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## No. 1, 301+ employees: T-Mobile

Score: 98

By Eric Olson - 12/4/2006

Springfield Business Journal Staff

The first day Brad Phillips began working at Springfield's \$20 million T-Mobile customer call center earlier this year, he became fully vested in the company's 401(k) plan.

That's one of the many perks that attracted Phillips to T-Mobile, the top company in Springfield Business Journal's 2006 Best Places to Work in the 301+ employee category.

"The 401(k) was a big draw," Phillips said, boiling down the company's top perks to benefits and culture.

Within its category, T-Mobile scored No. 1 in incentives, No. 2 in family friendliness and No. 5 in corporate culture.

Phillips, a recently promoted senior representative, talks about the plentiful benefits offered by T-Mobile: the 19 personal days available in an employee's first year, a child-care subsidy program, combined group health, dental and vision insurance and multiple family days such as a fall festival and an open-house barbecue. Then there's the short-term disability, auto, homeowner and pet insurance plans offered.

The concept is to attract quality front-line employees, said Mark Conrad, the call center's general manager. "(They're) No. 1, and the customer is the reason why," he said.

Added Phillips, "We realize that 99 percent of our customers are never going to talk to management staff. Our front-line employees are T-Mobile to our customers. We need to treat them right, so that they treat our customers right. That's the only way we are going to grow our business."

T-Mobile selected Springfield in a nationwide search in 2005, and chose to build its in-bound call center in Airport Plaza at North West Bypass and West Kearney, opening in May. "We've had a great launch," said Human Resources Manager Dee Ann Thompson, adding that of the 6,000 candidates since interviews began in March, 585 have been hired.

Management expects to have a full staff of 800 by the end of 2007.

Clever, edgy national advertising helps to attract a younger following; the average T-Mobile employee age in Springfield is about 26, Thompson said, and it shows throughout the center and its nearly 50 team pods.

The environment evokes professionalism, technology, enthusiasm, structure, fun and even pulls in the Ozarks' outdoors.

Springfield officials say the Bellevue, Wash.-based parent company allows a certain autonomy among its 20 call centers.

Local management chose the Ozarks' outdoors theme, and contractors preserved on-site boulders and cedar trees that now have a place along Main Street, the center's central corridor.

The boulders cordon off the "wall of serenity," complete with an Oriental gong and water features, while the trees are a wall feature in themselves.

Other amenities within the 77,000-square-foot facility: audio/video-equipped training rooms, cyber café, quiet room with plush couches, fitness center, 130 mounted TVs, on-site Commerce Bank ATM, kitchen, subsidized cafeteria served by Jackson Bros., community room, living room with flat-screen satellite TV, game area, outdoor patio with grill and a new mother's lactation room.

"We've provided an environment that is comfortable for everybody," Conrad said.

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