events. Top left: Gray Construction Top right: CTS Bottom: Wilkins Miller

BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR IN ALABAMA

SMALL-TO-MEDIUM SIZE COMPANIES (15-249 total company employees)

RANK	COMPANY	ALA. EXECUTIVE AND TITLE	ADDRESS	PHONE/FAX	WEBSITE	# OF ALA. EMPL.	INDUSTRY
1	CTS Inc.	Larry Lilley CEO	300 Riverchase Pkwy. E. Birmingham, AL 35243 6420 Wall St. Mobile, AL 36695	205-259-2300 205-259-2301 251-706-4460 251-706-4461	askcts.com	160	Technology
2	Alabama Credit Union	Steve Swofford President/CEO	220 Paul W. Bryant Dr. E. Tuscaloosa, AL 35401	205-348-5944 205-348-7456	alabamacu.com	175	Credit Union
3	Wilkins Miller LLC	W. Allen Carroll Jr. Managing Partner	41 W. I-65 Service Rd. N., Ste. 400 Mobile, AL 36608	251-410-6700 251-410-6799	wilkinsmiller.com	60	Accounting
4	Premier Bank of the South	John J. Mullins Chairman, President, CEO	101 First Ave. NW Cullman, AL 35055	256-737-9900 256-739-4889	premierbankofthesouth.com	68	Banking
5	DeAngelis Diamond Healthcare Group LLC	Robert Young President	1800 International Park Dr., Ste. 10, Birmingham, AL 35243	205-410-0422 205-977-7793	ddhealthcaregroup.com	16	Construction
6	Hartmann Blackmon & Kilgore PC	Dennis Sherrin Managing Shareholder, CEO	PO Box 1469 Fairhope, AL 36533	251-928-2443	hbkcpcas.net	50	Accounting
7	Golden Construction	Geoffrey S. Golden President	2212 First Ave. S. Birmingham, AL 35233	205-322-7726 205-322-6016	goldenconstruction.com	67	Construction
8	ASF Intermodal	Michael Smith President/CEO	3812 Springhill Ave. Mobile, AL 36608	251-287-8152 251-287-8151	asfintermodal.com	27	Transportation
9	JamisonMoneyFarmer PC	Bryan Chandler Managing Shareholder	2200 Jack Warner Pkwy., Ste. 300, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401	205-345-8440 205-366-4000	jmf.com	85	Accounting
10	Bayer Properties LLC	Jeffrey A. Bayer President	2222 Arlington Ave. Birmingham, AL 35205	205-939-3111 205-939-3140	bayerproperties.com	83	Real Estate

LARGE COMPANIES (250 or more total company employees)

RANK	COMPANY	ALA. EXECUTIVE AND TITLE	ADDRESS	PHONE/FAX	WEBSITE	# OF ALA. EMPL.	INDUSTRY
1	TQL	Kerry Byrne President	27900 N. Main St., Ste. 5 Daphne, AL 36526	800-580-3101 513-248-5347	tql.com	25	Logistics
2	Edward Jones	Jason Kozon Financial Advisor	358 N. Alston St. Foley, AL 36535	251-943-3399 888-860-6265	edwardjones.com	307	Financial Services
3	Gray	Brian Jones Vice President, Southeast	2 N. 20th St., Ste. 100 Birmingham, AL 35203	205-380-1800 205-380-1819	gray.com	19	Construction
4	Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz PC	Keith Andress Office Managing Shareholder	1400 Wells Fargo Tower, 420 20th St. N., Ste. 1400 Birmingham, AL 35203	205-328-0480 205-322-8007	bakerdonelson.com	138	Legal
5	Warren Averett LLC	Jim Cunningham CEO	2500 Acton Rd. Birmingham, AL 35243	205-979-4100 205-979-6313	warrenaverett.com	447	Accounting
6	America's First Federal Credit Union	Bill Conner President/CEO	1200 4th Ave. N. Birmingham, AL 35203	205-320-4000 205-320-4166	amfirst.org	306	Credit Union
7	MAX	Greg McClellan President/CEO	400 Eastdale Cir. Montgomery, AL 36117	334-260-2600 334-270-0921	mymax.com	307	Credit Union
8	Hargrove Engineers + Constructors	Ralph Hargrove President	20 S. Royal St. Mobile, AL 36602	251-476-0605 251-476-4895	hargrove-epc.com	465	Construction
9	Jones Walker LLP	William W. Horton Office Head	1819 5th Ave. N., Ste. 1100 Birmingham, AL 35203	205-244-5200 205-244-5400	joneswalker.com	84	Legal
10	Tower Loan	Francis C. Lee President/CEO	PO Box 320001 Flowood, MS 39232	888-664-9100	towerloan.com	45	Financial

