The top 20 workplaces

RANKING	COMPANY (LAST YEAR'S RANK)	PERFORMANCE INDEX	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	RESPONSE RATE	STAFF TURNOVER	ANNUAL REVENUE	COMMENTS
1	More FM Auckland *Radio station*	90.3	42	85.7%	6.0%	$10m	This place sounds like there's a perpetual party going on! Then again, it is a radio station where the number one value is having fun. Draped around the office is the number 10, signifying "the max". Creating the right environment, encouraging fun and deliver service excellence is what this workplace is all about.
2	Outward Bound Trust of New Zealand (18) *Adventure learning school*	87.8	51	90.2%	13.0%	$4.3m	Even though this not-for-profit adventure learning school has been through major changes over the last year it has yet again improved its BPTW ranking. According to chief executive Trevor Taylor the factors contributing to this are a crystal clear vision and values, respect for all and an emphasis on having fun.
3	Obex Medical *Medical device distribution*	86.3	31	96.8%	3.5%	$14.5m	Having recently taken staff to Fiji, the two founding partners of this company entered this year's survey to formally check out the company culture – and the result was even better than expected. If you want to join Obex, be prepared to demonstrate an attitude and personality that fits with the team culture.
4	Queensberry & Company *Photo album manufacturer*	85.4	48	64.6%	9.0%	$5m	Unwavering commitment to quality has seen this family-owned manufacturer of custom photo albums make the Top 20 on its first attempt. Employees are aware their products have to be the best available anywhere in the world, and that customer delight is the number one goal.
5	Equinox *IT consulting*	85.3	35	91.4%	8.0%	$4.3m	Too small last year to be eligible for the Top 20 list, rapid staff growth and significant improvement in survey results has seen this IT consulting company catapult into the rankings this year. Equinox sees the effort it puts into recruitment as a fundamental point of differentiation — it "hires on attitude and trains on skills".
6	Express Data NZ (8) *Technology supplier*	83.9	45	82.2%	15.9%	$72m	"Once staff buy into your vision, everything else falls into place," according to general managers Gavan Brunton & Paul Plester. Express Data's vision is "legendary customer service" and "being the best in the world". Emphasis is on celebrating success. "We aim to reward results graciously and frequently."
7	Waikato District Council (10=) *District council*	83.4	166	66.9%	16.0%	$55m	"A culture that came from the staff" meant that new chief executive Gavin Ion sees little difficulty in maintaining the record won by this Best Places rep since 2001. The council gives people the opportunity to develop, so as "to create a place where, when people do leave, they leave as better people".
8	Colmar Brunton (5) *Research brand development*	82.8	56	100.0%	12.0%	$7.3m	Maintaining its position in the Top 20 has been a matter of keeping on with existing practices while measuring monthly progress. Growth at the company has meant a strenuous induction process for new staff which includes being involved in the MAD awards (Magnificently Achieved Deeds).
9	GlaxoSmithKline (41) *Pharmaceutical*	82.3	55	83.6%	6.0%	$100m - $150m	Strong organisational values helped GSK through a difficult restructure in 2003, and the company has returned even stronger results for 2004. A sense of common purpose — helping Kiwis "do more, feel better, and live longer" — mean staff know what effect they're having on public health.
10=	Whybin TBWA *Advertising*	81.8	45	68.9%	25.0%	Not disclosed	"Our people work hard in a competitive industry," says chief executive David Walden, which means that it is important to take time to celebrate successes. As advertising is very much a social activity, this feature is played up at Whybin, where fun is seen as an integral component to good work.
10=	Microsoft New Zealand (7) *IT services*	81.8	110	67.3%	10.0%	Not disclosed	MD Ross Peat believes organisational values should be incorporated into the behaviour of employees and management, which then translates to the business value proposition offered to customers. The result is consistency in the messages the organisation conveys and improved customer relationships.
12	Flight Centre (NZ) (9) *Retail travel services*	80.6	700	63.4%	29.0%	$960m	Flight Centre has been internationally recognised as being a great employer in recent years, with top placings in similar Best Places to Work surveys in South Africa, Canada, Australia and the UK. For MD Graeme Moore, the key to its success is employing the right people, for the right roles, earning the right rewards.
13	Hosting and Datacentre Services (15) *IT services*	80.2	45	91.1%	6.5%	Not disclosed	This IT services company's culture is founded on upfront communication, commitment to HDS and its customers, and a total team approach. Director Roger Cockayne says HDS has lost people who have failed to realise no individual ego is bigger than the company culture.
14	Dispute Resolution Services *Mediation*	79.4	42	73.8%	15.0%	$5.5m	DRSL is able to engage its widely dispersed staff with a strong "one culture" focus and compelling vision, offering a picture of the future which has both a "social good element" and increasing job satisfaction. As a small professional services firm it also accommodates flexible working arrangements.
15 =	Toyota Financial Services (21) *Finance*	79.3	45	95.6%	7.0%	$32m	"Employees know their job best," says MD John Garland, which is why Toyota Financial Services encourages staff to look for ways to continually improve their work processes and environment. Employees who can address any frustrations in their work tend to be more creative and productive, Garland says.
15=	Fletcher Easysteel (36) *Steel supplier*	79.3	205	68.3%	10.6%	Not disclosed	The aim to be a top 20 organisation this year and plans based on last year's survey results culminated in Fletcher Easysteel making the list. For GM John Beveridge, key to getting the result in a "male dominated, hard graft, dirty" business has been setting targets, measuring and celebrating success.
17	Colenso BBDO *Advertising*	79.2	90	71.1%	8.0%	Billings of $109m	Employees at this ad agency are encouraged to take responsibility for their relationships with both clients and team members, and take ownership of results. The idea that people are running "their own agency within the agency" is encouraged within the rapidly growing organisation.
18	BMW Group New Zealand (12) *Automotive*	79.0	67	70.1%	6.5%	$150m	"Great brands attract great people," says new MD Mark Gilbert. And staff agree — total belief in the product, a genuine desire to meet customer needs and a culture that celebrates success contribute to this great workplace.
19	Securities Commission *Government agency*	78.9	37	91.9%	16.0%	$7m	Addressing work environment issues raised by staff helped the Securities Commission feature in the top 20. Changing open plan work areas in favour of individual offices saw the commission's highest rating question in the survey being "I am satisfied with my physical work environment".
20 =	Ministry for Culture and Heritage (16) *Government department*	78.2	78	69.2%	12.0%	Funding of $11m	The opportunity to work on "public good" projects which reflect a growing confidence in our national identity helps create an environment where staff are committed to this value-based government organisation and want to stay. Staff are treated with respect and are given autonomy to work independently.
20 =	Roche Products (NZ) *Pharmaceutical*	78.2	84	60.7%	16.0%	$57m	Three years ago Roche surveyed employees and set about becoming a values-based organisation. Three concepts are central to this: focus (on jobs, on adding value, and on products), balance (specifically work/life balance), and belief (in themselves, in their abilities, and in what the organisation does).