

MICHIGAN'S TOP WORKPLACES

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SECTION F

Commitment to workers is repaid

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1. MICHIGAN FINANCIAL

As Michigan's economy floundered, the Southfield-based Michigan Financial Companies grew. Its revenues expanded from \$2.6 million in 2004 to \$8.1 million in 2007 and its employee ranks rose from 29 to 55 in that period.

The company's growth was the reason Lisa Johnson moved there from a competitor a year and a half ago. The 31-year-old Madison Heights resident processes new business for life and long-term care for the financial-advising company, which was ranked in a Free Press-Workplace Dynamics survey as the top southeast Michigan workplace with up to 150 employees.

"It's a great organization," she said.

"They're appreciative of the work that I

do and how hard I work," Johnson said. "They have very open-door policies. I am never intimidated to go into" CEO Nick Valenti's office and say, 'Can we change this or that?'

"It's an open environment and they appreciate that we have a life outside of work," she added. If she needs to leave at 3 p.m. to meet a teacher at her children's school, she can do it.

Valenti said he tries to instill a fun and supportive work culture.

"We treat people with respect and honesty, and that's the way we do business," he said. "We've grown because we have really good people who are committed to doing what needs to be done."

Employees can work remotely and have access to managers and support while they're out. The company provides tuition reimbursement and other pertinent training.

"We want people to get the education they need to do a better job for their clients," he



PATRICIA BECK/Detroit Free Press

Case manager Jennifer Boyle of Clawson passes paperwork over to colleague Lisa Johnson of Madison Heights at Michigan Financial Companies in Southfield. Johnson says of her employer: "It's an open environment and they appreciate that we have a life outside of work."

said. "We provide advisers with the support they need."

Valenti says he has a five-year plan to grow the business 100%.

"Our goal is to assist our clients in growing, protecting and transferring wealth in the most tax-efficient manner," he said. "We look at advisers as clients, helping them grow business and income. Everything we do is designed around that."

Small Companies

1. Michigan Financial Companies

Finance
Southeast Michigan employees: 55
www.michiganfinancial.com

2. Unasource Surgery Center
Health care
Southeast Michigan employees: 50
veicorp.com

3. NBS
Commercial business sales
Southeast Michigan employees: 91
www.navbus.com

4. Metro Home Health Care Services
Health care
Southeast Michigan employees: 90
www.metrohomehealthcare.com

5. Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau
Destination marketing
Southeast Michigan employees: 60
www.visitdetroit.com

6. J.O. Galloup/Smith Instrument
Industrial distribution
Southeast Michigan employees: 52
www.galloup.com

7. USA Credit Union
Financial services
Southeast Michigan employees: 150
www.usacuonline.org

8. TAC Transportation
Workforce staffing solutions for transportation industry
Southeast Michigan employees: 55
www.tactransportation.com

9. Peerless Steel
Manufacturing distributor
Southeast Michigan employees: 82
www.peerlesssteel.com

10. McGraw Wentworth
Employee group benefits/insurance
Southeast Michigan employees: 64
www.mcgrawwentworth.com

11. AxleTech International
Off-highway and specialty vehicle drivetrain products
Southeast Michigan employees: 79
www.axletech.com

12. Altarum Institute
Nonprofit research institute
Southeast Michigan employees: 79
www.altarum.org

13. Great Lakes Medical Supply
Health care
Southeast Michigan employees: 87
www.glmssupply.com

14. Biker Bob's Harley-Davidson Motown
Recreational vehicle and retail sales
Southeast Michigan employees: 60
www.BikerBobsHD.com

15. Gallagher Benefit Services
Professional services
Southeast Michigan employees: 63
www.gallagherbenefits.com

How winners were chosen

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC, Google and Michigan Financial Companies Inc. were named the best places to work among businesses of their sizes in the 2008 Detroit Free Press Top Workplaces Survey. The survey, conducted by Workplace Dynamics of Exton, Pa., drew responses from 23,372 employees at 191 employers throughout southeast Michigan. The companies were rated in categories of up to 150 employees, 151-500 employees and more than 500 workers.

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC and Google captured the top spots in the large- and medium-size categories, respectively, while the lesser-known Michigan Financial Companies Inc. led the small-company list. "At the very best organizations, people really believe the organization is going in the right direction and operates by strong values and ethics," said Doug Claffey, chief executive officer of WorkplaceDynamics, an Exton, Pa.-based company that designs and conducts workplace surveys, including the one for the Free Press.