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## MACLEAN'S | Guide to Canadian Universities 2003



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### Cover

October 28, 2002

## THE TOP 100 EMPLOYERS

**Where you'll find the best places to work--and why they're employee magnets**

KATHERINE MACKLEM

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WALK THROUGH the Vancouver offices of Crystal Decisions Inc., and you'll see all the classic markers of the high-tech craze -- right down to the foosball and billiards tables. There are exposed beams, brick walls and warehouse-sized windows. Comfy couches are here and there in the open-concept space, and there's nary a tie or a suit in sight -- the dress code is, natch, casual. Fresh fruit is offered for a small donation; pop sells for 25 cents, and that also goes to charity. But as funky as it is, a cool work environment isn't enough anymore to

attract the best talent. "It's kind of nice to have," says Matthew Handford, the software company's VP of human resources, "but at the end of the day, that stuff is like window dressing."

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What matters to employees today, in the tech sector and beyond, is corporate viability. Boring -- and unnecessary -- though this might have seemed in 1999, Crystal Decisions has the essential ingredient employees now want: a proven product with a solid customer base -- in other words, a real business. Three or four years ago, Handford says, job candidates had "mercenary" interests: they wanted to know about IPO prospects and equity splits. Now people want to know the company's history, its profit model, and the number of quarters of growth -- "all the solid business model indicators that you are a going concern and that your growth is not some sort of accident." The main product at Crystal Decisions, which employs 1,650 people worldwide (859 in Canada), is an information management system sold around the world. That, and not the foosball, is a key reason the company is on this year's list of Canada's Top 100 Employers.

The list, compiled by Mediacorp Canada Inc., a Toronto-based publisher specializing in employment-related books and periodicals, showcases companies with the country's best practices in managing what many businesses call their greatest asset: their people. Firms are compared with their sector peers, rather than slotted into an overall ranking, says Anthony Meehan, Mediacorp's publisher. To be considered, a company must be expanding and hiring new people. Other questions asked are:

- Does the firm let employees know if they are performing well?
- Are its employment benefits and vacation allowance exceptional for the industry?

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- Is the physical environment of the workplace stimulating?
- Does the company pass on news and info to its employees?
- How involved is the firm in its community?
- Overall, does it go the extra distance to attract and retain outstanding employees?

To find the Top 100, Meehan and his staff began with the 47,000 companies they track for their publications, including the job-listing Canada Employment Weekly. Last spring, they sent questionnaires to the 6,000 fastest-growing employers, large and small. Those that made an initial cut were invited to send detailed data on human resources, financial and other issues. This year, there are fewer technology companies than last year -- a trend that follows the sector's overall decline -- and the ones that are there, like Crystal Decisions, boast black ink on the bottom line.

In fact, the research shows a blurring of the line separating the new economy and the old. While a tech firm today must have real revenues to be taken seriously, the so-called old-economy companies are adopting what may become a legacy of the dot-com era: the Cool Workplace. Companies in sectors that are decidedly uncool -- but stable -- are picking up many of the perks and practices first made popular by tech start-ups. "This year's most spectacular trend," says Meehan, "is the return of the traditional-economy companies as viable competitors for the best talent. It's a very good change in terms of the long-term viability of these programs."

There's a new pool table and a big-screen TV in the lounge, plus an exercise room, at the training facility of Saskatchewan's phone company, SaskTel, in Regina. BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc., a Vancouver-based mining company -- a sector as old-economy as they come -- has perhaps the longest list of cool stuff: foosball,



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billiards, squash, floor hockey, martial arts, badminton, even an indoor putting green and driving range. L'Union Canadienne, an insurance company based in Quebec City, has a lounge with comfy couches, music, a TV -- and a pool table "of course," says HR coordinator Ghislaine Nadeau, who admits she likes the game. The office perks, which include an on-site massage therapist, were adopted by L'Union Canadienne just a couple of years ago with the goal of improving workers' quality of life. Already, the company has seen results, Nadeau says, pointing to a dramatic decline in staff turnover, from 12.4 per cent in 2000 to six per cent in 2001. So far in 2002, the rate is 3.7 per cent. "Because we take care of our employees," says Nadeau, "they give back in return."

To showcase such winners, Mediacorp will shortly release its third annual edition of Canada's Top 100 Employers, a definitive guide for job seekers to firms that lead their peers in providing a great place to work. In the pages that follow, Maclean's takes a closer look at 10 of those companies, lists all 100, and provides a taste of what got them on Mediacorp's list. The book, which profiles all 100 companies from a cross-section of industries, is "a catalogue of best practices," Meehan says, for job seekers, human-resources specialists and corporate executives.