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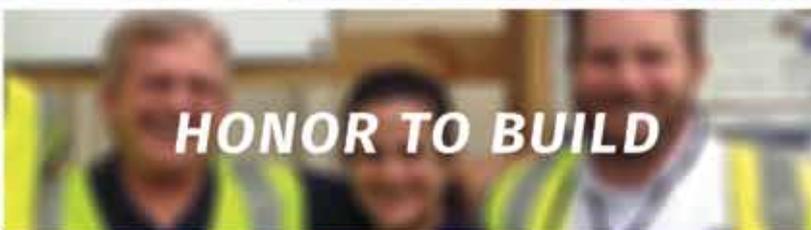


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BEST LARGE EMPLOYER: TOTAL QUALITY LOGISTICS



TQL: A WORK HARD, PLAY HARD STRATEGY

STORIES BY THOMAS M. LITTLE, ALYSHA SCHERTZ AND LAURA STAKELUM

Arranging transportation isn't an easy job. People in the industry must be available at all hours — seven days a week, 365 days of the year. It's stressful, but employees at Total Quality Logistics (TQL) are rewarded for their efforts on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

Based in Cincinnati, Ohio, TQL is one of the largest freight brokerage firms in the country. The company connects product that needs to be shipped with truckload carriers that have the ability to move it.

"Our employees are among the best in the logistics business, they are our biggest asset," says Kerry Byrne, president of TQL.

The company currently has more than 3,300 employees nationwide, including 30 in Alabama at its Daphne location.

The company has established a "Perks Team" of engagement specialists whose sole job is to implement services and benefits that make the lives of TQL employees easier.

This year the company launched a series of non-traditional benefits for

employees, including national donut day celebrations and mailing cards to moms and dads on their respective days. The company adopts a relaxed summer dress code to assist with day-to-day comfort, and it's not uncommon for teams to engage in fun and friendly in-office competitions throughout the workday.

"Ours is a work-hard, play-hard culture," says Byrne.

That culture plays a big part in keeping employees engaged and their morale and energy level high, he says. "This engagement lends itself to more productive employees, which in turn, drives company growth."

In addition, TQL employees can dictate their own income based on how hard they work, Byrne says. That, according to employee feedback, is one of the best aspects of working for the company.

"We are a high-energy company. We have a lot of internal competitions, we participate and sponsor a lot of charitable and social events in our communities," says Byrne. "And we celebrate all kinds of

Moving freight is a high stress job, so TQL makes sure employees have plenty of chances to relax and enjoy each other's company.

victories — from opening a new office to an account executive earning his or her first commission check."

The hard work and dedication of TQL staff is the reason the company has grown from a two-man operation in 1997 when it was founded to a \$2 billion company in 2014, says Byrne.

The company plans to continue to expand across the country to find new talent and increase market share.

"No matter how big we get, we want TQL to be the kind of company that recognizes the effort and value of its people."

Thomas Little, Alysha Schertz and Laura Stakelum are freelance contributors to Business Alabama. Little is based in Birmingham, Schertz in Mobile and Stakelum in Dothan.

STANDOUTS AMONG ALABAMA'S LARGEST EMPLOYERS

EDWARD JONES

Edward Jones takes a personal approach to investing. Mixing that with its regional focus, commitment to clients and community and its core values continue to drive the company's success.

"The regional aspect of Edward Jones makes our large company feel small, and it allows us to focus on our clients in the communities we serve," says Jason Kozon, financial advisor based in Foley.

Edward Jones has more than 37,000 employees serving more than 250 regions

across the country. Four regions — 138 branches and 307 associates — serve the state of Alabama.

Kozon, like all Edward Jones financial advisors, regularly meets face-to-face with clients in his community.

"Our business model is very unique. We give employees the opportunity to embrace their entrepreneurial spirit by opening their own branch, while still having the backing and support of the Edward Jones name behind them," he says.

