

The cream of the crop

Three top firms striving to keep their staff healthy and happy

By **Nina Notman**

To attract and retain crème de la crème scientists, most companies strive to offer their employees an interesting and stimulating work environment coupled with excellent financial rewards and benefit packages. But many also subscribe to the theory that a fit and happy workforce equals a healthy bottom line and are going the extra mile to achieve this.

C&EN has selected three such companies—Regeneron, Agilent Technologies, and The Dow Chemical Company—to highlight here from Fortune's "100 Best Companies To Work For", Forbes' "America's Best Employers", and Working Mother's "100 Best Companies For Working Mothers" lists in 2015.

Regeneron is a pharmaceutical company with around 4,000 employees, most of whom are based in the U.S.

"We have about 550 people who have a degree related to chemistry," explains Ross Grossman, vice president of human resources. This includes approximately 25% of the company's R&D staff. "We also have a fairly significant number of people with chemistry-related degrees working in our manufacturing and regulatory areas."

The company strives to promote employee health with massage chairs, a gym with regular workout classes, and a medical concierge on retainer at the Tarrytown campus, where more than half of Regeneron's employees are based. There are also many employee sports clubs and teams, including bowling, tennis, basketball, cricket, and football. These are all funded by Regeneron. "We pay the league fees and buy whatever uniform is needed," says Grossman.

"We believe that people who feel cared about are more likely to dig deep to get the work of the company done," he says. "We do a lot of things just to let people know we're thinking of them." Examples include a free frozen yogurt truck visiting the site on summer Thursdays and a donut and cider version in the fall. Gigantic baby gift packages are given to new parents, and lactation rooms are available to support mothers returning to work.

Regeneron also hosts regular family parties, barbecues, and picnics with face painting and other child-friendly entertainment. "Our best family engagement event happens on Columbus Day," says protein biochemist Jennifer Nguyen. "All employees' children over the age of five are invited on site to spend the day doing really cool scientific experiments."

Regeneron offers employees flexibility regarding working hours, where the job role permits it. "Philosophically, we don't really care a lot about when people get their work

done as long as the work gets done," says Grossman. "We don't crack the numbers, but we have lots of employees who have flexibility ranging from being able to work from home several days a week to just about everybody having the ability to flex their hours on occasions."

Nguyen—who joined Regeneron a year ago following a PhD at Yale University—has particularly appreciated this flexibility since her son was born eight months ago. Her role involves a mix of bench work and data analysis, some of which she can do at home when the baby is sleeping.

Offering education opportunities is also viewed as key to employee happiness. "On average our employees go through about 24 hours of [formal] training per year," says Grossman. This is in addition to extensive on-the-job training. Nguyen is particularly impressed by a program that allows scientists with a bachelor's degree to do an internal thesis project, enabling promotion to the same grade as PhD-level scientists. "I think that's a great thing," says Nguyen, "and I'm encouraging the research assistants that work with me to consider this."

As well as encouraging staff to give their best to the company, Grossman says that the effort to keep employees happy helps with retention. "We continue to have well below average in [staff] turnover for our industry," he says.

Agilent has 12,000 employees worldwide; 4,000 of them in the U.S.

"About 16% of our U.S. workforce is in R&D," explains Chris Swenson, the company's vice president of total rewards. Many of them are chemistry-related positions. Although best known as an instrument manufacturer, the company offers complete workflow solutions to laboratories, including software, consumables, and services. "We want to be the holistic partner to the lab," says Swenson. Agilent is taking the same holistic approach to employee fitness and happiness.

At the company's U.S. headquarters in Santa Clara, there is a gym on-site as well as multiple outdoor recreation facilities, including basketball and volleyball courts. Similar facilities are offered at other sites. Regular social events for employees are held to boost staff morale.

Agilent also prides itself in supporting work-life balance. "There is a lot of flexibility to work with people and figure out ways to accommodate the type of schedule they'd like to have and still meet their deliverables," says Swenson. Options include flexible time off, flexible schedules, and



Agilent Technologies

A lunchtime volleyball game at Agilent in Santa Clara.

telecommuting. Every employee may also take up to four hours a month of paid time off to volunteer.

The company provides a lot of support at all stages of employees' careers. "We focus very much on giving people the opportunity to stretch into new areas and bring that wealth of knowledge that you accumulate by doing that to new roles in other parts of the company," says Swenson. He credits this as the main reason the average tenure of Agilent's R&D workforce is 12 years.

Agilent employee Maggie A. Ostrowski agrees. She's been at Agilent for 14 years and has worked with five different R&D teams. In September, she left R&D to join the marketing department. "What's really kept me engaged the 14 years that I've been at Agilent is having the growth opportunity to be able to work on a variety of projects and teams," she explains.

Ostrowski has also benefited from Agilent's tuition support for employees wishing to return to university to earn further qualifications. The company funded her part-time master's degree in chemical engineering at Stanford University. It then partially funded her full-time PhD, again at Stanford. "I was back and forth between Agilent and Stanford during that time," she explains. "Agilent wants to continue to train and keep their employees engaged, and that's really key to retaining people for the longer term."

Dow has more than 53,000 employees based in 35 different countries.



The Dow Chemical Company

Dow employees are encouraged to volunteer through the Dow Sustainability Corps. This photo was taken during a 2013 project to ensure sustainable crop management to combat malaria in Ghana, Africa.

Dow's workforce is therefore very diverse in its makeup. "We see great correlation between the [cultural] diversity of our workforce with the most important element of diversity, which is the diversity of mindset. This is what we need when trying to solve some of the most challenging problems in science," explains Rui Cruz, R&D director for industrial solutions. And because Dow manufactures such a broad range of chemicals, plastics, and other products around

the world, its employees have access to diverse experiences throughout their careers.

Cruz has certainly had a diverse career himself. He joined Dow in his native Brazil in 2001, starting out in the human resources department while completing his chemical engineering degree. After a year he moved to R&D, and spent eight years working on several different products and technologies. In 2010, he left Brazil and moved to Texas. Five roles later, he is now the R&D director for industrial solutions.

The chemical giant hires approximately 30–40 new PhD chemists in the U.S. per year for roles in R&D, says Johanna Söderström, Chief Human Resources Officer and Corporate Director of Aviation. "Dow hires many more employees with chemistry-related degrees, particularly bachelors and masters degrees in chemical engineering." Chemical engineers are typically hired primarily into manufacturing or R&D roles. However, they also have career opportunities in other supporting functions in Dow.

"Dow is committed to promoting a culture of health," Söderström says. This includes on-site gyms (or offsite gym reimbursement) and access to weight management and smoking cessation programs. "Once a year in Freeport we give everyone in R&D pedometers, divide people in teams, and hand out weekly prizes [for the most steps taken]," says Cruz.

The company is also committed to learning and development, both on the job or through more formal training. Cruz himself completed his PhD in parallel with working at Dow, "and several people currently working in my team are pursuing their master's while on the job." A wide range of flexible working options are also on offer.

Dow encourages its employees to volunteer through the Dow Sustainability Corps. This program matches Dow employees with NGOs and other agencies looking for support for sustainable development projects, especially in locations of growth for Dow. Employee input ranges from consulting from their normal place of work for a few hours each week, to spending weeks out in the field.

Nina Notman, PhD, is a freelance writer based in the U.K.

This article is sponsored by C&ENjobs. The editorial content was created without direct involvement of C&EN reporters or editors.