

# The 2006 Best Christian Workplaces

By Emily Odegard



Do you believe Christian workplaces can be the best, most effective places to work in the world? Well...catch the vision.

This year, more than 10,600 employees gave honest, insightful feedback to managers, supervisors and executive boards. Of the 93 participating organizations, 40 were recognized at CMA Colorado 2006, CMA's annual conference, in Denver last month.

So, what makes the Best Christian Places to Work great? Research indicates that greatness lies in a delicate balance of character, competence, compassion, compensation and commitment (The Five Cs)... all firmly rooted in Christ. Ultimately, it is he who holds all things together, it is to him we give all glory, and it is for him we press on toward the goal.

Employees were asked, "What are the specific things about your organization that make it a great workplace?" Repeatedly, employees describe what the Best Christian Workplaces Institute has dubbed "The Five Cs," those things that cause them to rise above the rest.

## Character

Employees consistently say character of leadership sets their organization apart. "Demonstrated through open and honest communication, integrity in speech and action, and exemplified in leading with a servant's heart, character is indeed difficult to measure," says Al Lopus, president of Best Christian Workplaces Institute. "Nonetheless, employees reveal that character is the top priority of great leadership."

"Upper management is a living example of servant leader-

ship," claims one **Phoenix Seminary** employee. "They are men and women of true integrity with compassionate hearts who are dedicated to serving the Lord." A pleased employee at **Daystar** acknowledges a true love for the Lord in those he works with, and boasts of "the integrity of our leadership: they are above reproach. Their goals are to reach souls all over the world for Christ and not to lift up Daystar..."

In addition to integrity and humility, demonstration of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and open and honest dealings with organizational initiatives are indicators of outstanding character, as described by employees. One **EQUIP** employee gives thanks for "empowering Christian executives who model servant-leadership and a highly qualified staff that understands and practices teamwork. The fruit of the Spirit is seen everywhere..."

At **Corban College**, administration provides an example to follow: "There's a Christ-like style of leadership which I admire." A **Howard Publishing** employee said, "The leadership feels a great responsibility toward God's interests and desires. We have turned down many deals that might have compromised our purpose as a company." This employee has seen managers' depth of character *in practice*.

While character is admittedly difficult to measure, employees appreciate leaders who practice what they preach, whose words are seasoned with grace, and whose personal and professional lives intersect at the point of the cross.

## Competence

Management competence is critically important to the



effective performance of an organization. A well-managed employee is an empowered employee. Clearly defined goals and job roles, communication regarding major decisions, and visible improvement within an organization lead to a high level of trust between management and employees, and demonstrate a high level of competence.

“My supervisor is a person who leads by example and empowers people to discover their gifts and use them to their full potential,” states one **Bethel University** employee. “My duties are well-suited to my past experience, my skills and my spiritual gifts,” claims an employee at **Joni and Friends**. “... I love the freedom I have to make decisions and I love that my area director seeks my input and my suggestions. We have a high degree of mutual trust and respect. I feel highly valued and appreciated and have experienced great personal spiritual growth in the time I’ve worked here.”

Clearly, managers who are in tune with their staff capitalize on employee strengths to form a cohesive team. An **Alliance Defense Fund** employee tells of “highly qualified, highly motivated leadership and staff. The organization not only embraces the concept of ‘team,’ it works diligently at implementing it at every level... and has done so successfully.”

Lopus says that “when an organization has a winning strategy which everyone understands, and there’s consensus on the organization’s values, employees’ desire to engage is directly impacted.” At **Apartment Life**, employees appreciate the “solid vision and direction of the organization; [there is] a clear understanding of what success looks like for us as a min-

istry.” Further, “Apartment Life has implemented some great strategies over the last year to improve success of the mission. I believe continued implementation of the current strategies will prove to be beneficial.”

Growth within an organization, and particularly within an individual, proves to be a key factor in great workplaces. An EQUIP employee appreciates colleagues’ desires “to grow in the spiritual, skills, and strategic formations. There is also a freedom to fail and learn from the experience. EQUIP is a very empowering organization.”

A lack of competence and/or inefficiencies within management cause employees great frustration as a result of being unable to successfully complete their personal mission within the organization. Conversely, leaders who communicate openly and honestly, who explain reasons behind major decisions and empower their staff, not only meet their organization’s goals, but attract and retain highly qualified employees.