Associates adhere to the firm's original core values and remain committed to

client interests, a quality long-term investment philosophy and the partnership mentality.

Employees at Edward Jones actually own the company and can become partners in the firm, he says.

"The on-going training we get is phenomenal," Kozon says. "The firm recognizes the value of its employees and seeks to provide ongoing education and resources at all stages of an employee's career. The reputation and integrity of the Edward Jones brand is what brought me here and what keeps me here."



A team from Gray ran the color spray gauntlet to help raise funds for Children's of Alabama.

GRAY CONSTRUCTION

Employees want to be a part of something great.

Employees at Lexington, Kentucky-based Gray Construction certainly are, according to Brian Jones, vice president of Gray Construction's Southeast Regional Office.

Not only is the company on track to

do a billion dollars of construction work this year; it's also the third year in a row the firm has been named to The Best Companies to Work for in Alabama list, says Jones.

While Gray operates branch offices throughout the U.S. and Japan, Birmingham is the company's largest satellite office. The company recently purchased a five-story building in downtown

Birmingham and has embarked on an employee-driven project to build out its workspace in the new building.

"Our goal is to attract a younger generation of workers, so we're focused on adding that 'cool factor' and flair into our new state-of-the-art office," says Jones. "It's a statement to the fact that we're set on being here long term."

"We're a progressive company, we embrace technology and always try to think outside the box," says Jones.

The company currently has 25 employees in Alabama and plans to have space for 60 in the new building.

"People come first," says Jones. "We value our relationships with our employees and with our clients, and we value the input of every employee, regardless of age or experience."

BAKER DONELSON

The largest law firm in the Southeast, Baker Donelson has been in Alabama since 1928. This full-service litigation firm has three offices in Alabama, with 65 lawyers and 65 support staff.

"The people make this a great place to work," says Office Managing Shareholder Keith Andress. "We have an unbelievably large group of nice, hard working, com-

mitted people."

"We believe in giving the same high level of service to one another as we do to our clients," says Andress. "Ours is a culture of commitment to clients, to one another, to our communities. People really look out for one another."

Baker Donelson makes a point to hire people who share the firm's values — which puts all 650 lawyers employed across the country on the same page.

Retention, Andress says, is excellent.

While everyone may not always agree on everything, everyone functions as a team.

After participating in the survey, Baker Donelson looks carefully at the results and tries to find areas of improvement. They make changes and improvements as they are able. Says Andress, "The surveys are an excellent source of information. Employees show a general appreciation of working here."

WARREN AVERETT

Founded in 1972, Warren Averett started as a CPA firm and expanded into consulting and other services. By merging with other firms, Warren Averett grew to its current 850 employees in 15 offices in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Texas and the Cayman Islands.

Birmingham Office Managing Member and Chief Growth Officer Tommy Sisson attributes the successful work environment of Warren Averett to the “A-Plus Wheel” concept that guides the company. Three components — attracting A-Plus talent, providing A-Plus services to A-Plus clients — make up the spokes of the wheel.

“This is the key to our success,” Sisson says. “Everything we do strengthens a spoke on the wheel.”

Warren Averett enjoys a history of internal advancements and is always looking for new ideas and services.

“We’ve been lucky to retain talent, and we’re always finding new ways to solve problems,” Sisson says. “Finding new ways to solve problems creates new op-



Employees of Warren Averett on a recent excursion demonstrate that there’s more than one way to catch a fish.

portunities.”

According to Sisson, Warren Averett uses the results of the survey to improve on the existing work environment.

“The survey is a great way to take the temperature for what’s out there,” he says. “We want to help team members and clients thrive.”

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We do everything we can to involve the employees to see how we can improve.

— Audra Weber,
America's First
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Simply stated, we aim to treat people the way we would want to be treated, do the right thing and have fun while we work.

— Greg McClellan, MAX

We truly value the people and the work we do.

— Greg Blankenship,
Hargrove Engineers
+ Constructors

AMERICA'S FIRST FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

Since 1936, beginning as Iron and Steel Workers Credit Union, America's First Federal Credit Union has been offering financial services to the public in the seven counties of the Birmingham area. Today, more than 300 employees serve at 18 locations.