This year's list shows that perks of the dot-com variety, such as referral bonuses, have also been imported into the public sector. The Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital, a community facility in Burlington, Ont., offers a bonus up to \$500 for new-hire referrals and tops up maternity benefits to 93 per cent of an employee's salary for 27 weeks, considerably longer than the Employment Insurance standard of 15 weeks. The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto also offers a referral bonus, up to \$1,000, and a performance bonus of up to 10 per cent of salary for senior managers.

Almost across the board, share options -- once as much a mark of tech success as the requisite Bimmer -- have taken a back seat,

although they haven't entirely disappeared. At the still privately held Crystal Decisions, everyone participates in the company's stock option plan. Still, says Handford, options are not top of mind anymore for potential employees -- a striking difference from two years ago, when a stock option plan was a "significant part of the conversation" with a prospective worker.

Companies whose employees believe their bosses are good people-managers are the ones with the strongest shareholder returns, a study to be released this week shows. "Where trust in management is high," says Dawn Bell, a Vancouver-based senior consultant with Watson Wyatt Worldwide, "it is incredible what employees can do to drive business success. In organizations where the trust and confidence has gone, it is very difficult just to keep the lights on." For employers, good talent management is not simply a matter of keeping staff happy -- it's also good business.

Company profiles by Brian Bergman, John DeMont, John Intini, Katherine Macklem and Ken MacQueen

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## Cover

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**CHART: THE TOP 100**

**Culled from a database of 47,000 firms, here are the choices detailed in the soon-to-be- published 2003 edition of Canada's Top 100 Employers, with highlights from the book's data.**

## Photo Galleries

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COMPANY	JOBS	HIGHLIGHTS
AD OPT Technologies Inc. Montreal	<b>127</b>	Software developer with a special Valentine's Day gesture—flowers and chocolate delivered to all employees.
Adacel Inc. Brossard, Que.	<b>100</b>	Air-traffic systems maker leads in vacations: four weeks to start, 13-week paid sabbatical after 10 years.
Algorithmics Inc. Toronto	<b>334</b>	Strong educational opportunities, including \$2,000 annual tuition subsidy, at this financial services software firm.
AltaGas Services Inc. Calgary	<b>329</b>	Natural gas outfit offers in-house courses and pays full salary while apprentices are attending outside classes.
Assumption Mutual Life Insurance Moncton, N.B.	<b>225</b>	Old Maritime firm with parkside office, staff movie nights and rewards that can include cruise-ship vacations.
ATS Automation Tooling Systems Inc. Cambridge, Ont.	<b>1,709</b>	Family-oriented benefits include 50 \$1,000 academic scholarships awarded to the children of employees each year.

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Banff Centre Banff, Alta.	<b>582</b>	Educational and cultural institute offers chance to live (and learn, with subsidies) in a world heritage site.
Bank of Montreal Toronto	<b>25,358</b>	Operates a unique personal days off program involving short paid leaves where length is based on need.
Bethany Care Society Calgary	<b>1,238</b>	Uses annual surveys of employees, families and residents to improve facilities and work environment.
BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. Vancouver	<b>708</b>	Extensive recreation facilities, commitment to northern communities attracts skilled workforce to a remote location.
Brock Solutions Inc. Kitchener, Ont.	<b>220</b>	Engineering firm tailors rewards to individual personalities in diverse workforce—at least 32 languages spoken.
CAE Inc. Toronto	<b>4,000</b>	Simulator maker with operations in 13 countries features a large training centre and global opportunities.
Cara Operations Ltd. Mississauga, Ont.	<b>34,039</b>	Some top performers at food-services firm receive a leased car for a year (a Mercedes convertible in 2001).
CGI Group Inc. Montreal	<b>8,640</b>	Mentoring and strong career development are hallmarks at IT services firm, Canada's biggest and still growing.
Co-operative Trust Co. of Canada Saskatoon	<b>220</b>	Ensures that employees absent for maternity leave are still interviewed for internal promotions.
Co-operators Life Insurance Co. Regina	<b>522</b>	A 36-hour official workweek allows employees to earn a long weekend every other week.
Credit Union Electronic Transaction Services Regina	<b>381</b>	Staff get an extra day off each month in addition to generous vacation allowance.
Crystal Decisions Inc. Vancouver	<b>859</b>	Software firm subsidizes transit, encourages bikes, offers company-owned cabin at Whistler for \$20 a night.
Dalsa Corp. Waterloo, Ont.	<b>489</b>	Tech company involved with Canadarm2 hosts ESL classes during work hours for new employees from overseas.
DeltaWare Systems Inc. Charlottetown	<b>77</b>	Small firm brings high-tech jobs to PEI and beats the big guys—recently won national battle for a Nunavut contract.
Diagnostic Chemicals Ltd.	<b>150</b>	Pharmaceutical company offers everything from a solid pension plan to an enlightened



