Thanks for picking up a copy of the 2016 Career Handbook. Our goal, with this booklet as well as all the career resources from Science, is to bring you useful, relevant information to help you navigate the job search process and manage your development in a way that leads you to a truly rewarding career.

To that end, we have teamed up with some great organizations to bring you information about the latest career opportunities in many different fields. The profiles shown here will give you a sense of the types of organizations that are recruiting and the kinds of positions they offer. We’ve also included some articles with some general tips and advice on job searching.

In addition to the companies featured in this book, you can search thousands of additional job postings on our website ScienceCareers.org—all for free.

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THE TRANSFERRABLE POSTDOC

BY KENDALL POWELL
AUGUST 22, 2014

Now more than ever, experts say, postdoctoral fellows need to cultivate a broad base of beyond-the-bench skills and capitalize on transferring them to the next stage of their career to be as competitive as possible. In today’s competitive job market, it is vitally important for postdocs to accumulate skill sets on their CVs right alongside their publications—whether their next career move is research-based or not. Postdocs who repurpose their lab leadership and project management skills into star candidate qualities have an advantage when looking to step into their next position.

When an infectious disease fellowship at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta turned out to be a poor fit for Melissa Ramirez, she moved on to other postdoctoral opportunities where she picked up skills in grant writing, student mentoring, and teaching. Her last stop was as a postdoctoral teaching scholar at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, where she was immersed in teaching and curriculum development for the campus’s undergraduate microbiology students.

At each stage of postdoctoral development, Ramirez gained valuable skills that have now successfully translated into a new career as a teaching assistant professor at NC State. Her success was not a given, but came after several years of gathering broad expertise across areas and matching those skills to her interests. Ramirez’ approach should make her postdoctoral colleagues sit up and take note—no matter which direction they take next, it’s a tough job market out there. Almost every sector of the science and technical labor market has tightened since the Great Recession began in 2008.

“IT’S VERY HARD TO FIND RESEARCH POSITIONS, IN GENERAL,” SAYS PAULA STEPHAN, PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS AT GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY IN ATLANTA AND A RESEARCH ASSOCIATE AT THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH. “POSTDOCS, FOR THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS, HAVE HAD PARTICULAR DIFFICULTY BECAUSE OF A SOFT ECONOMY.” Universities in both the United States and Europe are hiring more contract-based faculty or in tenure-track positions that have no salary guarantee and require outside grant funding. Stephan notes that a combination of factors have hit biomedical job candidates especially hard, including the flattening of the U.S. National Institutes of Health budget and the consolidation, downsizing, and off-shoring of jobs among pharmaceutical firms. Some of the largest chemistry labs in the United States, such as DuPont, are also downsizing.

“Once we get updated data from the Survey of Earned Doctorates and Survey of Doctorate Recipients, I think we’ll see that industry is hiring fewer Ph.D.s for research positions as well.”

Compounding the problem is the expectation gap that exists among the roughly 56% of postdocs who believe they will continue on to tenure-track academic positions and the 21% who actually did in 2012 (scim.ag/XWZwhv). In addition, the definition of a successful academic job candidate has also shifted in the last decade. Beyond stellar research and publication records, faculty candidates must also collaborate across disciplines and the globe, and have a sharp talent for fundraising.

Problem solving, analytical thinking, and understanding how to run proper experiments translate beautifully in today’s companies operating within Internet-based commerce.

— Joe Hardy

MEG BUSCEMA
Paula Stephan urges postdocs to periodically step away from their research to make sure they collect transferrable skills, too.
Although this might all seem bleak, Doctorate-holding scientists are highly employable in many arenas. While postdocs tend to put their heads down and to toll for data, Stephan and others urge them to periodically step away from their research to make sure they collect transferrable skills, too.

“Actually many of the skills we need for academic careers are the same for non-academic careers,” says David Bogle, chemical engineer and pro-provost of the Doctoral School at University College London. Strengths in analytical thinking, problem solving, written and oral communication, and collaboration make postdocs universally attractive. “No employer wants somebody that is narrow-minded” or too narrowly focused, says Bogle.