"We have an employee-centric CEO," says Audra Weber, senior vice president and chief human resources officer. "That makes my job easier."

CEO Bill Conner believes that the company is only as good as the employ-

ees, so he allows for growth and opportunities for the employees. In addition to providing benefits such as life and vision insurance, America's First Federal Credit Union also offers tuition reimbursement, paid volunteer time off and gym memberships.

Results from the survey are categorized and used as an engagement report to see where improvements can be made. In previous years, employees expressed an interest in receiving more training. Now, America's First Federal Credit Union offers a robust training program.

"We do everything we can to involve the employees to see how we can improve," says Weber.



Colorful footwear is just the start of the fresh approach taken by employees at America's First Federal Credit Union.



Who you gonna call? Why not the credit union experts at MAX, who work together with their mantra, "We will find a way."

MAX

Since 1955, the credit union MAX has been evolving into a stable, growing financial institution. "MAX is a smarter place to bank and work," says Sandra Stenger, vice president of human resources.

MAX offers a full range of products and services to help customers save money conveniently. With 312 employees in 15 branches in the River Region and Lee County, Max has created a corporate culture that focuses on the MAX family. Great benefits are offered, as well as tuition reimbursement, discounted gym memberships, wellness programs and friendly leave policies.

"We operate on the core values of simplicity, hospitality and integrity," says Stenger. "Our mantra is we will find a way."

According to Lynette Cupps, assistant vice president of corporate communications, healthy communication is key. A blog called "Inside the Cube" is published in video and written form to highlight volunteerism, remind employees about upcoming initiatives and product specials, and also to share family announcements.

Promotions often come from within; Cupps and Stenger both started at entry-level positions.

"MAX is a great place to work and enjoy a career," says President and CEO Greg McClellan. "As a team, we highly value each other as team members and constantly try to work together to provide the best possible experiences and services for both team members and our customers. Simply said, we aim to treat people the way we would want to be treated, do the right thing, and have fun while we work."

HARGROVE ENGINEERS + CONSTRUCTORS

Hargrove Engineers + Constructors is excited to be celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. Founded in 1995, Hargrove now has 11 divisions and 1,050 teammates across the Southeast and in Houston and Pennsylvania.

Hargrove sees itself as a large company made of small groups, says Decatur Division Leader Greg Blankenship. It maintains this feeling through sending out birthday announcements, celebrat-

ing the completion of a project with pizza parties and hosting family picnics.

"Teammates also often come together to help other teammates who are facing challenges, giving vacation days to those in need" says Roy Duncan, Mobile Division leader, illustrating the family focus and culture of the team.

According to Senior Human Resources Generalist Mandy Mayson, Hargrove also has a commitment to training and personal development. Teammates are encouraged to pursue additional degrees and licenses. A new wellness program gives teammates the opportunity to challenge one another to better their health. Teammates also

can participate in a stock ownership plan. Schedules are flexible so everyone has plenty of time with their families.

"We truly value the people and the work we do," says Blankenship.

Three years ago, Hargrove established the Hargrove Foundation as a way to give back to the community. It is funded through teammate contributions and matched dollar for dollar by the company.

"A big part of our culture is giving back," says Vice President of Marketing Vicki Studstill. "We are constantly looking for ways to make an impact in the areas we live and work."

JONES WALKER LLP

Law firm Jones Walker LLP has had two offices in Alabama for the past five years. Originating in New Orleans in 1937, Jones Walker now has 400 lawyers around the country with a concentration in the Gulf South. Alabama's offices have 46 lawyers and 85 staff members.

According to Office Head William W. Horton, Jones Walker is a great place to work because of the commitment to client services. The firm is run by a managing partner and board of directors in New Orleans, while each office has a head lawyer.

Across the board, Jones Walker has a strong commitment to open communications. In addition to comprehensive benefit packages, employees are rewarded for meeting health goals in the wellness program provided by Jones Walker. Due to the positive attitude at Jones Walker, the firm enjoys employee longevity.

Participating in the survey helps the leadership to gauge the work environment. "We always want to know how employees perceive this as a place to work," Horton says. "We make changes and improvements based on the responses and pay attention to what we hear."

TOWER LOAN

In 1936, consumer finance company Tower Loan opened its first office. Through many acquisitions, the company has grown to more than 200 offices — 16 of them in Alabama and more slated to open later in 2015.

