

Prairie.
Business

2015

BEST

50

COMPANIES

*Congratulations to
this year's winners!*

Best Places to Work

This year's 50 top employers in the northern Plains

Netflix nearly broke the Internet a few weeks ago when it announced a plan to offer unlimited paid parental leave for new moms and dads during the first year of a child's life. In a blog post, Tawni Cranz, Netflix's chief talent officer, said parents can return to work part-time, full-time, or leave and come back as needed during that year, which, especially when combined with the company's existing unlimited time off policy, is part of the company's "freedom and responsibility" culture designed to help staffers achieve that coveted work-life balance.

"We want employees to have the flexibility and confidence to balance the needs of their growing families without worrying about work or finances," Cranz said in the blog, adding that employees also have been proven to perform better at their jobs when they aren't worrying about their home life.

The day after Netflix announced its policy change, Microsoft said it, too, was "enhancing" its parental leave policy to allow new dads to take 12 weeks of fully paid leave. All new moms will now receive 12 weeks of paid leave; birth mothers are able to take 20 weeks full paid. The company announced other new perks as well, including additional paid holidays and increased 401k matching, all in an effort to boost the company's culture.

"When I look at how rapidly the traditional workplace is changing, not just at Microsoft, but throughout business in general, I see a tremendous opportunity for companies to put a stake in the ground around what they believe in and what kind of culture they want to build together with employees," Kathleen Hogan, Microsoft's executive vice president of human resources, said in a blog post, adding that Microsoft's culture is evolving to embody a mindset that embraces diversity and inclusion.

Microsoft and Netflix most definitely have bigger piggy banks than the vast majority of companies in the northern Plains, but that hasn't stopped many of our area's businesses from making culture initiatives a major part of their budgets and daily focus. A few years ago, "company culture" was rarely mentioned as a reason why employees would consider working somewhere. Now, it's part of the initial conversation with most employers.

Why the switch? Simply put - there aren't enough workers to go around. And when salaries have been matched and hours and workloads are similar, company culture will be how employees decide where they want to work every time. Add to that the commonly held notion that millennials, who will comprise the majority of the workforce for the next few decades, won't settle for anything less than jobs with flex hours, brightly colored workspaces and company-backed kickball tournaments (or another comparable mix of perks) and it's easy to see why executives and HR teams are

creating culture clubs faster than you can say "pitch!"

Last year, we launched our annual 50 Best Places to Work contest and were thrilled to receive about 1,000 employee satisfaction surveys from approximately 100 companies in the region. This year, those numbers doubled. It's clear that competition is high, and while we didn't notice anyone mention unlimited PTO or paternity leave (although we hope that soon becomes the norm), we did notice a growing number of perks that also address work-life balance. One employee said they appreciate being able to work remotely from Arizona in the winter; another expressed her gratitude for being allowed to bring her infant to work.

"Everyone is so accommodating and helpful and it's so nice to be able to have her with me and not in daycare," the employee wrote.

No doubt the business may also be benefiting by retaining an employee who otherwise might not be able to work due to a critical shortage of daycare in the region.

Another employee stated that her office of young professionals is about to experience a baby boom. In response, forward-thinking company leaders created a nursing/pump room for new mothers to utilize when they return to the office, before anyone even thought to ask for it. "The leadership team is so responsive to what could make the office a better place that they're actually anticipating employees' needs. It's seriously impressive," the employee wrote.

We did notice a few changes this year in what employees appeared to value most about their workplace. While many of last year's employees touted fun perks like foosball tables, picnics and other items, the majority of employees this year credited managerial styles that allow for personal and professional growth, open communication among team members and appreciation for a job well done as reasons why they think their workplace is the best. In fact, several employees specifically stated they'd prefer those types of culture elements over free snacks or inter-office games hands down. And while experts often stress that pay isn't a deciding factor in where people work, the one comment employees most often offered when asked what their employer could do to improve was - better pay.

Following are the winners of this year's top 50 employers in the Dakotas and western Minnesota. Companies were selected based on employee satisfaction surveys submitted voluntarily by employees throughout the region. Survey comments were reviewed by Prairie Business staff and consideration was given to the number of surveys submitted for each company. Companies were divided into large (100 or more employees) and small (99 or fewer) categories.



Headquarters: Thief River Falls, Minn.

