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BUSINESS FIRST
WESTERN NEW YORK'S BUSINESS NEWSPAPER

**BEST PLACES TO
WORK**
2013



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A Word from the Sponsor: BlueCross BlueShield of WNY

BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York is pleased to sponsor Best Places to Work, and we applaud the commitment you have made to your associates to earn this honor.

Achieving and maintaining high standards of accountability within your team is only possible when your associates support your company's mission and core values. Together you succeed. Together you work to create exceptional experiences for your customers.

Successful businesses cultivate great customer experiences – and great working environments. Successful businesses understand the need to recognize and celebrate accomplishments. This is an achievement each company here today shares.

Congratulations to all the Best Places to Work honorees who make Western New York a great region in which to live and work. Engaging work environments enable our businesses and our community to grow and be successful – and that's healthy.

Thomas Fentner is senior vice president of human resources and administrative services at BlueCross BlueShield of WNY. bcbswny.com



**BLUECROSS
BLUESHIELD
OF WNY**

Thomas Fentner



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BEST PLACES TO WORK

SMALL — Companies employing 21-50, *cont'd*

HEALTH FORCE,

continued

employee will take good care of the client.

The survey says:

- Treats us to lunches to show appreciation for hard work. We get a hug and thank you every week for our hard work.
- Health Force management encourages me to utilize my strengths on a daily basis and frequently recognizes my contributions. They have earned my trust and respect by encouraging my personal growth and compensating my efforts with more than just money.

Kee Safety Inc.

100 Stradman St.
Buffalo, NY 14206
716-896-4949 • keesafety.com

CEO: Mike Mumau

HR contact: ngranville@keesafety.com

Employees (FT): 34

Founded: Kee Safety was founded in 1934 and the Buffalo office opened in 1958.

What company does: Global fall-protection leader specializing in separating people from hazards.

Example of best practice: Take ideas and roll them up into a global database and then prioritize development based on global data/opportunity

The survey says:

- Day-to-day goals are very clear, encouraging a team oriented atmosphere. The communication within the company is excellent. The management encourages strong communication habits, which minimize confusion and possible tension.
- They kill office politics whenever it raises its ugly head. They work hard to keep providing benefits beyond what is typical in WNY.

Liazon Corp.

747 Main St. • Buffalo, NY 14203
716-819-4507
liazon.com

CEO: Ashok Subramanian

COO: David Finkel

HR contact: Faren Gault
Wilson, faren.gaultwilson@liazon.com

Employees (FT): 50

Founded: 2007

What company does: Benefits technology and distribution company.

Example of best practice: We respect everyone's need



Small category (21-50 employees): The Service Collaborative of WNY

to take a break once in a while and have unlimited vacation and personal days.

The survey says:

- Insists on treating other departments and team-mates with respect. Allows flexible office hours and ability to work from home frequently. When a process isn't working, we change it instead of sticking to failed processes for the sake of avoiding change.
- The company has meetings in person and online to train in new procedures and programs and go over any changes or challenges anyone is experiencing. We also get our own laptops so training and work can be done from anywhere.

PLS 3rd Learning

678 Main St. • Buffalo, NY 14202
716-855-2250
pls3rdlearning.com

CEO: Donald Jacobs

COO: Sarah Glenn-Smith

HR contact: Tracey Kozlowski, tkozlowski@3rdl.com

Employees (FT): 34

Founded: 2007

What company does: Co-creates custom technology solutions for partners, elevating educator effectiveness.

Example of best practice: We have an extremely collaborative environment where all can contribute ideas toward a common goal. Whiteboards are always implemented.

The survey says:

- Making the environment into a friendly team-orient-

ed workplace. There is no micro managing. Retreats foster team building. Giving perks like company lunches, iPads and time off.

- We regularly meet as teams and as a company to brainstorm. That makes it feel like we're a family and everyone's ideas count.

Russell Bond & Co. Inc.