According to Lynne Card, director of human resources, Tower Loan makes its promotions from within, giving everyone a chance for advancement. While Tower Loan has been enjoying rapid growth, sometimes feeling engaged can be hard for employees. Card says Tower Loan works to keep the company feeling like a family.

"We communicate as quickly as possible," she says. "There is good communication between leadership and employees."

A charity was recently established and the company enjoys getting involved in their community by helping to select the recipients. Wounded Warrior and Juvenile Diabetes Research have benefitted from Tower Loan's charity.

Feedback from the survey allows Tower Loan to learn from the results. Card appreciates the input from the employees. The more people who participate in the survey, she says, the more improvements Tower Loan can make in the workplace.

We always want to know how employees perceive this as a place to work.
We make changes and improvements based on the responses and pay attention to what we hear.

— William W. Horton, Jones Walker LLP

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BEST SMALL-MEDIUM EMPLOYER: CTS



CTS: APPROACHABLE MANAGEMENT HELPS KEEP EMPLOYEES ENGAGED

“If you treat people like adults they will behave accordingly; if you shield them, and treat them like children they will behave accordingly as well,” says Larry Lilley, chief executive officer of Birmingham-based Computer Technology Solutions or CTS.

The company prides itself on its culture of transparency and its commitment to its employees and the community.

“Our company is extremely transparent in our communication,” Lilley says. “From everything including the history and the culture of the company to the successes we celebrate and the challenges we face.”

Lilley regularly visits each CTS office and meets with small groups of employees to establish direct communication channels that he believes help drive the success of the company. “There are generally no more than eight employees in those groups, and they are encouraged to ask about anything they want to know about the organization or the goals that we have

as a company,” he says.

“Our management team is fun and approachable — an idea about how to make this organization better can come from anyone,” he says.

CTS is a regional IT consulting firm. Lilley co-founded the company in 1993 with his colleague, Bill Fenton, vice president of engineering, and another college friend. Today, the company has more than 250 employees and six locations, including two in Alabama. The company has hired 30 to 40 new people in Alabama over the last 12 months; by the end of the year that could be as many as 60.

Mobile is the company’s fastest growing location, Lilley says.

From the onset of hiring a new employee, there’s a clearly defined career path for everyone. “Part of transparency is setting expectations for our employees’ on what they need to do to succeed.”

Strategically, the company targets the cities where it wants to expand and tries

to limit the amount of travel required by its employees.

“In the war for talent, we’ve recognized that people in this industry enjoy traveling until a certain point in their careers,” Lilley says. “We try to expand geographically rather than all in one location to better serve our clients and the community from a local office.”

The company’s turnover rate is approximately 20 percent less than the industry average.

According to Lilley, CTS employees receive an outstanding benefits package that includes generous paid time off, but the company’s dedication to the communities it serves has driven the company to provide an additional week of paid time off for employees to do community service.

Employees gather at the new CTS office in Mobile. The company’s main office is in Birmingham.

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ALABAMA CREDIT UNION

Being member-owned brings a different dynamic to the company culture at Alabama Credit Union. According to CEO Steve Swofford, it lends itself to a more employee-involved, communicative workplace, and also drives growth in the company.

Alabama Credit Union started at the University of Alabama and now has more than 185 employees at 25 locations throughout the state, says Swofford.

“We’ve been recognized as one of Alabama’s fastest growing credit unions for quite a while now,” says Swofford. “Part of the reason for that is our communication. Our employees are kept very aware of what is going on in the company, they know what our mission is and what we’re

all about.”

Swofford has established “high performance teams” of employees that assist in all major decisions made in the company, he says. Teams of employees from all departments across all branches meet in Tuscaloosa without senior management.

“That process is so important,” Swofford says. “We really empower our employees, and they lead the charge in discovering ways to do many things within our company better.”

Employees who’ve had the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process buy into the final solution a lot more, he says.

Alabama Credit Union senior management takes pride in knowing employees and their families on a personal level. Personalization not only drives cohesiveness throughout the firm, it also helps drive trust and growth, Swofford says.



A relaxing moment for employees at Tuscaloosa-based Alabama Credit Union.



Employees at Mobile’s Wilkins Miller accounting firm take time out for a staff photo.