Employees: 3,100+

Description: Digi-Key is one of the fastest growing distributors of electronic components in the world. Since its founding in 1972, Digi-Key has been committed to offering the broadest selection of in-stock electronic components, as well as providing the best service possible to its customers, aiding engineers through the entire design process, from prototype to production.

Website: digikey.com



At Digi-Key Electronics, a number of programs lay the groundwork for employee involvement and philanthropy, while helping to maintain a small company atmosphere at the large, continually expanding company, says Rick Trontvet, vice president of administration and human relations.

"We want to make sure our employees are trained as well as possible for the jobs they perform," he says. Employees can take part in Digi-Key University, which is held through Northland Community & Technical College in Thief River Falls, and scholarship programs are also offered. All open positions are posted internally first to give current employees the chance to continue moving up or into a position more suited to their interests. "We want to make them want to stay," Trontvet says.

In addition to empowering its employees through education, Digi-Key also focuses on giving its employees the chance to make changes within the company. Trontvet says the company is focused on continuous improvement with several newer programs. One of them invites employees to suggest ideas for improvement, while another brings in a consultant who meets with employees. "We're learning how well we're engaging with our employees and how we can make our processes better," Trontvet says. "We're putting the power back in employees' hands."

The Digi-Key Cares program, which was started in 2011, encourages employees to give back locally. More than \$90,000 was raised and 3,500 volunteer hours were logged in 2014, as employees gave back to five Thief River Falls charities. Digi-Key President and CEO Dave Doherty says that philanthropy has become part of the company's DNA and is almost entirely employee-driven.

Doherty says the challenge now is maintaining the company culture that its employees have worked hard to build. "It's not perfect, and we're always striving to be better. The goal is to keep that small company feel and continue to empower our employees."

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Arvig Enterprises, Inc.

Headquarters: Perham, Minn.

Employees: 700+

Description: Established in 1950, Arvig has grown from a small, family-owned telephone company into one of the largest independent telecommunications and broadband providers in the nation. Today, Arvig's diverse product portfolio includes broadband and broadband-related services, traditional and managed voice services, hosted PBX, security systems and home automation, television service, construction and digital media services.

Website: arvig.com; arvigbusiness.com



In 2012, Arvig took a vested interest in becoming the best possible place to work. The company hired the Disney Institute to come in and show the process of helping its leaders learn to lead better. Out of that grew the Arvig Advantage, which consists of teams of employees who lead the company in different areas, such as communication and improvement.

Arvig also stepped up its investment in its employees, by putting in workout rooms at some locations, encouraging employees to walk on their breaks and rolling out a wellness program that includes incentives for participating. Arvig also has an employee stock ownership program, which gives its employees a stake in the company. "We care about our people, and we want them to stay with us for a long time," CEO David Arvig says.

The company also focuses on giving back to the communities it is located in, budgeting about 5 percent of its net income to donate to local charities in those communities. The company also pays employees' dues for service organizations and doesn't require them to use vacation time for those organizations' meetings and events. Employees are also encouraged to work as volunteer firefighters and police officers, which they aren't required to use vacation time for either.

Arvig says the company constantly reviews what it learned in 2012 and evaluates where it is currently. "It all goes back to the culture change. We go back and re-evaluate frequently to see how we're doing, and are constantly improving. We want to be the best place to work in this region."



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First International Bank & Trust

Headquarters: Watford City, N.D.

Employees: 525

Description: First International Bank & Trust has been banking locally and responsibly for more than 100 years with 24 locations across North Dakota, Minnesota and Arizona. As a full-service financial institution, it's a one-stop shop for all of its customers' banking needs.

Website: firstintlbank.com



At First International Bank & Trust, each branch is considered a community bank, where the employees know and participate actively in their communities. As part of that, First International has created an environment where employees are easily able to participate in service organizations and attend their children's daytime events, CEO Steve Stenehjelm says.

First International pays for its employees' memberships in service organizations and allows them to attend those organizations' meetings and other community service events without having to use vacation time. The bank itself sets the first example of community service by giving back to the communities it has locations in. For example, Stenehjelm says in Watford City, where the bank is headquartered, First International led the way in fundraising for a new hospital.

In addition to charitable giving, First International works hard to continue being a place where people want to work. Stenehjelm says the bank continually re-evaluates its employee benefits, including funeral and maternity leave and vacation days. "We do our best to work with our employees. We try to offer flexibility so parents can go to their children's events that are held during the day, so they don't have to make the decision of work over their children."

