

Friday, January 20, 2012

Happily employed in Worcester

ONLY MIAMI HAS SUNNIER DISPOSITION



Nicole Cyganiewicz, left, and Maureen Langlois were surprised by Worcester's status as a good place to work, but both said today that they like their jobs in the business office of UMass Memorial Medical Center. (T&G Staff/PAUL KAPTEYN)

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Lots of people in Worcester are whistling while they work these days, apparently.

A new study by online career site CareerBliss looked at the happiest and unhappiest cities to work in.

The results, published this week on the Forbes magazine website (www.forbes.com) put beautiful, swanky Miami at the top of the list of cities where people are happiest in their jobs. And, following right behind that balmy city, is...may we have the envelope, please... why, Worcester!

Worcester's score was 4.106 out of a possible 5, just nudging out third-place Oklahoma City, which netted a 4.105 score. Miami's chart-topping tally was 4.140.

"Overall, your city did very, very well, ranking better than big cities like San Francisco, New York and LA," Alia Hanson, communications director for CareerBliss, said. "It was right under Miami and you were actually above Miami in some categories."

The rankings were based on an analysis of 43,000 independent employee reviews. Workers were asked to evaluate 10 factors that impact workplace happiness using a five-point scale.

Those factors included their relationship with their bosses and co-workers, compensation, job resources, work environment, opportunities for growth, the company culture and its reputation, daily tasks and control over the work they do on an upbeat daily basis.

A quick check of Worcester workers walking downtown today seemed to confirm the study's cheery findings. People we spoke with did indeed enjoy their jobs. Still, there was considerable surprise that Worcester was such a big winner. When they were told about the study as they walked down Main Street, Maureen Langlois and Nicole Cyganiewicz couldn't stop laughing. What's so funny?

"It's actually really a surprise because it's a smaller city and I just thought a bigger city like Boston would have gotten something like that," Mrs. Langlois said. She and Mrs. Cyganiewicz both said they like their jobs in the business office of UMass Memorial Medical Center at 370 Main St. "The camaraderie, that's the best part despite the cost of living and all that," Mrs. Cyganiewicz said. "It's the people that we hang out with and work with."

The co-worker factor was an area that Worcester outscored Miami with a score of 4.48, Ms. Henson said. "A 5 would be optimal, the best you could be, like, 'I'm in bliss,'" she said. "And with the 'the people you work' with at 4.48, that's pretty darn good."

Another Worcester high point was the category of management fairness, Ms. Henson said. Kathy Camden, another UMass office worker, agrees with that finding. "The bosses are great," she said. "They're not on our backs all the time. They let us do our thing."

Having a modicum of freedom also was a favorable factor for Michael Nugent, a courier for the downtown law firm of Fletcher Tilton. "I'm not in the office all day so I get to get out and walk around and then I go back in the office," he said. "It's a good mix."

Even those with less ambulatory positions seem to like their jobs, he said. "My workplace is pretty happy," he said. "It's a pretty good workplace."

No one said they were so happy that they would turn down a big fat raise, but compensation was just a part of the package that the study looked at. "It's not just based on company growth and hiring rate," Ms. Henson said. "It's really looking at the whole person and employee experience and what really gives them joy in their day-to-day lives."

While some people may be surprised that Worcester beat out more glamorous cities, William D. Wallace, executive director of the Worcester Historical Museum, is not. The museum houses an extensive collection of memorabilia connected with the smiley face, the perennially grinning advertising image created in 1963 by Worcester resident Harvey Ball. "Worcester is the home of the truly great, iconic image — the smiley face," he said. "We've been the most smiling city in America, if not the world, since December of 1963."

Rounding out the top five happy cities after Oklahoma City were San Jose and Oxnard, both in California. The only other northern city in the top 10 was Syracuse, N.Y., which came in at No. 8.