Got skills?
A variety of self-assessment resources can help postdocs track their progress. “Young scientists need to periodically sit back and think, what skills do I have? What skills do I need for my project? And what am I lacking?” says Bogle.

He recommends the Researcher Development Framework created by Vitae (scim.ag/1lVhLtb), a career development organization based in Cambridge, United Kingdom. The framework covers four domains scientists need to be effective: intellectual knowledge, personal effectiveness, professional standards, and working with others.

Similarly, the myIDP website (myIDP.sciencecareers.org) is particularly well-suited to helping biomedical scientists explore careers and set goals for career development. Sibby Anderson Thompkins, director of postdoctoral affairs at University of North Carolina (UNC), Chapel Hill, advises using the National Postdoctoral Association’s Core Competencies document and the checklist at the end of it (scim.ag/1pmZp9l) as a concrete way to discuss professional development and specific skills goals with postdoctoral advisors.

A skills frame-shift
The core skills that every postdoc needs to transition to a successful academic career are well known. Professorships go to those who exhibit clever experimental design and efficient research project management, who can deliver persuasive scientific arguments, and who are able to write clear, concise, and winning publications and grant proposals. But many postdocs may overlook that those same skills—with a slight tweak in frame-of-mind—make them highly marketable for other positions as well.

Anderson Thompkins says postdocs have to shift their own thinking about their acquired skills and how best to present them to potential future employers. “Postdocs are, in fact, mini project managers,” she says, and should describe themselves as such. “Think more broadly—can you manage people, manage time, meet deadlines, and organize? All those skills are really useful in any job. Any job.”

Bogle points to another skill that is highly valued in the workplace, but often undervalued by scientists: “The A-B test, he says, of different customer exposures. Then, companies measure behaviors like clicking links or purchasing in response. Postdocs understand the importance of random assignment of conditions, good experimental controls, and how to process the data coming back. “In this world of the Internet, millions of experiments are happening simultaneously. Experimental design and analysis are big players now,” Hardy notes.

Another invaluable skill postdocs must possess to succeed in almost any later venture is writing clearly and concisely. Doing three paleontology postdocs in France, Berlin, and New York—and writing multiple fellowship applications to fund them—prepared Faysal Bibi for pursuing the large grant he needs to secure a permanent faculty position. Now in a five-year “habilitation” post as an assistant professor of paleontology at the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin, Bibi says he has the confidence to write a proposal for the €1–2 million grants necessary to sustain a research program.

When it dawned on Christine Gould that she actually enjoyed the process of writing up her thesis and postdoctoral work, she investigated scientific writing careers. As a medical writer for Health Interactions in San Francisco she prepares manuscripts, slide presentations, and abstracts for biotechnology clients. Careers that employ scientific writing skills include science communications and journalism, medical writing, regulatory affairs, and continuing medical education (or CME). Jeff Stakianos even found that his manuscript-writing skills were extremely handy when filing patent applications for his therapeutics startup company. Stakianos, who did a postdoc at Genentech, found that the back-and-forth with patent examiners mirrored the process of peer review. “Writing my own papers was more important than I imagined,” he says.

Even though writing clearly, presenting complex ideas, and successful completion of projects comes with the postdoc territory, job seekers might need to spell these abilities out for employers. Hardy of Lumosity stresses that if postdocs are transferring outside of their immediate research field, then they must describe in detail (and perhaps in a profession-matched vocabulary) their accomplishments and what useful, relevant skills they have attained.

Gould did this by flipping her curriculum vitae on its head. She listed all of her writing experience at the top—including contract editing work, blogging, and courses in science writing—and de-emphasized her research. “I described myself as a medical writer who happens to have eight years of experience in cancer biology,” Later, she was told her resume stood out to the human resources department.

Missing from the toolkit
Most postdocs make good project managers, shepherding multiple lines of research into a coherent final publication, but they often lack other types of management training. Fiscal, personnel, and time management are critical for careers both inside and outside academia. These skills, along with teaching and business know-how, should top the list of anyone heading out on the job market, but obtaining them requires extra effort.