Stenehjelm says the culture at First International is built by every employee. "Our two greatest strengths are communication and leading by example. We encourage management to lead how they think will work best for their branch while inspiring their employees to provide the best service possible." As a continually growing and financially stable organization, Stenehjelm says the company has tried to leverage those characteristics to become a place where people want to work. "It's helpful when a business has success. People like to work for places that have a good future, so we've tried to use that to our advantage."



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www.ackerman-estvold.com

Border States Electric



BORDER STATES
Supply Chain Solutions™

Headquarters: Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 2,000+

Description: Border States supplies products and services to construction, industrial and utility customers. Our 100 percent employee-owned company is the eighth largest electrical distributor in the U.S., as rated by "Electrical Wholesaling" magazine, with more than 2,000 employees and 81 branches in 16 states.

Website: borderstates.com

EAPC Architects Engineers



Headquarters: Grand Forks, N.D.

Employees: 150

Description: EAPC is a multi-discipline design consulting firm that helps to prepare its clients for the future. Their design solutions result from a collaborative process that encourages multi-disciplinary professional teams to research alternatives, share knowledge and imagine new ways to solve the challenges of the built environment. For over 48 years, EAPC's experts in strategic practice areas have created design solutions that bring great value to their clients across North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota, Colorado, Vermont and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Website: eapc.net

Fisher Industries



Headquarters: Dickinson, N.D.

Employees: 1,100

Description: Fisher Industries serves all aspects of the aggregate processing industry, from the design and fabrication of aggregate equipment to processing and end use of aggregate materials. The Fisher Industries portfolio currently includes concrete, asphalt, drilling, blasting and paving services, along with selling various aggregate products, but the foundation and heartbeat of Fisher Industries has been, and will always be, mining aggregate materials.

Website: fisherind.com

Gate City Bank



Headquarters: Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 525

Description: At Gate City Bank, community, commitment and a better way of life are more than just words; they are actions which bring the bank's mission to life. With deep roots in North Dakota since 1923, it's been a privilege serving the state's communities. Everything the bank does, through all the products and services offered, is designed to meet the individualized needs that combine the values of a traditional hometown bank with the strength and resources of the 21st century. Gate City's tradition is to be the bank of choice, an employer of choice with employees of choice.

Website: gatecitybank.com

Houston Engineering Inc.



Headquarters: Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 172

Description: In 1968, George Houston began Houston Engineering Inc. as a small civil engineering and surveying firm with fewer than 10 employees. Now, headquartered in north Fargo just a few blocks from where it began, HEI employs nearly 180 professionals in offices across North Dakota and Minnesota. Local and national clients alike seek HEI's creative and lasting solutions in the areas of water resources, environmental issues, water supply, municipal, transportation, surveying, land and site development, waste management, urban planning and GIS.

Website: houstoneng.com

Intelligent InSites



Headquarters: Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 127

Description: Intelligent InSites develops operational intelligence software for health care that improves care, enhances the human experience and increases efficiency. By automating manual processes and eliminating wait times, Intelligent InSites is reinventing how health care systems operate.

Website: intelligentinsites.com

BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY SINCE 1976

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retired Cooperstown, N.D., educator.*

Prairie
Business
prairiebizmag.com

JLG Architects



Headquarters: Grand Forks, N.D.

Employees: 107

Description: JLG is a 100 percent employee-owned full-service architecture firm, founded in Grand Forks in 1989 by Lonnie Laffen and Gary Johnson. Today, the firm has grown to nine offices with over 100 employees, and has been named one of the top architecture firms in the United States, one of the fastest growing architecture firms in North America and a best place to work, by numerous different magazines and organizations.

Website: jlgarchitects.com

John Deere Electronic Solutions Inc.



JOHN DEERE

Headquarters: Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 1,000

Description: John Deere Electronic Solutions is a principal global provider of high-value electronic solutions for use in harsh physical and electrical environments. JDES is dedicated to meeting its customers' needs through innovative technologies, unsurpassed engineering design capabilities and comprehensive support services. As a supporting business of John Deere, JDES strengthens Deere's global business by developing and/or partnering for solutions that provide reliable and rugged electronic components and systems that function under the most extreme conditions. These components and systems provide differentiating advanced technologies for Deere equipment, which increase the end customers' productivity. To enhance innovation, expertise and competitiveness, JDES also provides custom and off-the-shelf electronics and power electronics for original equipment manufacturers worldwide.