WILKINS MILLER

For more than 50 years, Mobile-based Wilkins Miller has provided audit, tax, accounting and consulting services to the Gulf Coast. The foundation of the company lies in its commitment to its longstanding culture and the employees at the firm.

“We do a really good job of hiring the

right people — getting them engaged, and then getting out of the way,” says Allen Carroll Jr., managing partner.

The firm has a strong focus on work-life balance, and recognizes the value of personal time and workplace flexibility. “Now it’s a buzzword, but we’ve been doing it as long as I’ve been with the firm,” Carroll says. “It’s a demanding profession. We rec-

ognize that, and ultimately treat everyone like we would want to be treated.”

This year, the company implemented a program that only required employees to work two Saturdays during the busy season from January to April — a big departure for most firms during that time.

Wilkins Miller also prides itself on its open door policy. Partners, professional staff and even interns work seamlessly together in open communication.

New employees are paired with a mentor to help guide them and answer any questions they may have, says Carroll. In response to employee survey feedback, the company also implemented a program to assist employees with obtaining their CPA licenses and additional credits.

PREMIER BANK OF THE SOUTH

“We are bankers who share camaraderie in a safe, comfortable work environment,” Rusty Payne, executive vice president of Cullman-based Premier Bank of

the South, told Business Alabama last year. The bank declined an interview this year. He added that Premier Bank encourages new ideas and when employees share them, management listens.

As for worker advancement: “We are continuing to grow,” Payne said, citing two recent expansions. “With growth

comes opportunity. If you work for us and you can do the job, want it and there’s an opening, it’s yours.”

Premier Bank emphasizes continuous on-the-job training and cross training for multiple job positions, Payne said.

DEANGELIS DIAMOND

General contractor DeAngelis Diamond Healthcare Group has managed more than \$1 billion of construction around the U.S., with significant business based in Birmingham.

President Robert Young believes that his team members are what make the company all that it is. "I can't say enough about the quality of our people," he says.

"We want all our people to feel this is the greatest work experience they can have, and we also recognize that career and family life should be in balance."

DeAngelis invests heavily in its employees and strives to facilitate a quality work-life balance.

"We strive to be servant leaders, putting the needs of our team members first while helping them develop and perform as highly as possible."

Family-focused benefits include maternity care and adoption assistance. DeAngelis offers a retirement plan and membership to Costco and Sam's Club. Veteran team members receive Veterans Day off, and employees may receive volunteer time off. In addition to eight holidays, employees can take the day off on their birthday.

DeAngelis also allows room for upward mobility among its staff. "As a young, innovative company we will continue to have many future opportunities for advancement," says Young. "Since the beginning of 2015 we have created five new positions in the company and promoted seven team members."

HARTMANN, BLACKMON & KILGORE PC

The accounting and consulting firm of Hartmann, Blackmon & Kilgore PC serves multiple industries while exploring and innovating the best ways to meet client needs. "Our team likes to focus on 'why' we do what we do," says Managing Shareholder Dennis Sherrin. "We do what we do to make our customers, communities and our employees better by challenging 'the way things have always been done' and looking at where things will be looking forward."

Firm leadership aims to empower the team with training and cooperation. "We have created a collaborative work environment where thought, creativity, innovation and honest opinions are required," says Sherrin. "The company continues to seek new benefits and programs to meet the changing needs of our team."

The firm offers a range of benefits including medical and dental insurance and a 401k. During the summer, Friday office hours are shortened. Employee enrichment is fostered through education incentives. "We encourage and support our staff accountants to attain their CPA license by offering time for them to study, as well as pay for their training, study material and exam costs."

Through training, team members can enhance their skills and grow within the company. "We recently had two executive internal promotions: Principal and Director of our Foley office and Principal and Director of Accounting and Audit Services."

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Leadership from within is a key component for the growth of Golden Construction. Employees are encouraged to innovate on the job site.

GOLDEN CONSTRUCTION

Specializing in multi-family, senior living, and hospitality facilities, Golden Construction employs an innovative staff in Birmingham's Southside. The general contractor has pioneered the construction process through their waste-cutting Golden Production System.

"We thrive on collaboration and working together to solve issues and remove waste from our processes," says President Geoff Golden.