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Charlottetown		paid personal days off program.
Dofasco Inc. Hamilton	<b>7,526</b>	Old-economy steel firm still creates jobs. Has had profit-sharing since 1938, offers huge recreation/teaching facility.
Ecotrust Canada Vancouver	<b>22</b>	Non-profit organization's employees are trusted: can take days off based on an honour system.
Enbridge Inc. Calgary	<b>2,980</b>	Pipeline company with strong community involvement; has a full-time manager of Aboriginal relations.
Envision Financial Langley, B.C.	<b>725</b>	Canada's fourth-largest credit union offers yoga and self-defence classes, and four weeks' vacation after two years.
Epcor Utilities Inc. Edmonton	<b>3,568</b>	Big on volunteerism—75 per cent of staff see community service as one of their best perks.
Ernst & Young LLP Toronto	<b>3,292</b>	Accounting firm likes bonuses: up to \$4,000 for referrals, \$20,000 for signing, \$5,000 for course completions.
Export Development Canada Ottawa	<b>983</b>	Trade organization backs youth employment, has a \$1 million scholarship fund for students in international studies.
Fairmont Hotels & Resorts Inc. Toronto	<b>12,000</b>	Strong in-house training and tuition subsidies, plus 38 luxurious places to work worldwide.
Frank Russell Canada Ltd. Toronto	<b>74</b>	Staff can work at the investment firm's other offices in London, Paris, New York, Sydney, etc. for up to five years.
Gennum Corp. Burlington, Ont.	<b>456</b>	Ninety per cent of employees are shareholders, thanks to the electronics firm's stock-purchase plan.
Georgian College Barrie, Ont.	<b>1,169</b>	Strong benefits, including on-site daycare and generous vacations, while living on the doorstep of the Muskokas.
Golder Associates Ltd. Burnaby, B.C.	<b>1,238</b>	Employee-owned engineering consultant runs "Golder U" for training, exchanges staff among its 80 offices worldwide.
Great-West Life Assurance Co. Winnipeg	<b>3,830</b>	Leading provider of benefit plans to others also leads with its own, including discounted mortgage rates.
Hallmark Canada Inc. Toronto	<b>2,039</b>	Offers post-secondary scholarships to extended family members, including grandchildren and siblings.
Halsall Associates Ltd.	<b>145</b>	Employee-owned, family-run specialist in

Toronto		restoration and "green" construction stresses environmentalism.
Hamilton Police Service Hamilton	<b>1,080</b>	Cop shop committed to better work-life balance, including job sharing, paid time off for community volunteering.
Hewlett-Packard (Canada) Co. Mississauga, Ont.	<b>1,450</b>	Employees can vacation at a company lodge near Kingston, Ont., or other HP retreats in the U.S., Japan or Germany.
Hill & Knowlton Canada Toronto	<b>173</b>	Performance management at PR firm includes feedback from manager, subordinates and hand-picked co-workers.
Hospital for Sick Children Toronto	<b>6,229</b>	Facility dedicated to kids offers strong maternity leave top-up—to 84 per cent of salary for 26 weeks.
Husky Energy Inc. Calgary	<b>1,416</b>	Equity programs bring Aboriginals and women into a workforce that traditionally had few of either.
Hyperchip Inc. Montreal	<b>337</b>	Located in a former convent built in 1892, the tech firm consulted a feng shui master to help with the redesign.
iAnywhere Solutions Inc. Waterloo, Ont.	<b>212</b>	Wireless access software maker provides \$6,000 a year each for staff to spend on professional development.
IBM Canada Ltd. Markham, Ont.	<b>17,122</b>	Perks typical of the high-tech industry (such as an extra week's vacation when getting married) plus IBM security.
IMS Health Canada Ltd. Montreal	<b>308</b>	A two-week Christmas holiday shutdown enhances already decent annual vacation (three weeks after two years).
Industrial Accident Prevention Association Toronto	<b>218</b>	Employees receive three paid days off a year to volunteer for charities, and can get help setting up home offices.
Inex Pharmaceuticals Corp. Burnaby, B.C.	<b>154</b>	Gives extra days off to create or extend long weekends. Social events include whitewater rafting and snowboarding.
Inscriber Technology Corp. Waterloo, Ont.	<b>102</b>	Snacks available daily, and a local bakery delivers fresh pastries every week to the video-graphics software house.
International Road Dynamics Inc. Saskatoon, Sask.	<b>122</b>	Maker of traffic management systems listened to employees, brought in compressed work week and wellness plan.
Intuit Canada Ltd. Edmonton	<b>467</b>	The showcase software firm has a gym, weight room, TV lounges, patios with barbecues, and sleep rooms.

Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital Burlington, Ont.	<b>1,378</b>	Private-style benefits in the public sector: maternity top-up, referral bonuses, tuition subsidies et al.
KPMG LLP Toronto	<b>4,769</b>	Unique fitness participation payment averages \$700 per employee to use for any sports activity.
MacDonald Dettwiler & Associates Ltd. Richmond, B.C.	<b>1,556</b>	High-tech engineering firm doing advanced robotics hasn't laid off an engineer in 30 years.
Manitoba Telecom Services Inc. Winnipeg	<b>4,685</b>	Along with its maternity top-up, the phone company covers 100 per cent of salary during the two-week waiting period.
Maritime Life Assurance Co. Halifax	<b>2,158</b>	Lots of options, including flexible hours, telecommuting, job sharing and seasonal and compressed workweeks.
Maritime Travel Inc. Halifax	<b>383</b>	After 9/11 whacked the travel industry, the firm laid off staff but maintained their benefits. Everyone was back by Jan. 7.
Matrikon Inc. Edmonton	<b>322</b>	IT consultant's hiring and assessments focus as much on "human" factors such as dedication and loyalty as job skill.
Merck Frosst Canada Ltd. Montreal	<b>1,887</b>	A leader for people with young families: offers 100 per cent maternity top-up for 18 weeks and daycare nearby.
Meridian Technologies Inc. Strathroy, Ont.	<b>531</b>	Auto components maker provides tuition subsidies and training rotations at the company's facility in Italy.
Metso Automation SCADA Solutions Ltd. Calgary	<b>460</b>	Social activities include camping, cave spelunking, wine and whisky tasting, a summer concert, and beer every Friday.
Mintz & Partners Toronto	<b>130</b>	A mid-sized accounting firm with a human touch—Mintz has one of busiest employee social calendars around.
City of Mississauga Mississauga, Ont.	<b>5,781</b>	Staff of this fast-growing city enjoy a 35-hour workweek and on-site daycare and fitness facilities.
Mitra Imaging Inc. Waterloo, Ont.	<b>305</b>	Medical imaging firm, now owned by German-based Agfa, has a well-regarded profit-sharing plan for all staff.
Montgomery Sisam Associates Inc. Toronto	<b>48</b>	Architectural firm takes staff on an annual trip to a major design centre—last year, Michigan's Cranbrook Academy.
National Life Assurance Co. of Canada	<b>373</b>	Employees can build their own benefit plans, selecting those that suit their needs.

Toronto		
NCR Canada Ltd. Waterloo, Ont.	<b>1,784</b>	With three on-site baseball diamonds, staff host an annual charity softball tournament, now a Waterloo tradition.
Nunavut Power Corp. Iqaluit	<b>148</b>	Offers paid housing and free electricity (no small benefit given its cost locally) to those transferring from the south.
OMERS Toronto	<b>512</b>	Strong performance review program, including training, at the pension manager for Ontario municipal employees.
Patheon Inc. Mississauga, Ont.	<b>1,372</b>	Pharmaceutical outfit offers global opportunities and has specially designed training programs at two local colleges.
PCL Constructors Inc. Edmonton	<b>927</b>	Employee-owned firm keeps construction staff employed by moving them from job to job, rare for the industry.
Pelmorex Inc. Mississauga, Ont.	<b>290</b>	The federal government ranks the operator of TV's weather channels tops in its industry for employment equity.
Pfizer Canada Pharmaceuticals Group Montreal	<b>1,059</b>	Firm recently revamped its vacation policy to take account of previous work experience for new employees.
Pika Technologies Inc. Ottawa	<b>58</b>	Free breakfast served twice a week. Company has basketball courts, jogging trails and a Mt. Tremblant, Que., chalet.
Power Measurement Ltd. Saanichton, B.C.	<b>225</b>	Provides high-tech jobs on scenic Vancouver Island, near coastal beaches, hiking trails and lakeside jogging.
Purdue Pharma Pickering, Ont.	<b>220</b>	"People-first" custom-designed facility beside a conservation area gives most workers views and natural light.
QuestAir Technologies Inc. Burnaby, B.C.	<b>125</b>	Employees of firm involved in fuel-cell technology can choose between stock options and cash for bonuses.
Qunara Inc. Winnipeg	<b>267</b>	The former Exocom Group of IT consultants tailors rewards to individuals, from flying lessons to electronic gadgets.
Recruitsoft Inc. Quebec City	<b>201</b>	Software firm likes to hold departmental meetings away from the office—such as one last year in Cancun, Mexico.
Research In Motion Ltd. Waterloo, Ont.	<b>1,800</b>	The fabled BlackBerry maker shut down for half a day last year so employees could go see the latest Star Wars movie.