Website: johndeere.com/jdes

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KLJ



Headquarters: Bismarck, N.D.

Employees: 750

Description: Since 1938, KLJ has provided engineering and planning solutions for local, regional and national infrastructure projects. The company provides knowledgeable, experienced support for engineering, planning and surveying projects of all sizes in a variety of market sectors. As an employee-owned firm with a focus on innovation and hard work, KLJ helps clients succeed by developing lasting infrastructure that responds to the social, civic and economic needs of communities. KLJ currently has 24 office locations spanning six states -- North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, Wyoming and Florida.

Website: kljeng.com

Kupper Automotive

Kupperautomotive



Headquarters: Mandan, N.D.

Employees: 312

Description: Kupper Automotive is a best-price dealership group with four locations in Bismarck and Mandan, N.D. Owned and operated by Bob Kupper, the company's goal is to be an industry leader in providing unmatched quality automotive products and services. Kupper Automotive offers six new vehicle franchises including Chevrolet and Subaru under the Kupper namesake and Honda, Nissan, Hyundai and Volkswagen under Bismarck Motor Company. Each facility operates as a standalone dealership, offering large selections of new, used and certified pre-owned vehicles, each with parts, service, quick lube and accessory departments. Kupper Automotive also operates a standalone body shop facility in Mandan.

Website: kupperautomotive.com

Lloyd Companies



Headquarters: Sioux Falls, S.D.

Employees: 170

Description: Founded in 1972 by Craig and Pat Lloyd, Lloyd Companies is a family-owned, community-oriented business which has evolved from a single apartment property to a collection of real estate companies focused on promoting well-maintained and profitable investments for our clients. Its specialized divisions -- development, construction, commercial real estate, property management and residential real estate -- lead the way with flexible and creative solutions designed to get the job done.

Website: lloydcompanies.com

Marco Inc.



Headquarters: St. Cloud, Minn.

Employees: 900

Description: Marco is a leading technology services company that specializes in business IT services, hosted/cloud services, managed services, telecom carrier consulting services, copiers/printers/phone systems, document management and audio/video systems. Marco serves over 25,000 customers throughout the Upper Midwest and nationally with offices in Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Illinois and Nebraska.

Website: marconet.com

MetroPlains Management LLC



Headquarters: Devils Lake, N.D.

Employees: 285

Description: MetroPlains Management is a property management firm managing multi-family and commercial real estate located in North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota, Kansas and Oklahoma.

Website: metroplainsmanagement.com

Midcontinent Communications



Employees: 1,300

Description: Founded in 1931, Midcontinent Communications is the leading provider of Internet, cable TV, phone, home automation and advertising services in the Upper Midwest. More than 300,000 residential and business customers count on Midcontinent services in 335 communities in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. In September 2014, PCMag.com named Midcontinent the fastest Internet in the country. Midcontinent is investing in even more advanced gigabit Internet technology, which will be delivered to most customers by the end of 2017.

Website: midco.com

Mortenson Construction



Headquarters: Minneapolis, with a regional office in Fargo

Employees: 882

Description: Mortenson Construction is a family-owned organization built on strong values, family heritage and a commitment to making a difference in the communities in which we work. Established in 1954, it has built a reputation for being a solid and progressive company and a trustworthy leader in the construction industry. The firm operates as a diverse construction organization, involved in a wide variety of project types including health care, higher education, sports, renewable energy, cultural/public, corporate and hospitality.

Website: mortenson.com/north-dakota

National Information Solutions Cooperative



Headquarters: Mandan, N.D.

Employees: 1,000+

Description: NISC is an information technology cooperative that delivers advanced solutions, services and support to more than 750 rural utilities and independent telephone companies in 49 states, American Samoa, Palau and Canada.

Website: nisc.coop

North Dakota Guaranty & Title Co.



NORTH DAKOTA
**GUARANTY
& TITLE CO.**

Headquarters: Bismarck, N.D.

Employees: 133

Description: Founded in 1955, North Dakota Guaranty & Title Co. provides complete residential and commercial land title and real estate closing services across North Dakota and into western Minnesota. Dubbed "The Title Team" -- the company boasts experienced professionals offering the most comprehensive land title services in the region. NDGT is comprised of 13 offices located in North Dakota and Minnesota.

Website: thetitleteam.com

RDO Equipment Co.