As a senior postdoctoral researcher at Uppsala University in Sweden, Grzegorz Wicher has acquired an impressive list of technical skills from specialized mass spectrometry to microdissection and primary cell culture. But when it came to starting up his own cell culture company, PrimeCell, he took advantage of the Uppsala Innovation Centre, which helps researchers commercialize their ideas.

Through the center, he took the three-month Business Lab program to gain some business, marketing, and legal knowledge and to get connected to experts in those areas. He also attends “business pub” meetings every couple of weeks to chat with others starting companies and “exchange knowledge with a beer in your hands.”

Chris Blagden, director of CME development and strategy for Healthmart/CME in New York notices another skills gap: while postdocs get loads of practice at bringing projects to an endpoint, they get “very little training in the way of doing it cost-effectively and time-effectively.” These are key for CME projects—and for many other client- or product-based projects—that must come in on time and under budget. Postdocs who have managed their own research budget or met tight deadlines may have a leg up.
Considerable skills gaps can exist even for postdocs remaining in academia. The leap from postdoc to lab head comes with considerable shifts in focus and responsibilities—teaching, lab management, dealing with interpersonal conflicts, and a penchant for fundraising (scim.ag/1mCSOTf)—which don’t necessarily come naturally. Academic career development programs, like the popular Preparing for Academic Practice at Oxford University in the United Kingdom, can pave the way for postdocs moving toward tenure-track posts.

Ramirez’ teaching scholars program at North Carolina State University provides a foundation for transitioning to teaching faculty positions. With other fellows, she helped teach, organize, and administer the courses and answered student questions. Postdocs can also explore teaching careers through programs such as the American Society for Microbiology’s Teaching Fellows Program, a five-month online development course.

Ramirez says her past research career greatly influences her teaching. She was already skilled at distilling down her research to a few sentences to grab the attention of scientists outside her field. “It’s the same thing with students—you have a few minutes to capture their attention in a lecture or you’ve lost them for 50 minutes.”

Running a successful marketing campaign

Regardless of whether postdocs transfer skills to a permanent professorship or to another field entirely, they must think broadly about how to market themselves when the time comes. Much like a presidential bid, running a successful self-marketing campaign requires starting years ahead.

Bogle suggests that trainees ponder career choices at two special times: research highs and research lows. “Take a break and look around. Go to the pub with friends and talk about it. Explore, get out there and find out what’s on offer. Make all the connections you can and make use of all the external contacts you can.”

Young scientists have things backwards if they research intensely for amounts of time investigating, networking, and understanding what people like you have gone on to do.”

Although self-promotion doesn’t always come naturally to scientists, postdocs need to think strategically about how best to position themselves in the research enterprise. In his various postdoc posts, Bibi soaked up cutting-edge techniques, such as evolutionary meta-analysis and genomics, and made valuable personal connections.

“What paid off is that I liked to be a bit of the odd one out, surrounded by people who worked on different things or in different [geologic] time periods.” This way, he gained both innovative technical skills and expanded his network well beyond his subfield. As an academic job candidate, he says, “this is something I think I can sell much better than simply saying that I study fossil antelopes.”

Bibi has landed on the exact right word: “sell.” Job searching in today’s market is fundamentally about selling yourself, your ideas, your skills, and convincing a potential employer of your value. Luckily, that’s one skill many postdocs have already unwittingly mastered. After all, how many times have you given a seminar and successfully persuaded the crowd to believe you and your data?

The biotechnology and pharmaceutical sectors have emerged from the global recession to find technological breakthroughs, enthusiasm and risk-taking at companies. The firms landing at the top of the 2015 Science Careers Top Employers Survey have harnessed these innovative sparks and created workplaces that recruit the best and brightest scientific minds. Their researchers are largely given free rein to develop the next big thing in green agricultural biotechnology (agbiotech) or cancer treatment. Real-world results from such breakthrough innovations inspire the next generation of industry researchers as they ride the crest of a new wave of biological advances. These top employers ensure that their scientists surf that wave with agility, passion for what they do, and creativity to arrive at technologies that will transform lives.

