



To cut down on cubicle fever, 84 percent of the 50 Best **let employees telecommute**. Compare that with outdoor gear company REI, where staff get “yay days”—paid time off to enjoy favorite outdoor activities.



**©** **HAPPY REBIRTHDAY TO YOU ...**  
Technology services team leader Paul Wallenberg is up to his hips in balloons to mark the fifth anniversary of his hiring.



Of the 50 Best, 74 percent give time off for volunteering. HR specialist Premier Staffing of San Francisco expects employees to devote 20 days a year to community service.



For play time, 24 percent of the 50 Best offer unlimited vacation. Compare that with Airbnb, which gives employees a \$500 quarterly travel credit if they use Airbnb for their accommodations.



**LaSalle Network**  
HUMAN RESOURCES • CHICAGO • 150 EMPLOYEES

## Want to Make Your Team Feel Great? Shower Them With Appreciation

**I**F YOU WAIT until the annual review to tell people how valuable they are—or, worse, until they have one foot out the door—you’ve already missed your chance, according to Tom Gimbel, founder and CEO of LaSalle Network. “I may say the wrong thing sometimes,” he admits, “but I’m never going to have somebody leave here for something I did not say. People want to be appreciated.”

To turn that appreciation from an annual affair into a daily drumbeat, Gimbel has invested heavily in employee development and training, winning top scores for that measure in our 50 Best audit. He takes ideas that are common enough—like mentorship programs and staff trips—and finds ways to build genuine excitement around them. The result is a team that actually enjoys coming in to work, helping fuel red-hot growth at the \$50 million Chicago-based staffing and recruiting agency. Revenue was up 18 percent last year and head count 35 percent, and the company has been on the Inc. 5000 a remarkable nine years in a row. Many struggle to maintain a cohesive culture while scaling, but Gimbel, who’s also an Inc.com columnist, seems to have found the formula. —KATE ROCKWOOD

CONCIERGE SERVICES



COMPANY-WIDE TRIPS



ONSITE FITNESS



TIME OFF TO VOLUNTEER



REBIRTHDAY PARTY



### REBIRTHDAYS

The sight of two professional colleagues enthusiastically embracing might raise eyebrows elsewhere, but here it’s simply too common to be conspicuous. When Alexandria Fandino, 25, recently celebrated her second rebirthday (that is, her hire-date anniversary), co-workers greeted her with open arms nearly every time she stepped away from her desk. Filling the foyer were balloons, streamers, and poster-size photos of her beaming at work. And at her party, 100-plus employees gathered for chips and heartfelt speeches from both Gimbel and Fandino, who choked up as she said, “I had no idea, two years ago, that working here would be so awesome!”

### GRANDPARENTING

“People confuse appreciation with perks,” says Gimbel. “But putting a pool table in doesn’t make it a culture. Caring about employees is culture.” Gimbel saw that rather than seeking distractions from work, his mostly Millennial staff wanted help doubling down on it. So LaSalle Network launched a mentorship program and embraced “corporate grandparenting”—managers guide not only their direct reports but the layer below as well. The company is now assembling a three-person training department. And employees with a tenure of as little as a year can join a staff council, where they meet directly with the CEO to ask questions and share ideas.

### INCENTIVE TRIPS

Each year, Gimbel sets a sales goal, and if the staff meets it, everyone—from the chief operating officer to the office assistant—gets an all-expenses-paid trip that has so far bounced from Miami to Napa Valley to Vegas to San Francisco. Everyone agrees the goals are not easy. So recruiters turn walls and windows into dry erase boards for tracking placement metrics. And along with flowers from recent rebirthdays, adorning the desks are mugs bearing the company’s internal motto: Get Shit Done. The shared goal creates unity: If one recruiter is struggling to fill a position, people from other departments volunteer to come in on Saturday (with bagels and mimosas) to pound the phone lines.

### RESPONSIVENESS

Gimbel spends half his day talking to employees about—literally—anything. He knows who speaks Latin and Hindi, who’s put her dog down recently, who was home-schooled. That insatiable curiosity encourages openness when he asks employees what they want to do next. When one staffer moved to San Francisco because of her husband’s work, LaSalle opened a West Coast office and put her in charge. When a recruiter said he might want to work in operations someday, he was reporting to the COO two weeks later. Ninety percent of management rose from within, and half began in entry-level roles. “It doesn’t matter where you start,” says Gimbel. “It’s what you do with it. We believe in our people enough to give them a shot.”