Headquarters: Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 2,457

Description: Founded in 1968, RDO Equipment Co. sells and supports agriculture, environmental, positioning, surveying and irrigation equipment from manufacturers including John Deere, Vermeer and Topcon. With more than 75 locations across the United States, including partnerships in Russia, Ukraine and Australia, RDO Equipment Co. is a total solutions provider.

Website: rdoequipment.com

Schuneman Equipment Co.



Headquarters: Milbank, S.D.

Employees: 190

Description: Schuneman Equipment is a family-owned, authorized John Deere dealership with six stores in South Dakota and Minnesota. The company offers sales, service and parts for a variety of agriculture, lawn and garden and home workshop products, including John Deere, STIHL, New Leader, Brent, Unverferth, Kuhn/Knight, Frontier, Summers, Top Air, J&M, Wishek, Meyer, Gates, Degelman and Notch.

Website: schunemanequipment.com

Steffes Corporation



Headquarters: Dickinson, N.D.

Employees: 320

Description: Steffes Corporation began in the 1940s as a small manufacturing operation and grew into a steel fabrication business, manufacturing replacement snowmobile skis, hopper-bottom storage bins, furniture frames and a variety of custom-designed equipment. In 2007, Steffes entered the oil and gas industry, starting in the Bakken Shale formation, and quickly became a leading manufacturer. Steffes provides manufactured products and technical services in areas such as flare systems, automation and control systems, treater and separator systems, steel berms, walkways, staircases, cattle guards, berm walkovers and various other accessories.

Website: steffes.com

WCCO Belting Inc.



WCCO Belting, Inc.

Headquarters: Wahpeton, N.D.

Employees: 200

Description: WCCO Belting, a family-owned business and nationally recognized exporter, manufactures custom rubber products for every major agricultural equipment manufacturer in the world. Known for its high-quality belting, WCCO's dominance in the agricultural market has led to growth in the industrial industry and the company continues to expand after 60 years in business.

Website: wccobelt.com

3M Brookings



Headquarters: Brookings, SD

Employees: 1,000

Description: 3M Brookings is the first and largest manufacturing plant supporting 3M's worldwide health care business. For more than 44 years, the facility has applied 3M science to produce complex medical dressings and tapes, surgical drapes, biological indicators and food safety products. The plant currently produces more than 1,700 different products.

Website: 3m.com

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Midwest Bank

Headquarters: Detroit Lakes, Minn.

Employees: 85

Description: Midwest Bank is a locally owned, independent bank with offices throughout west-central Minnesota. Since being founded in 1998, its rapid growth has allowed the bank to develop the financial and technological resources to meet the needs of small and large customers, while its independent status and top-notch customer service has helped to maintain a quality banking atmosphere customers appreciate.

Website: midwestbank.net



MIDWEST BANK

Banking your way.



With success comes growth, and Midwest Bank is indeed growing. The locally owned, independent bank has a current asset size of \$360 million, up from \$60 million when it opened in 1998, and has grown from a handful of employees at its Detroit Lakes, Minn., headquarters to 80 staffers at seven locations throughout Minnesota Lakes Country.

President Steve Daggett credits all of that success to the bank's employees. "No one has ever banked with us because [we have] a cool sign or they like our building," he says. "People bank with people."

Midwest Bank has taken steps to ensure its employees stay happy and stay working there, chief among them being financial rewards. The bank offers a profit-sharing program as well as cash bonuses for stellar financial performance. It also emphasizes internal promotions and encourages employees to pursue training that will allow them to advance through the ranks. "I think people like that if they prove themselves and want to advance their careers they're going to get opportunities to progress," Daggett says.

The bank's leadership also enables staff to answer questions and make decisions without running everything up the ladder, which results in happier employees and better customer service, he says.

The bank's efforts certainly seem to be working. In the last 17 years, Daggett can remember only four loan officers who have left the bank. "I think it's a combination of all those things that makes the culture great," he says. "I'm not saying we've got utopia because of course we have days that can get quite stressful, but when you look at it from a global basis we have a group of employees that really have great attitudes and I think part of that at least is a function of the culture."

Epicosity

Headquarters: Sioux Falls, S.D.

Employees: 18

Description: Founded in 2008 as Epic Multimedia and rebranded as Epicosity in 2013 the agency has grown from a local video production firm to a full-service international agency with clients in 22 states and three countries (and counting) in just a few years. The firm's team is a tight group of creative, idea people who can execute client-driven work nimbly and effectively. Blending traditional services with a strong digital footprint for brands with purpose, the firm excels at creative development, digital strategy, video production, website development, public relations and media buying and planning.