It sounds like an old game show. The buzzword is “transformative technologies.” But it’s truly more than a buzzword. A palpable excitement travels through both boardrooms and scientific conferences following breakthroughs in immunotherapy, messenger RNA (mRNA) therapies, or microbiome mining. Many companies have made a strategic migration away from the tried-and-true (but also too long and costly) pathways of drug discovery toward novel approaches that promise unprecedented speed and precision.

That excitement is one reason that scores in this year’s Science Careers Top Employers Survey were higher in general—more so than in the last four years. A better economic outlook, with venture capital money flowing into the biotechnology and biopharmaceutical sectors more freely, doesn’t hurt either. The scores reflect a breath of fresh air from scientific advances that translate into not merely incremental advances, but rather transformative new medicines or solutions.

“Take a break and look around. Go to the pub with friends and talk about it. Explore, get out there and find out what’s on offer. Make all the connections you can and make use of all the external contacts you can.”

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BY KENDALL POWELL

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These successful workplaces keep creativity and innovation at the heart of operations—giving employees the responsibility and control over developing their projects and their own careers. These firms are filled with motivated employees because real-life examples of their work’s impact on the world are woven into their cultures. And though recruiting and retaining a highly skilled work force is cited as a major challenge for the industry, these companies excel at attracting and keeping top talent. Benefits, both official and fun perks, keep employees’ eyes on the prize—developing bold ideas into the next transformative application.

“We are not looking for therapies that give incremental benefits,” says Martin Mackay, head of research and headquartered in Asia. And Celgene Corporation (moving up to #12 this year after placing #17 in 2013 and #15 in 2014) leapt ahead of other mid-sized biopharma peers, Biogen (#18) and Gilead (#19).

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The firm dropped discovery and development in the areas of diabetes, virology, and neuroscience in favor of a research focus on oncology, heart failure, genetically defined diseases, immunoscience, and fibrotic diseases. In 2009, BMS took a big risk jumping into the immunotherapy field by acquiring the company Medarex, which brought with it Yervoy, a member of a new class of cancer drugs. In 2011, Yervoy became a breakthrough treatment for metastatic melanoma, and BMS quickly followed that success with another immuno-oncology drug, Opdivo.

By June 2015, the transformation was largely complete, with BMS renewing its focus on the abovementioned areas and also on immuno-oncology, where it held a huge lead over the competition. The company that emerged on the other side was slimmer, shedding the weight of a large, too-diversified drug company to become a biopharmaceutical firm focused on specialty therapies for high medical needs.

“It completely changed the atmosphere. It’s changing the outcomes for these terrifying diseases,” says Fouad Namouni, head of development for Yervoy and Opdivo at BMS’s headquarters in Princeton, New Jersey. “We are walking the talk, trying to help save lives.” As such, he says the makeover was not only the right business decision, but was highly motivating for BMS researchers, too. BMS has 7,300 R&D employees, invested $4.5 billion in R&D in 2014, and expects to open a new R&D campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 2018.

Namouni credits trailblazing and bold leadership for BMS’s success in immuno-oncology. “No matter what the science fight diseases better—has been around for decades, the molecular keys to unleash the immune system without doing more damage than good have long remained mysterious. But in the last decade, the field has made a tsunami of progress. Now, pharmaceutical manufacturers are jostling for position on the immunotheraphy wave, with BMS holding the leader’s position.

BMS’s two monoclonal antibody products both act on T-cell checkpoints, mechanisms that normally act to shut down an immune response once the job is finished. Some cancers have also found ways to trigger these checkpoints to effectively shut off T cells and hide from the immune system. By masking checkpoint receptors, Yervoy and Opdivo expand the number of circulating, tumor-recognizing T cells.