Golden credits his staff for the company's continued innovation. "Golden is filled with amazing people," he says. "Literally, every single person here is talented, innovative and productive, yet humble, friendly and caring."

Company culture is defined by a core set of values — unity, respect, innovation, communication, commitment and humility. Communication is kept clear with an emphasis on honesty and respect.

"We believe in candor and using it to help us attack issues and not the people involved," says Golden. "This applies to employees, subcontractors and clients."

Employees are eligible for a 401k plan, flexible spending account and HRA account. Insurance is provided for health, dental, life, disability and vision.

Golden operates across the country and continues to expand into new markets. "This provides employees with regular opportunities to advance within the company," says Golden. "Whether it's a project manager moving into a senior project manager role or a laborer moving into a superintendent role, employees that work hard and are innovative are rewarded with new responsibilities and opportunities."

Golden is proud of the numerous employees promoted to high positions within the company. "We make every effort to promote from within," he says. "That sustains our culture."

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ASF INTERMODAL

In Mobile, ASF Intermodal has fostered a family-first culture with open lines of communication. "All employees are given the autonomy to make decisions in a team-focused environment," says President and CEO Michael Smith.

The Port City intermodal drayage carrier and full transportation broker operates 11 offices across the Southeast and Midwest. Departments include safety, accounting, operations and management, with unique opportunities to advance in each.

ASF encourages dialogue among team members and management. "Every team member is treated with respect and a valued participant within our team," says Smith. "All of our associates know that our company has a very open door policy and leadership is always available for anything they need."

Smith and company apply a servant-leadership approach to management, with direct communication with staff. "We believe if we exist to serve the need of our associates rather than always directing, it brings out the strength in people, rather than them always waiting on management to direct them on what needs to be done," says Smith.

ASF offers a 401k plan and medical insurance through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama. Employees enjoy seven holidays and are allowed 15 days off, with the number of days increasing over time. The company also reimburses a portion of employee gym membership costs. As company goals are met, employees may be eligible for yearly target bonuses.

JAMISONMONEYFARMER PC

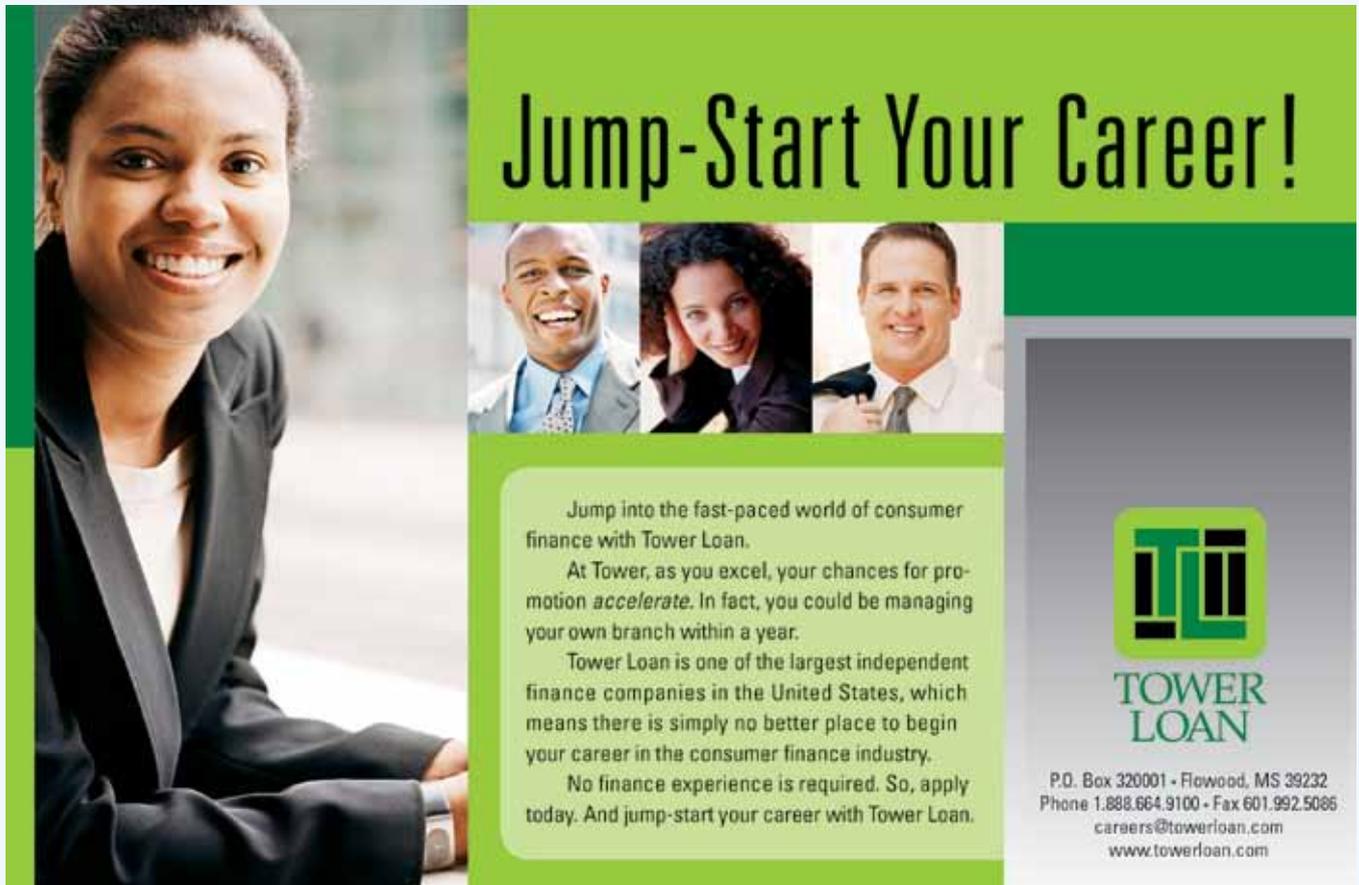
With offices in Birmingham, Tuscaloosa and Selma, public accounting firm JamisonMoneyFarmer PC serves family-owned businesses, governmental groups and not-for-profits.