Website: epicosity.com



EPICOSITY



Craft Beer Fridays and daily games of PIG around the office basketball hoop are just two of the ways Epicosity is interjecting fun and camaraderie into its office environment. Since launching the firm a few years ago, partners Eric Sivertsen and Justin Smorawske openly admit they've kept a low profile locally. Meanwhile, they've captured an international client base and carefully amassed a team of professionals who fit the company's culture ideals and contribute immense talent to the company. They've done so well that the company earned a rank on the Inc. 5000 list this year. It has also outgrown its current office space and will soon move into a newly renovated 10,000-square-foot space in downtown Sioux Falls, complete with a miniature golf course and a built-in bar to take Craft Beer Fridays to the next level. Smorawske says perks like the bar are an attempt to show they're willing to make investments in creating a space where employees enjoy spending their time. It also illustrates the leadership's commitment to openness and teamwork.

"It's not our way or the highway," Smorawske says. "You really have 18 leaders on our team who own their own success."

Team spirit and communication is prized by staff and ownership alike at Epicosity, which Sivertsen says outweighs any of the other perks. "As much as the fun things are important, I think what employees really want to know is - what does success look like for the organization as whole and what does it look like for me," he says. As the company continues to grow its culture will continue to evolve, but Sivertsen and Smorawske intend for employees to have a hand in shaping those changes. After all, better teamwork leads to better collaboration, which is the ultimate goal in creating a successful company culture in the first place.

Nexus Innovations Inc.

Headquarters: Bismarck, N.D.

Employees: 16

Description: A strategic technology consulting firm, Nexus Innovations delivers tailored solutions that are designed, built and deployed with the finest methodologies, technologies and professionals in the industry. A Microsoft Certified Partner, the company has emerged as one of the leading strategic IT consulting firms in the region not just because it delivers an outstanding product, but because of the people who work there. The team is highly proficient and certified across a variety of technologies, consulting disciplines and project management strategies, and the company considers employees its No. 1 asset.

Website: nexusinnovations.com

The logo for Nexus Innovations features the word "NEXUS" in a large, bold, blue serif font. Below it, the word "INNOVATIONS" is written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font with wide letter spacing. The entire logo is set against a white background within a black-bordered rounded rectangle.

Lorie Pope, co-owner and executive vice president of Nexus Innovations, gets almost giddy with excitement when she talks about the importance of company culture. Her passion for culture began a few years ago when Nexus began developing its own culture plan, using material from The Table Group, Patrick Lencioni's leadership and management teachings, as guidance. She's since become such a proponent of developing and implementing a culture strategy that she has become a certified John Maxwell coach, earned additional certification in team behavior, and offers culture consultancy services through the company.

"People don't understand how much culture is the rudder that steers the big ship and will get you the results that you want," she says. "Culture is that foundational piece that provides the platform to execute a successful strategy for business."

Nexus Innovations implements a culture plan which includes behavioral values and rules of engagement so that employees know exactly what is expected of them. Paramount to those rules is the commitment to open communication. Pope says everyone is encouraged to share their opinion, even if it is a negative comment, and leadership is taught to value every employee's thoughts. The result is an environment that is fun, comfortable and collaborative, which carries over into customer relations and ultimately positively impacts the bottom line.

Pope says building great relationships is at the heart of the company's philosophy, and while the company still provides fun perks like free snacks and sodas and company get-aways, an open line of communication trumps any other culture offering out there. "You can have the latest and greatest in decorating and ping-pong tables and all that, but that's not going to do it," she says. "People have to know they're valued and they have a voice."

Ackerman-Estvold



Headquarters: Minot, N.D.

Employees: 78

Description: A professional civil engineering and architectural consulting firm, Ackerman-Estvold serves clients in the areas of planning, design and construction services in both the public and private sectors throughout the upper Midwest. Offices are located in Minot and Williston, N.D.

Website: ackerman-estvold.com

All-Terrain Grounds Maintenance Inc.



Headquarters: Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 45

Description: All-Terrain Grounds Maintenance was established in 1999 by Ryan and Jennifer Such and is the largest full service lawn/snow company in the Fargo area. Its four company values are team, giving back, customer experience and being real.

Website: allterrainfargo.com

Applied Engineering Inc.