Reynolds and Reynolds (Canada) Ltd. Mississauga, Ont.	<b>380</b>	Supplier of data systems to auto retailers allowed many of its employees to move to home-based offices last year.
Rogers Communications Inc. Toronto	<b>16,412</b>	Strong synergy means broad opportunities across Rogers' array of businesses, not to mention many staff discounts.
SaskTel Regina	<b>4,090</b>	Stresses community involvement—employees and retirees donated over 70,000 hours of volunteer time last year.
Schlumberger Canada Ltd. Calgary	<b>2,817</b>	Extensive in-house training at multinational energy-tech firm for career possibilities in nearly 100 countries.
Seimac Ltd. Dartmouth, N.S.	<b>62</b>	When the Chelton Group bought the tech firm last year, staff each received profit-sharing cheques of \$8,000 to \$15,000.
Shell Canada Ltd. Calgary	<b>3,800</b>	Raising the bar for oil and gas producers by emphasizing environmental concerns in everyday business conduct.
Sierra Systems Group Inc. Vancouver	<b>676</b>	Tech firm gives staff as much info as possible via the Net and newsletters, including results of employee surveys.
Spectrum Signal Processing Inc. Burnaby, B.C.	<b>140</b>	Fun workplace with themed meetings, an active social club and an annual resort retreat for employees and families.
Standard Aero Ltd. Winnipeg	<b>1,294</b>	Everyone gets a free turkey at Christmas, and managers serve the staff Christmas lunch.
Stikeman Elliott Toronto	<b>502</b>	The firm offers performance bonuses high even for corporate lawyers, and is big on staff parties and summer picnics.
Sun Life Financial Services of Canada Inc. Toronto	<b>4,291</b>	Strong health, financial and vacation benefits, plus discounts on tickets to the Shaw and Stratford theatre festivals.
Syncrude Canada Ltd. Fort McMurray, Alta.	<b>3,944</b>	Provides 1,800 academic scholarships to employees' children each year, and stresses career development.
TDL Group Ltd. Oakville, Ont.	<b>1,033</b>	Its highly focused charity arm, the Tim Horton Children's Foundation, is a model for any company.
Teranet Inc. Toronto	<b>792</b>	Unusual public-private partnership developing government software offers stability in the tech sector with good perks.
Toronto Transit Commission Toronto	<b>9,953</b>	The subway line is expanding, governments are committed and there's a 35-hour workweek and a free ride to the job.

Trillium Health Centre Mississauga, Ont.	<b>3,612</b>	Employees can take leaves of absence for studies or even to "try out" new positions at the hospital.
L'Union Canadienne, Compagnie d'assurances Sillery, Que.	<b>297</b>	Offers perks rare in the insurance industry: monthly on-site massages, a lunchroom with TV, music and billiards.
Wardrop Engineering Inc. Winnipeg	<b>352</b>	You can throw pies at your manager to raise money for charity—the gesture speaks volumes about the firm's approach.
City of Waterloo Waterloo, Ont.	<b>802</b>	City that competes for workers in a key high-tech region has adopted many of the perks found in the private sector.
Yanke Group of Companies Saskatoon	<b>485</b>	Enlightened trucking firm provides leave time for drivers who farm and offers a confidential family assistance plan.
Zenon Environmental Inc. Oakville, Ont.	<b>576</b>	Custom-built facility includes a wellness centre, healthy cafeteria menu, outdoor ponds and forest pathways.

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