Managing Shareholder Bryan Chandler believes that the firm's staff is stocked with the high quality professionals from the newest to senior positions, with seamless interactions between levels. "Our culture is professional but casual and informal rather than stuffy or hierarchical," he says. "We recruit for talented staff that fit our culture and have a passion for serving clients."

Mornings often begin with brief team meetings to go over group goals. "Much of our work is collaborative, so informal communication occurs throughout each workday." More formal committees are arranged throughout the year.

JMF covers the cost of CPA exam study courses for new employees and pays a bonus upon completion. Insurance covers health, life and disability, and employees receive paid vacation and holidays. The staff is particularly fond of the firm's flexible working hours that accommodate family needs.

The firm also offers far-reaching opportunities for promotion. "Our administrative professionals have been great to move into different areas and assume additional responsibilities as their roles have changed over time," says Chandler. "Professional accountants can expect to advance to significant responsibilities as they progress in their careers, including becoming a firm owner for some."



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“Bayer offers a positive, energetic and pleasant environment with open communication,” says Virginia Bridges, VP of human resources.

BAYER PROPERTIES LLC

Bayer Properties LLC specializes in a variety of real estate services including developing, leasing, managing and marketing mixed-use properties. The company’s credentials include high-profile properties like The Pizitz Building and Summit in Birmingham. Bayer currently owns and/or operates approximately 10 million square feet of real estate nationwide.

Drawing from its real estate industry goals, Bayer seeks to maintain a sense of community among its team. “Bayer’s leaders are true visionaries with an entrepreneurial spirit and a civic-minded heart,” says Virginia Bridges, VP of human resources. “They see the future of the industry and bring it to the present by developing commercial real estate environments that offer an enjoyable experiential atmosphere for the community.”

Management makes every effort to support and inspire the staff. “Their passion and excitement spread throughout the company and motivate associates to continue to strive for excellence with a belief that anything is possible with hard work and perseverance,” says Bridges.

Company leaders are accessible and group discussion is always welcome. “Bayer offers a positive, energetic and pleasant environment with open communication,” says Bridges. “The CEO and senior management encourage questions, hearing new ideas and discussion with Bayer associates.”

A comprehensive benefits package includes health, dental, vision, disability, life insurance and matching 401k. Bayer offers flexible training platforms and covers costs for certification programs. Work-life balance is held in high regard, as the company offers summer hours, extra paid time off around holidays and family events.

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