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7 Reasons to Work for a Small Company



It's been a while since I've written a counterpoint to someone else's thesis when it comes to anything touching leadership or employee development strategies. I think my last one was this post in July arguing that imagination is not dead but alive and well.

Here I go again today. Dharmesh Shah has a new guest post on his OnStartups blog by IDR Solutions CEO Mark Stephens. In it, Stephens shares 7 reasons why you should work for a big company. I actually agree with several of them, such as getting exposed to lots of clever people. Yet, since Winning Workplaces is all about highlighting and maximizing performance in small firms, I thought it would be a worthwhile exercise to take and explore the other tack – 7 reasons to work for a small business:

1. **You also learn a lot.** With their flat hierarchies and greater tendency for the executive team to be "on the floor" with all other levels of employees, in great small firms learning is central.
2. **You can excel as a big fish in a smaller pond.** Stephens notes that you can become part of a large community, and that's true – I'm not sure about his qualifier of "can," implying "optional"; if you're hired at a big company, you *are* part of a big community whether you like it or not. In the employee interviews we do for the due diligence phase of our annual small workplace award, the theme of low- and mid-level employees getting to work on big projects, earlier in their career than they might at a larger firm, pops up again and again.
3. **Many small companies also have lots of perks.** I am always amazed by the number of companies in our network with fewer than 500 employees that either have an on-site gym, or give vouchers for local gym membership as part of their health and wellness benefits. They also excel when it comes to paid time off and workplace flexibility – perks that I've seen rank higher for employees as the economy has impacted companies' ability to keep pay and bonuses at pre-Great Recession levels.
4. **You largely eschew office politics.** Again because of their flat organizational structure – not to mention the tendency of great small firms to heavily structure their hiring process for best results in bringing on people for workplace culture fit as well as raw talent, as we shared in detail in our people practices email this week – politics is much less of an issue. This is a big advantage over large firms when you consider the implications of undue stress on worker productivity.
5. **You have less time to reflect.** I read Stephens' use of "reflect" as "sit idle at times", and that doesn't appeal to me. Nor do I think it appeals to most workers today, who are seeking tasks they [Buy cheap Cialis Online](#) can mark as completed for both their next performance review – to have measurable results to point to for promotions and salary increases, or to have ammo to stave off pay cuts in tougher times – and their resume to help their career long term.
6. **More interaction with the community at lower levels in the organization.** Community-facing interactions are powerful for both promotions in the same company, and moves to new ones. Small firms in our network including Phelps County Bank and Daphne Utilities excel at aligning community-facing objectives with their larger strategy, and giving low- and mid-level employees the opportunity to step up to tackle them, and gain experience on par with middle and senior managers. It's a win-win for everyone.
7. **Greater voice when the chips are down.** If you're a low- to mid-level worker in a big company, and the CEO says tough times have forced the firm to make some uncomfortable choices, what are the chances that you and your colleagues could have a frank discussion with the CEO that might change the definition of what those "uncomfortable choices" are? If you work for a small firm, there's a much greater chance that you'll

have a stake in the next steps – and the longer-term outcomes, which could mean the difference between staying on payroll or lining up for unemployment. For reference among our honorees, see Corporate Ink and Bailard Inc.

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