295 Main St. • Buffalo, NY 14203
716-856-8220
russellbond.com

CEO: Kurt Bingeman

COO: Gary Holleder

HR contact: Mark Palmisano

Employees (FT): 46

Founded: 1950

What company does: Insurance wholesaler, writing standard, specialty and high-risk property and casualty insurance for clients of retail agents and brokers throughout the USA.

Example of best practice: We are an Employee Stock Ownership Plan company with employees currently owning 45 percent of the firm. We offer flexible hours, work-from-home options, extensive in-house education including courses, books and exam fees, college tuition assistance and great health-care options.

The survey says:

- We are an employee-owned company. We share directly in the growth of the company. Management shares figures quarterly and the success/failures of the company. This helps bring about a

sense of team to our company as a whole.

- Our company has an open-book policy. Every quarter we are given in-depth updates on how the company is doing. We get to celebrate the positives and come up with ideas how to do even better the next quarter. Our company also holds an end of year raffle with usually close to \$1,000 in gifts.

The Service Collaborative of WNY

2188 Seneca St. • Buffalo, NY 14210 • 716-418-8500
tscwny.org

CEO: Kate Sarata

HR contact: Tina Dalka

Employees (FT): 21

Founded: 200

What company does: TSCWNY creates opportunities for all individuals to serve their communities.

Example of best practice: Through transformational service and civic responsibility, we are designing a sustainable future for our nation's communities.

The survey says:

- The Service Collaborative allows the ultimate in flexibility that makes working while having a family, aging parents or an illness so much easier.
- All leadership is friendly and approachable. I am trusted and therefore not micromanaged. Feeling trusted gives me great incentive for making sure the work I produce is beyond excellent and as best as possible.

SKM Marketing Group LLC

6350 Transit Road • Depew, NY 14043 • 716-989-3200
skmgroup.com

CEO: Larry Robb

COO: Bryan LeFauve

HR contact: Ellen Peinkofer, epeinkofer@skmgroup.com

Employees (FT): 35

Founded: 1986

What company does: Integrated marketing communications agency

Example of best practice: Missionary Award. Monthly employee nomination program for those who exceedingly demonstrate the corporate mission. Winners receive special parking, a gift card and the company gnome, Skomer.

The survey says:

- Regularly buying us food. Open and honest communication from the leadership team about the future direction of the company.
- When there is good news to be shared, we ring a bell in the office and everyone comes running to find out what it is. The more often the bell is rung, the better our year is.

United Way of Buffalo & Erie County

742 Delaware Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14209
716-887-2626 • uwbec.org

CEO: Michael Weiner

COO: Bob Morgan

HR contact: Beth Sullivan, beth.sullivan@uwbec.org

Employees (FT): 44

Founded: 1917

What company does: UW brings people, organizations and resources together to improve community well being.

Example of best practice:

UW has an employee-driven "742 Crew" that organizes fun activities and utilizes a business plan function that strengthens teamwork.

The survey says:

- Open and transparent information on how we are doing is shared regularly with everyone. The 742 Crew is run by an employee team that makes work fun and encourages us to interact as fellow humans, not just employees. Senior leadership is very visible and works on project teams right along with everyone.
- We have a team called The 742 Crew and they put on great events every month just for fun. These include bingo, a tailgate party, bowling parties, picnic lunches in the summer and soup and sandwich lunches in the winter.

VoIP Supply LLC

80 Pineview Drive • Amherst, NY 14228
800-398-8647 • voipsupply.com

CEO: Benjamin Sayers

CFO: Paula Griffo

HR contact: pgriffo@voip-supply.com

Employees (FT): 36

Founded: 2002

What company does: Online supplier of VoIP solutions and integrated communication systems.

Example of best practice: VoIP Supply is a Certified B corporation that meets higher standards of social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability.

The survey says:

- Continual personal and professional development. Our first core value is 'Come to play and deliver excellence' – can't get any better than that. We are asked frequently what can be made better.
- Flexible scheduling. Examples include working from home, changing hours to take care of personal appointments, and a generous PTO program. Communication – where the company is heading and we get to sit and talk with the CEO directly about the future of the company. Bonus programs and intra-office awards ensure that when you go above and beyond, you will be recognized.