### **Compassion**

Compassion not only considers the personal hardships an individual faces, but is demonstrated in the workplace as a concern for the growth and direction of employees. Jesus’ heart for the people is revealed in Matthew 9:36, as he had compassion on them because they were scattered like sheep without a shepherd. Helping others learn and grow toward a specific goal is key to organizational success.

“I appreciate working for an organization where leadership values who I am as a person, as well as the work I do for the



## Well said...

“The task of leadership is not to put greatness into humanity, but to elicit it, for the greatness is already there.”

- John Buchan

organization,” one Bethel University employee reports. “My supervisor encourages growth on multiple levels: in the workplace, in the team, in my education, in my personal life and in my spiritual life.”

Another Bethel employee agrees. “My director – the person above my supervisor – is exceptional. Last year I was ready to leave because, after five years, I needed a challenge. She recognized that soon after she was hired, and has helped me make changes that have met my personal and professional goals.”

A Daystar employee describes a touching story about compassionate leadership: “When I recently went through a medical crisis with a newborn in my family, Daystar management gave me the help I needed! My department management gave me the emotional support I needed. I’ll never forget the kindness and spiritual support shown to me! I enjoy my work and am proud to be an integral part of this loving, caring workplace.”

Indeed, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Thus Jesus’ compassion demonstrates a legitimate need for people to be cared for. This need, when satisfied, results in effective, encouraged workers, and raises up new leaders to add to the harvest field.

### Compensation

It takes much more than dollars and days off to make for enthusiastic employees. Despite “better pay and benefits” frequently stated as what employees would like to improve about their organization, several from the Best Christian Places to Work said they’re pleased with their rewards.

“I appreciate the CCO for its willingness to receive suggestions for all levels of the organization, the training we receive as field staff, and how they provide us with the resources we need.” This employee at **Coalition for Christian Outreach** adds, “I also think our 401k plan is great, and I love the diversity and flexibility of positions.”

In addition to retirement benefits, this Daystar employee reminds us that it’s also the little things that count: “The break/lunch rooms have free coffee/tea/etc., and that, along with good benefits, tells me employees are highly valued.”

Flexibility in the workday and additional training add to employee satisfaction. Apartment Life employees “love the flexible hours and being able to office from home.” And a great perk to working at Howard Publishing is that it’s “very family oriented.” One employee states, “Any time I need to be off for any reason, no matter how much I have to do, I know the answer will be yes.”

At **Christian Heritage Academy**, an employee said they are “encouraged to pursue continuing professional development, which is paid for by the school in most cases. We’re also allowed time to pursue church or missionary opportunities that may occasionally take us away from our professional duties here. I feel so lifted up, esteemed and affirmed by our school board and parents. They celebrate and encourage our gifts of teaching with whatever gifts the Lord has given them: time, money, connections, teaching abilities, etc.”

Lopus reveals the astonishing fact that “67 percent of employees stated that, in comparison with people in similar jobs in other Christian organizations, they are paid fairly.” In addition, some of the most intriguing comments came from employees who wished for higher pay or better benefits, but conceded that the people they work with and the missions they were committed to more than made up for the lack.

### Commitment

Employer commitment takes into account the attraction of highly qualified employees, and the empowerment of those employees to do well and to succeed. Essential to commitment is a clearly defined mission with which employees align themselves. A lasting career is one that is rooted in similar

vision and deep trust, not to mention God’s will and blessing.

A **Fellowship Church** employee calls this “putting people in their sweet spots.” Others affirm that the church excels at “carefully selecting staff and placing them in appropriate positions according to their gifts,” and they are given “the freedom to take calculated risks.”

Characteristic of Christian organizations are high levels of employee engagement, as a result of the mission being closely aligned with its own personal calling/ministry. One

## The Five Cs of Christian Management

**Character:** Managers behave with fairness and integrity, demonstrate the Fruit of the Spirit, conduct activities openly and honestly, and create high levels of trust in the organization.

**Competence:** Managers manage well, communicate a winning strategy, and demonstrate that the organization improved over the last year. There is a clear consensus on organization values.