“The consequence is that the T lymphocytes are back at work and our natural defense system does a very good job” attacking tumors, says Namouni. Both drugs are approved for treating metastatic melanoma, and Opdivo is also approved for squamous lung cancer. Namouni says the immuno-oncology field exploded after BMS showed that the immune-activating approach not only worked, but worked on notoriously stubborn cancers. These amazing successes have made believers of investors and researchers alike, with a flood of companies adding cancer immunotherapy components to their portfolios. Both Cellgene and Roche have firmly staked out territory on the immunotherapy wave already.

Roche has four biologic cancer immunotherapy molecules in clinical trials that could work in powerful combinations with each other or with current drugs, says William Pao, global head of oncology discovery in Basel. Those candidates include antibodies that would activate and arm more T cells and bispecific, engineered antibodies that physically bring T cells to the tumor cells they are armed to kill. Another engineered antibody would tag tumor cells with an immunocytokine that preferentially activates killer T cells.

Modernina’s mRNA therapeutics also put the power of molecular genetics to work, but, in this case, as an entirely new drug modality. Formed in 2011 and based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Moderna is the newest top employer on the list. The company's modified mRNA drugs incorporate naturally occurring nucleotide analogs that evade the body's efficient dispatch of foreign, introduced RNA.

Matt Stanton, Moderna’s head of chemistry, says the company’s innovation can use exogenous, synthesized mRNA to create any protein of interest in targeted cell types or tissues. “There are obvious no-brainer advantages to that approach in cost, speed, and efficacy, he says.

Moderna Chief Executive Officer Stéphane Bancel adds: “mRNA drugs can do things for patients that small molecules and huge antibodies cannot do.” Among other feats, the technology has the potential to serve up gene therapy without genetic tinkering, and it can deliver regenerative medicine without the messiness of cell-based therapies. Stanton says that the technology could also tackle “undruggable” targets, for example by replacing a missing intracellular protein or disrupting a protein-protein interaction.

Many like BMS, Cellgene also made a big gamble about a decade ago when it developed a class of immune-modulating drugs that included the infamous teratogen thalidomide. These immunomodulatory drug (IMiD) compounds, including Revlimid, were successful at targeting multiple myeloma and lymphoma. They work by boosting the degradation of key factors for white blood cell production.

**Transformative biotechnologies**

Other top employer innovations harbor the potential to change lives as well. Transformative biotechnologies at Moderna and Novozymes are changing the way scientists approach both medicine and agriculture.

Novozymes is a relative newcomer to the biopharmaceutical realm, having split from Novo Nordisk in 2000. Headquartered in Bagsvaerd, Denmark, the enzyme-based company makes industrial, biofuel, agricultural, and medical products. Some of Novozymes’ latest technological pushes rely on mining the microbiome to find powerful new enzymes or activities.

Chief Scientific Officer Per Falholt says that the enzymes discovered to date are only the tip of the iceberg. “In the past, we were restricted to microbes we could grow in the lab, but metagenomics gets around that,” he says.

Teaming up with fellow top employer Monsanto, Novozymes’ scientists are developing microbial seed treatments that will yield more corn and soybeans, ideally with less chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or water. These microbes might increase crop yields by releasing more phosphate or nitrogen from the soil. Nathan Cude works in Novozymes’ agbiotech division in Durham, North Carolina in the microbial discovery group, which isolates and identifies thousands of microbes collected from soil samples around the United States. After characterizing the bugs genetically and biochemically, and assessing safety risks, the group nominates promising candidates to Monsanto for testing in 500,000 annual field trials of every imaginable soil and weather scenario.

1. We are the walking talk, trying to help save lives.—Fouad Namouni

Driving characteristics of top employers

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<tr>
<td>1. Innovative leader in the industry</td>
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<td>2. Treats employees with respect</td>
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<td>3. Local employees</td>
<td>3. Local employees</td>
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<td>4. Socially responsible</td>
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<td>5. Work culture values aligned</td>
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Driving characteristics are listed in descending order of impact on overall employer rankings. The colored backgrounds indicate the characteristics in common for the two years.