Headquarters: Bismarck, N.D.

Employees: 95

Description: Founded in Fargo in 1986, Applied Engineering is an employee-owned engineering and technology company that combines talent and technology to offer custom solutions to customers' unique challenges. In addition to engineering and manufacturing consulting services, the company offers IT and customer programming services, large-format digital printing, and sells and supports design and manufacturing software.

Website: go-applied.com

Blend Interactive



Headquarters: Sioux Falls, S.D.

Employees: 22

Description: Since 2005, this content, design and development shop has helped institutions and agencies with complicated web problems, from implementing dynamic content for banner ads to major content management system installs and migrations. The team is content-focused, future-friendly and process-driven.

Website: blendinteractive.com

Bismarck Aero Center



Headquarters: Bismarck, N.D.

Employees: 45

Description: For 25 years, family-owned Bismarck Aero Center has been a one-stop destination for aviation needs, offering 24/7 aircraft fueling and top-notch flight instruction, pilot services, aircraft rental and charter brokerage. After the completion of the company's newest hangar, Bismarck Aero Center will have eight aircraft hangars and two offices on the Bismarck Airport. Sister company Mandan Aero Center adds two more aircraft hangars and an office at the Mandan Airport. The company's strong commitment to its employees, customers and community helps it continue to grow and stay successful.

Website: bismarckaero.com

Click Rain



Headquarters: Sioux Falls, S.D.

Employees: 30

Description: Online marketing firm Click Rain provides expertise in web design and development services, online marketing and digital video, as well as public speaking and consulting services to more than 100 clients in 25 states. Clients range from hospitality management companies and health care systems to colleges and manufacturers. Click Rain has been recognized by Inc. 5000 as one of the fastest growing companies in the United States two years in a row and was the 2015 recipient of the EmBe EmBeliever Award.

Website: clickrain.com

DFC Consultants Ltd.



Headquarters: Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 18

Description: DFC Consultants offers sales, implementation and support of Microsoft Dynamics GP, Dynamics CRM and Office 365. As a Wennsoft Executive Partner, DFC also specializes in assisting companies with job cost and field service solutions. DFC Property Management, a software solution that integrates with Microsoft Dynamics GP, allows Native American Housing Authorities to track tenants, work orders, wait lists and rent programs. Along with providing software solutions for small- to medium-sized businesses, DFC offers accounting services, website design and implementation, custom programming and DFC Cloud.

Website: DFCconsultants.com

H2M



Headquarters: Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 16

Description: A full-service marketing agency well-known for having some of the most unique advertising on display, H2M is also steeped in developing strong, objective-based marketing strategies that deliver results while always providing proof of performance. The firm's work can be seen throughout the region and includes clients like Essentia Health, Lund Boats and Vogel Law Firm.

Website: h2m.biz

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High Point Networks



Headquarters: West Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 62

Description: As a value-added reseller of IT, providing solutions to both the SMB and enterprise-level markets in the upper Midwest, High Point Networks offers best-in-class solutions in the areas of infrastructure, unified communications, data center and security. The company employs the best professional services team in the region who solve real challenges and provide measurable ROI.

Website: highpointnetworks.com

ICON Architectural Group



Headquarters: Grand Forks, N.D.

Employees: 48

Description: One of the premier architectural and engineering firms in the upper Midwest, ICON works closely with its clients to deliver successful designs while creating value for the owner. The firm's portfolio includes education, municipal, sports and recreation, commercial, hospitality and master planning. The firm is also partnering with unmanned aerial systems (UAS) industry leaders to help make North Dakota the place to do business for the rapidly expanding global UAS market.

Website: iconarchitects.com



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Karvako Engineering



Headquarters: Bemidji, Minn.

Employees: 25

Description: Established in 2006, Karvako Engineering was founded on the principles of integrity and communication and strives to maintain a level of professional fun throughout its offices. Clients and employees mold the company culture and the energetic staff makes every effort to provide extraordinary services while maintaining the utmost professional experience, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of life now and into the future through innovative solutions and fresh ideas.

Website: karvako.com

Liberty Business Systems Inc.



Headquarters: Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 55

Description: Since being founded in Fargo in 1986, Liberty Business Systems has grown to include offices in Fargo, Grand Forks, Bismarck and Minot, N.D., and Fergus Falls, Minn. Proud to be locally owned, the company believes its growth and success is a result of the world-class service and commitment it offers to all clients.

