

WHO HAS THE COOLEST PERKS? [P. 31]

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SMALL COMPANIES

«COMPENDIUM INC.

600 N 36th St., Suite 400; 206.812.1640; compendiuminc.com

ESTABLISHED: 1985

**BUSINESS FOCUS:** Publishes a line of inspirational books, cards and other gifts. Also develops strategic communications programs for various corporate clients.

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 17

**CORE BENEFITS:** 100 percent health coverage for employees and families, with no subsidy from the employee; coverage of unmarried domestic partners, including same-sex couples; profit-sharing program; cash bonus program.

**UNUSUAL/SPECIAL PERKS:** Weekly visits from a massage therapist; a "playroom" stocked with toys and games; free use of company bicycles; on-site espresso; private rooftop deck; encouragement of participation in wellness activities; company time allowed for employees to participate in volunteer organizations.

If your company produced as many relentlessly optimistic products as Compendium Inc.—publisher of dozens of gift books with titles such as "The Human Spirit," "Live Good" and "Soul Happy"—you'd be forgiven if you had unrealistically high expectations about your work environment.

But, true to the company's own inspirational message, Compendium follows through. First of all, there's the location at the "Center of the Universe." Last December, the 22-year-old company moved to a new building in the bohemian enclave of Fremont, overlooking the famous Lenin statue. The move meant higher rental costs, but Kobi Yamada, president and co-owner of the small publishing/communications firm, says the move was worth the expense to be part of the "artistry and fun" of the neighborhood.

Inside the building, it gets even better. The style of the new Fremont digs is light years away from Compendium's previous HQ—a small office off their old warehouse in Lynnwood. The new space has

an open floor plan with very few doors, so the office is flooded with natural light. A spiral staircase leads to an outdoor rooftop deck, where Yamada says the company plans to hold regular lunches and events this summer.

"It's just a lovely, lovely building," says Kristel Wills, a former English teacher who now does research and copy editing at Compendium. "Having a view and being around a vibrant place like Fremont really adds to the atmosphere of creativity."

Before her teaching stint, Wills worked at Egghead Software, which she described as "an awful cubicle city," where any expressions of individuality were discouraged. Compendium's office, in contrast, "has a completely different vibe," she says.

A focal point in Compendium's facility is a common area that Yamada calls the "playroom"—a meeting space that contains an espresso machine, a pool table, a dartboard and a swing made from an old skateboard suspended from the ceiling. Even the artwork is playful: A hanging sculpture in the room is made of functioning bicycles, which the employees are encouraged to take down from the wall and use whenever they want.

While these unusual perks may seem like a touch of "fun, fun, fun" overkill, Michael Flynn, Compendium's vice president of sales and marketing, says it's a competitive business, where there is a lot of pressure to perform—pressure that needs plenty of opportunities to blow off steam.

"Creativity is our lifeblood," Flynn says. "We work with some high-dollar-value talent here, a lot of intellectual capital. Sometimes it helps if creative people can take a break in the middle of the day to play a little pool."

Although the business has plateaued a bit in the first two quarters of this year, Yamada remains optimistic (what else?) about future growth. He expects to bulk up revenues by about 15 to 20 percent this fiscal year as Compendium looks to enter the home décor market. In mid-April, the firm hired Jim Darragh, formerly with Clark Nuber, as Compendium's new CFO/COO, bringing the total staff to 17 employees. The company may also add another three or four people to the roster, Yamada notes. —Randy Woods

(continued from page 34)

late on the interplay between pay and health care. As workers anticipate paying a greater percentage of their coverage each year, they become more concerned about their job paying well enough to cover those rising costs.

**BEND BUT DON'T BREAK**

Flexibility is currently also a top attention-getter for job hunters, but companies are finding that they need to be, well, flexible in how they define the term. Consider the following employee perks and benefits trends:

» **Flex time:** Employees might find it highly valuable to be able to choose the hours they work and have some say in how they do their work. "Every employee here has a lot of autonomy," says Roberts Rents' vice president Matson. "There's no micromangement vibe."

» **On-site services:** Benefits might include bringing your dog to work or, as clothing retailer Eddie Bauer has done, getting your flu shot or mammogram right at the office. Popular work-life bennies include on-site massage therapists or concierge services to handle things like picking up your dry cleaning. One company provides time to study an online "nanny cam" to make sure your minime is being treated well at daycare.

» **Career development:** "Good companies have clear plans to help employees improve their skills," Huber says. "The latest trend is having multiple career tracks." At WaMu, for instance, "one of the things people like about working here is you don't have to leave the bank to change careers or do something different," says Monique Erickson, a senior vice president of

human resources. Annually, the bank has each associate draw up a development plan and each manager draft a leadership plan.

» **Cultural diversity:** Benefits must be tailored to meet the expectations of employees with different backgrounds and experiences. "Nimble organizations are flexible in terms of understanding and allowing individuals from different cultures to feel at home," Huber says. For example, "Microsoft has to hire 50 to 80 workers per day, and they can't get them all just from the United States—they're getting them from all over the world." Even within the American population, "there are different perspectives people have on their employer and their workgroup based on their generation," says Burr-Chellin.

(continued on page 40)

Kobi Yamada, president and co-founder of Compendium, provides a number of ways for his employees to unwind, including an occasional game of pool.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTOPHER CUMMING