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The places to be

I'm a sucker for lists. When the Modern Library came out with its 100 best novels of the twentieth century, I vowed to read them all. When the American Film Institute revealed its 100 best movies of the twentieth century, I was determined to see them all. So, when *Fortune* magazine released its 2005 list of the 100 best companies to work for (www.greatplacetowork.com/best/list-bestusa.htm), I naturally took notice.

The first thing that struck me was the number of companies on the list that had at least some science and technology component. I counted 23, which I thought was great representation — especially for a publication that emphasizes finance, law and management. I was also struck by the range of these science and technology firms. Software and telecommunications had nine on the list, which isn't surprising as high-tech has dominated the job market over the past few years. But pharmaceuticals (Roche at 97, Pfizer at 76, and Eli Lilly at 73), biotechnology (Genentech at 4 and Amgen at 33) and agricultural life sciences (Monsanto at 83) combined for six, which was striking as those sectors didn't have the best of years in 2004.

Also providing representation for science were companies that promote 'off-the-bench' careers such as scientific publishing (John Wiley at 95) and biotech financial analysis (Ernst & Young at 80). And companies that at least dabble in growing fields — such as applied materials science (W. L. Gore at 2), medical devices (Medtronic at 71) and clinical care and research (Mayo Clinic at 81) — made a strong showing.

What makes these companies good places to work? On average, they increased the number of jobs, held firm on health-insurance premiums and actively solicited employee feedback. Although I won't aim to work for all 100 companies, I will continue to use my job as a way to inform readers of organizations that follow these 'best practices'.

Paul Smaglik
Naturejobs editor

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