Putting patients, planet first
Innovation has remained the survey’s top driver for 12 years running. It’s not surprising that scientists want employers who give them the space and freedom for the creativity needed to find to fresh solutions. Celgene scientist Patrick Hagner develops next-generation IMID therapies, including drug candidate CC122. When asked what he likes best about working there, he replies, “The nerd in me says innovative science is what defines this company.” But he also mentions a particular 20-year-old lymphoma patient whose cancer had failed to respond to multiple chemotherapies. After enrolling in a clinical trial for CC122, the patient experienced a remission. “To have actually helped somebody live longer—that’s one of the most enjoyable qualities of working here.”

**Putting patients, planet first**

Hagner is not alone in being motivated by making such a tangible difference. Most top employers scored highly for being responsible corporate citizens and for having corporate values that aligned with their employees’ own beliefs. Many have sustainability initiatives like buildings powered by wind and recycled water (Celgene), partnering with local Habitat for Humanity projects (Moderna), or volunteering at patient events like the National Veterans Wheelchair Games (BMS). Last year, Celgene employees raised funds alongside the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation in the Empire State Building Run-Up, racing up all 86 flights of stairs in less than 15 minutes.

Two firms, however, stand out in the crowd for placing patients’ needs (Alexion) and sustainability (Novozymes) squarely at the center of their business model. “In this industry, everyone is trying to come up with important, good medicines, but at Alexion, we are extremely and genuinely patient-centric,” says Mackay. That “patient-centricity” can be seen in town-hall meetings where patients share their disease and treatment experiences. After visits from Alexion’s youngest patients, Mackay says he often sees employees “walking on air, going back to their lab benches or offices knowing that they could have a real impact on children.”

The urgency to find treatments for life-threatening conditions translates into a company culture that is fast-paced, hardworking, and entrepreneurial in spirit, says Clare Carnichael, chief human resources officer for Alexion. Similarly, Novozymes’ Nielsen says that young employees are not driven by the size of their paychecks, but rather by personal development and making an impact. “People want to tell their kids when they pick them up from kindergarten, ‘I did something today that makes this world a better place to live,’” he says.

The company’s tagline “make more with less” plays out across its science, from detergent enzymes that save energy and water to technology for converting waste biomass into biofuels. It even trickles into travel planning, with employee reminders about carbon footprints.

That emphasis on sustainability appealed to scientist Leah Blasiak when she transitioned from academia to her current post in the agbiotech division at Novozymes. “What I do matters, and I am much closer to the direct application of my research,” she says.

**Recruiting and retaining top talent**

Recruiting talented young scientists like Blasiak and keeping them on board for the long haul was cited by this year’s survey respondents as one of the industry’s biggest challenges. Top firms say they have not-so-secret weapons for attracting the best scientists and keeping them stimulated. “Novozymes’ success is determined by the passion and energy that Zymers bring to work each morning,” says Nielsen. He says his firm is often a first choice for scientists in Denmark, Sweden, and Germany who are familiar with it, but recruiting in the United States or Asia is more difficult.

Falholt says that Novozymes looks for scientists who “burn high,” chewing on problems until a solution comes to them, whether during work hours or not. Likewise, every Moderna employee is given an iPhone and iPad connected to the company cloud, so if genius strikes while an employee reads her Sunday paper, it can be captured instantly.

Many top employers are growing rapidly, and so they look for employees who are “learning agile,” who can wear multiple, shifting hats, and who excel at cross-functional or even cross-company collaboration. Job candidates must show the capacity for managing uncertainty, change, and even ambiguity in a fast-moving company, says Moderna’s Steve Harbin, senior vice president for human resources. “I look for it in every interviewee, because the one constant is that Moderna is changing,” he says.

When hiring at Roche, Pao says that personality is equally as important as a deep understanding of disease biology and an appreciation of drug development. “We look for a team player who can fit into a matrix environment,” he says, echoing other top employers as well. That means someone who can ferry his ideas and data between all the various layers of a drug development program—from target discovery to chemistry to preclinical tools and testing, clinical development, and beyond.

