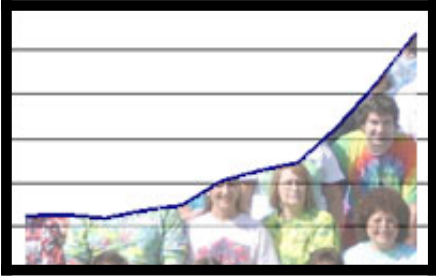


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Big Revenue Growth for Democratic Workplaces - Even Small Ones

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One reason why many business leaders who don't subscribe to egalitarian workplace people practices have stuck to their autocratic (or other) employee engagement systems is because they think it will slow down decision making and action, and thus impede revenue growth.

Yet, as WorldBlu CEO Traci Fenton aptly notes on her website, workplace democracy isn't about being slow – it's about knowing when to be fast *and* when to be slow. This distinction can work in tandem for great results.

The 52 companies on WorldBlu's 2011 List of the Most Democratic Workplaces support this: as Donna Fenn notes in her interview with Fenton this week on BNET, from 2007 to 2011, the companies on their list have grown revenues 400%, from \$3 to \$15 billion.

Of course, that's with the Great Recession factored in. Score a big one for the ROI of investing in your workplace culture!

WorldBlu's page listing their 2011 companies notes that they have some pretty large organizations, with up to 80,000 employees. Their list includes private as well as public and non-profit firms from North America and six countries in Europe and Asia.

By comparison, Winning Workplaces' Top Small Company Workplaces – our award program which is also in its fifth year (for 4 years previously we did the Best Bosses award) – has sought and evaluated organizations from North America exclusively, with no more than 750 employees, whose growth has relied on many of the same principles as WorldBlu's honorees. This includes for-profits and non-profits, but not public companies.

Given this much smaller demographic, have we also found strong 5-year revenue growth? Yes, we have: from 2007 to 2011*, our winners' combined total revenue has grown from \$484 million to \$1.25 billion.

Think about that: In an era in which the SBA says about half of all new firms fail, and in recent years in which it has been difficult for small businesses to maintain access to credit or be approved for new credit lines at favorable rates, **our honorees have not only stayed in the black and kept their doors open – their revenue now vs. 5 years ago is as if they opened another company and a half, on average** (their overall revenue growth is 160%).

This growth is cause for celebration, and is most certainly a catalyst for study by business leaders who would like to emulate it. There is an opportunity for the latter coming up in June, when Winning Workplaces will team up with Inc. Magazine to once again host our joint Leadership Conference, this time in Dallas, Texas. So far, two leaders of our honored firms will be speaking: Mike Faith, CEO of Headsets.com, and Matt Higgins, SVP of the New York Jets. Stay tuned to our conference agenda for updates.

Related: Read this new article on our site for egalitarian employee practices that have helped 10 applicants for our award grow their bottom line. What can you use or adapt for your company?

**Our 2011 award winners have been selected but won't be revealed until June 2011. Look for coverage of them in the June issue of Inc.*

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