Website: libertybusiness.com

Midwest Fire Equipment & Repair Co.



MIDWEST FIRE.

Headquarters: Luverne, Minn.

Employees: 22

Description: A woman-owned business, Midwest Fire designs and manufactures high-quality, multi-purpose, customized, cost-effective fire trucks. To date, the company has delivered more than 700 trucks throughout North America. Midwest Fire employs a small team of skilled, loyal professionals who are committed to producing highly reliable, durable, functional, innovative and safe fire trucks. The company's core values set the course for how the team works and achieves high quality results. Those values are: expertise and knowledge; passion and positive attitude; teamwork and fun; flexibility and responsiveness; customer-focused products and solutions, and quality, continuous improvement and safety.

Website: midwestfire.com

Network Center Inc.



Headquarters: Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 57

Description: Since 1986, Network Center has been providing technology solutions and support across the Midwest for virtualization, VoIP-communications, mobility, disaster recovery, cloud computing, network infrastructure, 24x7 help desk, website development and more. The company's mission is to deliver proactive technology solutions and support that ensure customers achieve the highest level of business success.

Website: netcenter.net

Norby's Work Perks



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Headquarters: Grand Forks, N.D.

Employees: 20

Description: From initial contact to installation, Norby's Work Perks is a service-based company, providing a single-source solution for all interior design and office furnishing needs.

Website: norbys.com

Odney



Headquarters: Bismarck, N.D.

Employees: 49

Description: Odney is in the business of persuasion. The full-service agency offers marketing, advertising, public relations and government relations services, creative design, research, interactive services, media placement and digital strategy services. Offices are located in Bismarck, Minot and Fargo, N.D., and Couer d'Alene, Idaho.

Website: odney.com

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Posi Lock Puller Inc.



Headquarters: Cooperstown, N.D.

Employees: 45

Description: Established in 1974, Posi Lock Puller is known throughout the world as being reputable, hard-working and dedicated to the quality of its innovative products and services. Posi Lock recognizes its 45 employees not just as valuable assets, but as an integral component of the company's global success. Without them, Posi Lock couldn't maintain its exceptional customer service or exceptional products.

Website: posilock.com

Preference Personnel



Our talent is finding yours.

Headquarters: Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 16

Description: This employee-owned employment firm offers businesses access to great talent, speeding up their time-to-hire and reducing their hiring risk with help from experienced staffing consultants. Customized service plans, employment law certifications and niched staffing consultants add extra value for employers. Job seekers enjoy free assistance, confidential career searches and exposure to reputable employers.

Website: preferencepersonnel.com

RealTruck Inc.



Headquarters: Jamestown, N.D.

Employees: 90

Description: An online retailer of aftermarket pickup truck accessories, the company's humble beginnings date back to the late 1990s, when Scott Bintz began selling items from his duplex basement in Spokane, Wash. Since then, the company relocated to Jamestown, N.D., added a satellite office in Fargo and has been included on the Inc. 5000 list for the past three consecutive years. Driven by a set of principles that include "take risks," "include fun" and "be humble," the company's mission is to improve people's lives and their vehicles.

Website: realtruck.com

Spectrum Aeromed



SPECTRUM
Aeromed

Headquarters: Fargo, N.D.

Employees: 34

Description: Founded in 1991, Spectrum Aeromed operates in a 17,000 square-foot state-of-the-art facility at Hector International Airport. Spectrum Aeromed has designed and developed air ambulance medical interiors for hospital programs, military branches around the world, multi-mission charters and private operators, as well as custom VIP emergency medical interior suites for executive aircraft and heads of state.

Website: spectrum-aeromed.com

Stoneridge Software



Headquarters: Barnesville, Minn.

Employees: 46

Description: A Microsoft partner, Stoneridge Software sells, implements and services Dynamics AX and NAV accounting software for mid-market and large businesses. The company has broad expertise in business technology solutions, from development to finance and project, manufacturing, supply chain, and system and project management.

Website: stoneridgesoftware.com

Strider Sports International Inc.



Headquarters: Rapid City, S.D.

Employees: 34

Description: Founded in 2007, Strider Sports designs no-pedal balance bikes, simplifying the bicycle to its essence to eliminate any fear of riding and instill confidence in young riders. The company is filled with passionate riders of dirt, mountain, street and road bikes who have helped grow the brand to include riding events and competitions that attract participants from around the world.

Website: striderbikes.com



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