**Comparison of top ten’s top characteristics**

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<td>TheraVies</td>
<td>Has loyal employees</td>
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**Comparison of the top 10 companies on the basis of the top three drivers (scored out of 100):**

- Innovative leader in the industry (x-axis)
- Treats employees with respect (y-axis)
- Has loyal employees (bubble width)

Many top employers are growing rapidly, and so they look for employees who are “learning agile,” who can wear multiple, shifting hats, and who excel at cross-functional or even cross-company collaboration.

“People want to tell their kids when they pick them up from kindergarten, ‘I did something today that makes this world a better place to live,”’ says Peder Holk Nielsen.

“Recruiting and retaining top talent” by Grace Pao, Celine Tavares, Mary Lou Beers, Konstantina Gkoundi, and Bethany Zemlyanitsky. Continued on next page...
Respect begets loyalty

It’s an old maxim of business: People leave employers because of bad managers. This year, the second-most important driver of top employers was respecting employees, followed closely by having loyal employees. Workers at the best companies say that respect, which can take many forms, begets loyalty. At Novozymes, employee turnover is low—just 8.5% worldwide in 2014—reflecting a very low proportion of heavy-handed managers, says Michael Aimer, vice president of human resources.

The company also puts a Scandinavian twist on trust—giving employees a hefty dose of responsibility upfront. Cude recalls being handed that mantle on day one, starting in an empty lab with 12 others at the new agbiotech facility. “We still had those goals and timelines dictated by the growing season to meet,” he says. “I was put into the deep end, but it was a really great learning and networking experience.”

Smaller tokens of employee appreciation don’t hurt either. Companies have brought in “jeans every day” dress codes (Alexion), free ice cream trucks (Novozymes), and an electric car for zipping between campuses (Moderna). More serious benefits make high-performance employees’ lives a little less stressful. Alexion provides paid caregiver leave to spend time with a terminally ill loved one and coaches for families navigating college applications. Celgene places a hefty emphasis on employee wellness, employing a nurse practitioner to treat employees on-site and providing hot, healthy to-go dinners from its cafeteria and local, farm-fresh produce for employees to buy on their way home. Moderna operates on the cantina model, serving a free catered lunch so employees can discuss matters over the daily meal.

But Harbin pooh-poohs the idea that perks like foosball tables will reel in or retain employees. “So Moderna provides free lunch, who cares?” he dismisses. Providing an environment where employees can dream up new ideas and carry them out is more important. “It is the speed with which we move from ideation to execution that makes Moderna special.”

Unbridled enthusiasm

That buzz for getting things done permeates all top employer companies and shines through in this year’s historically positive overall survey scores. Even though the global economic outlook has ticked upward, industry leaders attribute the survey’s optimistic attitudes to scientific excitement rather than financial security.

“lt’s unique to be at a company sitting on top of discoveries that are actually changing the standard of care in cancer,” says Carl Decicco, head of discovery at BMS. Four of the company’s immuno-oncology drug trials had to be stopped due to the ethical need to offer the more effective experimental treatment to the other arm of patients receiving standard care. “BMS is willing to take risks that are backed by good scientific data,” he says. “We’re getting a lot of things right and people are finding it an exciting place to work.”

Not resting on laurels inspires Celgene’s employees to always strive for the next level of success, says Chief Financial Officer Peter Kellogg. “We try to keep the money focused on the science and innovation.” He says employees appreciate long-range planning and vision that allows companies to ride out shifting financial trade winds. “There’s something to be said for persistence and never feeling like we are a successful company.”

Above all else, employees rank innovations that allow them to make a positive, real impact in the world—not compensation, retirement benefits, or career advancement—as the biggest reward of working in biotech and pharmaceuticals. Biasiak refers to an oft-repeated motto at Novozymes about having a “triple” bottom line.”“People, planet, profit—which is totally buzz-wordy—but it really does mean something here,” she says. Because the company’s leaders truly care that profitable products also do some good for people and the environment, Biasiak and her colleagues are inspired to put forward their best effort. “At the end of the day, everyone wants their work to be doing some good.”
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