**Compassion:** Managers care about employees as people, encourage opportunities for learning and growth for employees, and communicate what is expected of each employee.

**Compensation:** Managers effectively reward and recognize top performers, pay fairly and provide satisfactory retirement plans.

**Commitment:** Managers involve employees in decisions that affect them, seek and act on employees’ suggestions.

Source: Best Christian Workplaces Institute® 2006. Result of Factor Analysis from four years of employee satisfaction research incorporating surveys of 40,000 Christian workers.

EQUIP employee claims, “we practice what we teach. It’s a leadership culture that exudes biblical leadership and the principles Jesus lived by. I love coming to

work because I know I'm involved in a movement of God that will impact eternity."

One **AMOR** employee comments, "Working for this ministry is a blessing for me because it provides the opportunity to work cross culturally. It has provided me the ability to "GO" into the world as God has commanded me to, and has given me the environment I need to learn, be available, and teachable for what God has planned for my life!"

An Alliance Defense Fund employee asserts, "I enjoy the atmosphere of ADF. Working in the social and legal issues of the U.S. is exciting and interesting to me. Probably 90 percent of all ADF employees believe in the reasons ADF exists and, because of that, want to be a part of what God is doing through the organization. This creates a mission-oriented team that will do what's necessary in working together to get the job done. ADF's leaders earn respect rather than demand it, and maintain high levels of personal integrity."

Finally, a **Mount Paran** employee says it all. "Leadership is professional,

caring, and I feel like they're my extended family who support me any way they can. I feel I can 'really teach,' because they allow me to be creative, yet hold me accountable to the standards. It's the perfect balance. I love it as a teacher and as a parent!

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for [once] he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the [law] of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:23-25, NASB)

"The building is beautiful inside and out. Administrators walk in truth, and follow Christ's example. They're an inspiration to me. Also, the after-school care program is outstanding and very, very affordable to teachers. The chef is phenomenal and sometimes security will give me a ride to my car in the golf cart when it's raining. A true utopia!"

Analogous to the mirror in James 1, the survey reflects employee perceptions, values and attitudes as they exist within an organization. Great leaders

look carefully in the mirror, and go away *not* forgetting what they have seen, but endeavoring to tend to, and better, that which they have seen with clear eyes and teachable hearts.

Communication proves to be integral to great leadership, and those 93 organ-

izations that took a bold step toward organizational improvement by participating in the survey process are demonstrating to their employees that they're listening. Are you?

**Emily Odegard** is communications manager for Best Christian Workplaces Institute, Mercer Island, Wash. Contact her at [Emily@bcwinstitute.com](mailto:Emily@bcwinstitute.com).

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**Emily Odegard**



## Larger Organizations (600+ Employees)

- 1 Bethel University (Saint Paul, Minn.) [bethel.edu](http://bethel.edu)
- 2 Wycliffe (Orlando, Fla.) [wycliffe.org](http://wycliffe.org)

## Higher Education (225 to 500 Employees)

- 1 Dallas Theological Seminary (Dallas, Texas) [dts.edu](http://dts.edu)
- 2 Evangel University (Springfield, Mo.) [evangel.edu](http://evangel.edu)
- 3 California Baptist University (Riverside, Calif.) [calbaptist.edu](http://calbaptist.edu)
- 4 Olivet Nazarene University (Bourbonnas, Ill.) [olivet.edu](http://olivet.edu)

## Higher Education (101 to 224 Employees)

- 1 Corban College (Salem, Ore.) [corban.edu](http://corban.edu)
- 2 The Master's College (Santa Clarita, Calif.) [masters.edu](http://masters.edu)
- 3 Belhaven College (Jackson, Miss.) [belhaven-college.com](http://belhaven-college.com)
- 4 Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (South Hamilton, Maine) [gordonconwell.edu](http://gordonconwell.edu)

## Higher Education (Up to 100 Employees)

- 1 Phoenix Seminary (Scottsdale, Ariz.) [phoenixseminary.edu](http://phoenixseminary.edu)
- 2 The Master's Seminary (Santa Clarita, Calif.) [tms.edu](http://tms.edu)

## Media (Over 100 Employees)

- 1 Daystar Television Network (Dallas, Texas) [daystar.com](http://daystar.com)
- 2 Educational Media Foundation/KLOVE and Air1 Radio (Rocklin, Calif.) [klove.com](http://klove.com)

