



The Great Workplace: How to Build It, How to Keep It, and Why It Matters

Michael Burchell, Jennifer Robin

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Trust, Pride and Camaraderie-transform your company into a "Great place to Work"

The Great Place to Work Institute develops the annual ranking of the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For. In this book, the authors explore the model of a Great Place to Work For-one which fosters employee trust, pride in what they do, and enjoyment in the people they work with. They answer the fundamental question, "What is the business value of creating a great workplace?" and brings the definition of a Great Place to work alive with anecdotes, best practices, and quotes from employees working at the best workplaces in the U.S.

- Reveals the essential ingredients in and the trends of the best places to work
- Explores Great Place to Work model developed in 1984 and validated through its enduring resonance in both the United States and in over 40 countries around the world
- Written by Michael Burchell and Jennifer Robin two Great Place to Work Institute Insiders

If your organization is struggling with the challenges of leveraging human capital, discover why some companies have what it takes to be great.

Q&A with Authors Michael Burchell and Jennifer Robin

What prompted you to write this book?



Author Michael Burchell

Both of us have served in various capacities at Great Place to Work® Institute, the research and consulting firm that produces the *FORTUNE* 100 Best Companies to Work For® Annual List. After our speaking engagements, people would tell us that they wanted to bottle up the knowledge of the Institute and our advice so they could better take action back home. The message in *The Great Workplace* encapsulates what we teach in our workshops: great workplaces are ones in which people trust those they work for, have pride in

what they do, and enjoy the people they work with. And, we know that any workplace can be or become a great one. We wrote this book to share that message with more people and to serve as a reference tool long after our workshops were over. It inspires us to know more leaders will be empowered to create more workplaces built upon trust, pride, and camaraderie.

What is one thing that people are often surprised about when they hear about great workplaces?

People are often excited to hear about the best practices at and the perks offered by companies that make the list, many of which are profiled in the book. But, they are surprised to learn that behind every company's great workplace is not a magical set of programs or practices, or an unlimited budget for perks. What we find behind the curtain are leaders who build strong relationships with employees. We often say that "it's not what you do; it's how you do it." The policies and programs and the perks and celebrations are all examples of "what" is done. But it's not about those things at all. It's about the relationships that these leaders foster, and that depends upon the "how."

If a great workplace isn't about policies, money, or time, but about creating strong relationships, why do you think managers have such a difficult time doing it?

We have never met a manager who didn't intend to create trust, pride, and camaraderie in the workplace. But, in most cases, those intentions aren't supported in today's competitive workplace environment. Managers are often working managers who produce alongside employees--in addition to being held accountable for financial and production goals, upstream and downstream communications, performance management, and countless other administrative responsibilities. Relationships form whether a manager is paying attention or not. Strong relationships, however, take more conscious effort--at least up front.



Author Jennifer Robin

What are the three key relationships that are found in a great workplace?

Great Place to Work® Institute has been researching great workplaces for 30 years, and in the millions of employee interviews and survey comments, it is clear that trust, pride, and camaraderie are the relationships that matter.

Trust: It is the first of the relationships, and the one that employees spoke of the most often as they described their workplaces. In fact, their comments about this relationship were so numerous and nuanced that they form three dimensions in the Great Place to Work® Model©. They are:

- **Credibility:** The degree to which leaders communicate openly and honestly, are perceived as competent in their decisions and in the direction of the organization, and match their words with actions.
- **Respect:** The degree to which employees feel supported and cared for and sense that their ideas matter. Employees in great workplaces feel that they have appropriate resources and training, and that they can make suggestions and recommendations. They also feel appreciated, and that their work life-balance,

physical work environment, and benefits are all contributors to their great workplace experience.

- **Fairness:** The degree to which employees feel that there is a level playing field: they are treated with equity, impartiality, and justice.

Pride: The second of the three relationships found in great workplaces (and the fourth dimension of the Great Place to Work® Model) is the relationship between the individual and his or her work. Essentially, people experience a great workplace when they feel as though they make a difference in their organization, that their work is meaningful. They are also proud of their team's accomplishments, and the contributions the organization makes to the community at large.

Camaraderie: The final dimension of the Great Place to Work® model is camaraderie. At great workplaces, people describe strong relationships with coworkers, feeling welcomed from the very first day, feeling everyone is working toward one common goal, and feeling that they can be authentic at work.

What problems are eliminated when companies become great workplaces?

Great workplaces are not perfect workplaces. They still run into breakdowns in communication, false starts, suboptimal results, and premature decisions. The difference is that in great workplaces, these inevitable snags are much easier to navigate. If people don't trust their leaders, they hesitate, weigh the consequences of action and inaction, and may determine that the safest thing to do is wait and see. In great workplaces, trust is there, so people more easily move forward into unknown territory--and find their way out if it was a bad idea. Moreover, in time, a relational shorthand develops whereby communication happens more quickly and team members can read one another and the environment in a way that saves time and money while avoiding workplace breakdowns.

How do you use the principles of great workplaces in your day-to-day life?

Jennifer here: So many ways! But one that I return to again and again is the value in responding to the person first, and then the issue at hand. According to Great Workplace principles, doing so builds respect and people are better able to extend trust. When people email, call, or approach me, I take the extra time to acknowledge them, their situation, or their life outside of work before launching into more tactical discussions.

And Michael? Now that I've begun to see the world through the lens of trust, I can't see it any other way! When I observe groups in my own job, or in other areas of my life, I often ask myself if I or other leaders are establishing credibility, respect, fairness, pride, and camaraderie. I used to manage a team that was located on the opposite coast. Because I wasn't there day to day, and couldn't read body language or interact as easily with my team, I put a pulse survey into place that would help me gather information from my team so I could make changes. While that survey in and of itself served to build my credibility as a leader, it also provided me insight into other areas where I could make changes.

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