## Media (Up to 100 Employees)

- 1 Howard Publishing Co., Inc. (West Monroe, La.) [howardpublishing.com](http://howardpublishing.com)
- 2 Warner Press, Inc. (Anderson, Ind.) [warnerpress.com](http://warnerpress.com)

## Parachurch & Missions (Over 120 Employees)

- 1 Coalition for Christian Outreach (Pittsburgh, Pa.) [ccojubilee.org](http://ccojubilee.org)
- 2 Bible League (Chicago, Ill.) [bibleleague.org](http://bibleleague.org)
- 3 Crown Financial Ministries (Gainesville, Ga.) [crown.org](http://crown.org)

## Parachurch & Missions (50 to 120 Employees)

- 1 Joni and Friends (Agoura Hills, Calif.) [joniandfriends.org](http://joniandfriends.org)
- 2 CityTeam Ministries (San Jose, Calif.) [cityteam.org](http://cityteam.org)
- 3 ABWE (Harrisburg, Pa.) [abwe.org](http://abwe.org)

## Parachurch & Missions (Up to 50 Employees)

- 1 Apartment Life (Eules, Texas) [apartmentlife.org](http://apartmentlife.org)
- 2 New Mission Systems International (Fort Myers, Fla.) [nms-intl.com](http://nms-intl.com)
- 3 Walter Hoving Home (Garrison, N.Y.) [walterhovinghome.com](http://walterhovinghome.com)
- 4 Amor Ministries (San Diego, Calif.) [amor.org](http://amor.org)

## Service & Product (Over 90 Employees)

- 1 Alliance Defense Fund (Scottsdale, Ariz.) [alliancedefensefund.org](http://alliancedefensefund.org)
- 2 Logos Research Systems, Inc. (Bellingham, Wash.) [logos.com](http://logos.com)

## Service & Product (Up to 89 Employees)

- 1 EQUIP (Duluth, Ga.) [equip.org](http://equip.org)
- 2 DeMoss Group, Inc. (Duluth, Ga.) [demossgroup.com](http://demossgroup.com)
- 3 Envoy Financial (Colorado Springs, Colo.) [envoyfinancial.com](http://envoyfinancial.com)
- 4 MPower Systems (Dallas, Texas) [mpowersystems.com](http://mpowersystems.com)

## Church Related

- 1 Fellowship Church (Grapevine, Texas) [fellowshipchurch.org](http://fellowshipchurch.org)
- 2 BBFI Mission Office (Springfield, Mo.) [bbfi.org](http://bbfi.org)

## Christian Schools (K-12) (Over 90 Employees)

- 1 Mount Paran Christian School (Kennesaw, Ga.) [mtparanschool.com](http://mtparanschool.com)
- 2 Indian Rocks Christian Schools (Largo, Fla.) [indianrocks.org](http://indianrocks.org)
- 3 Evangelical Christian School (Cordova, Tenn.) [ecseagles.net](http://ecseagles.net)

## Christian Schools (K-12) (Up to 89 Employees)

- 1 Christian Heritage Academy (Northfield, Ill.) [christian-heritage-academy.org](http://christian-heritage-academy.org)
- 2 Stoneybrooke Christian Schools (San Juan Capistrano, Calif.) [stoneybrooke.com](http://stoneybrooke.com)
- 3 Christian Heritage School (Trumbull, Conn.) [kingsmen.org](http://kingsmen.org)

## Choosing the Best Christian Places to Work

Conducted by the Best Christian Workplaces Institute, the 2006 survey polled self-nominated workplaces with a Christian mission or purpose. More than 10,600 employees filled out a confidential online survey, and administrators from each organization provided details of human resources practices in their workplace.

Due to differing sizes and industries, the participants were divided into 14

categories. Independent judges weighed the data in a "blind process" and 40 finalists rose to the top. (The names of non-finalists are kept confidential.) The number of finalists in each category is proportionate to the group's size.

The panel of judges included three presidents of previous finalists: Bob Fryling, President, Intervarsity Press; Mark Holbrook, President, ECCU; and Bill Robinson, President, Whitworth College; along with cofounder of the Best Christian Workplaces Institute, Helen Lee.