

# CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

Detroit and Southeast Michigan's premier business news and information website

## Municipal League: Career path guide



ROBERT CHASE

CEO Daniel Gilmartin: "We want to show them career path opportunities."

Although the **Michigan Municipal League** advocates for Michigan villages and cities, the organization makes sure to look out for its employees, as well.

To make sure its employees stay ahead, the Ann Arbor-based nonprofit association of municipal governments and leaders provides tuition reimbursement and professional development through training programs, coaching and mentoring.

"We try to treat employees as well as we can," CEO Daniel Gilmartin said. "We want to show them career path opportunities and let them expand from beyond what they were specifically hired to do. That keeps it much more dynamic than getting stuck under your boss for 20 years and either waiting or moving on."

Caroline Kennedy, MML's manager of field operations, said when she didn't succeed on a project early in her career at the MML, the organization helped her improve.

"You have this kind of fear and sense of foreboding when you don't do well in a new position," Kennedy said. "My boss at the time said, 'If you don't fail once in a while, you aren't trying hard enough,' and I think that's what allows us to take chances."

Kennedy works in the northern Michigan field office in Gladstone and has been with the organization nearly 15 years. She said employees are never locked into their first position.

"In my first position in this organization, I was able to approach my boss and say 'I want to stay here, but I don't feel like I'm going to be of maximum potential to you in this position,' " and he listened to me," she said. "I might be hired for one thing, but I'm not locked into that little silo. I get to exercise all my knowledge and they appreciate that."

The creative and high-energy environment and managers who are willing to listen and offer advice make for an enjoyable work atmosphere, Kennedy said.

"There's not a boredom or routine to what we do, and you don't feel stiffened," she said. "An old-school line of thinking doesn't always work today. We have to be open to everything."

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# Attract, retain, repeat: What's cool in 2011: Hiring, helping workers build careers



Employees use the exercise room at the Michigan Municipal League.

When *Crain's* last held its Cool Places to Work awards program in 2009, the big issue was how to navigate the economic realities of the recession without punishing workers in the process.

Now, things are less grim. Many employees who nominated their employers mentioned how these organizations worked hard to avoid major cuts in pay and benefits during the worst years. Better still, quite a few said one of the coolest things about the company they work for is that it is growing and hiring.

This year, Cool Places to Work, as judged by *Crain's* and the **American Society of Employers**, recognizes companies and nonprofits that take talent attraction and retention seriously. These organizations acknowledge the importance their workers play in the success of their business and take actions to help those workers thrive.

As some workers pointed out in their nominating forms, this means more than having a video game console and a few couches in a corner of the office.

"We are currently seeking to hire over 100 sales positions this year, and that is sure to lead to other opportunities within the company for existing employees," wrote an employee at **MIE Financial Services LLC**, the Troy-based operator of **MyInsuranceExpert.com**.

It means demonstrating a commitment to employees' future success through advancement and training opportunities. It means keeping them in the loop on the organization's strategy and direction.

And, yes, sometimes it does mean a stocked refrigerator, a game room and other things that have nothing

to do with the organization's primary product or service. Plenty of nominators were happy to highlight niceties such as on-site dry cleaning pickup and regular happy hour meetings.

Kevin Marrs, Southfield-based ASE's director of survey services, said many lighter offerings aren't expensive and they signal a company's values to workers who would match the culture.

"It helps recruit talent that's a right fit for the organization," he said.

Nominated organizations were asked to complete a survey conducted by ASE. Out of 378 nominated organizations, nearly 100 completed the survey, of which 48 were selected as winners.

The survey covered six weighted categories: work-life initiatives, talent management, communication, total rewards, work environment, and recruitment and employment activities. ASE applied scores to each category and derived a final ranking from those category scores.

Some features were given extra credit, Marrs said. While offering flexible schedules was considered positive, it is also common. If an organization went the extra mile on flexibility, that yielded more points.

Mary Corrado, president and CEO of ASE, said there is no one-size-fits-all formula -- just because one organization offers certain perks doesn't mean others should. Some people might prefer an organization that offers adoption services and child care to one that has beer and games.

"Every organization can come up with ways to make it a cool place, she said.

And while talent attraction does have a bottom-line impact, stability will always trump cool, Corrado said.

"I prefer to be assured I have a job to go every day next week," she said.

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## **And the winners are ...**

*Crain's Detroit Business* has named 48 companies of varying sizes as Cool Places to Work in Southeast Michigan.

### **1-50 employees**

**Brogan & Partners**

**Michigan Municipal League**

**Eisbrenner Public Relations**

**McGraw Morris**

**O'Keefe & Associates**

**Credential Check**

**Innovative Learning Group**

**Nemeth Burwell**

**Michigan Suburbs Alliance**

**Interior Partnership Group**

**Airfoil Public Relations**

**Brightwing**

**Core3 Solutions**

**Billhighway.com (Automated Payment Highway)**

### **51-250 employees**

**Michigan First Credit Union**

**United Way for Southeastern Michigan**

**The Farbman Group**

**Giarmarco, Mullins & Horton**

**Brown & Brown of Detroit**

**Potestivo & Associates**

**Walsh College**

**MyInsuranceExpert.com (MIE Financial Services)**

**Trubiquity**

**Mercedes-Benz Research & Development North America**

**Marketing Associates**

**McGraw Wentworth**

**Detroit Athletic Club**

**251-500 employees**

**Arrow Strategies**

**JVS**

**Market Strategies International**

**Warner, Norcross & Judd**

**HHA Services**

**Educational Data Systems**

**Advantage Technical Resourcing**

**Macomb-Oakland Regional Center**

**501-1,000 employees**

**The Epitec Group**

**Mercedes-Benz Financial Services USA**

**Sun Communities**

**More than 1,000 employees**

**Henry Ford Health System**

**General Motors**

**Beaumont Health System**

**Valassis Communications**

**Seko Worldwide-Detroit**

**Digitas**

**St. John Providence Health System**

**Inergy Automotive Systems (USA)**

**Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan**

**International Automotive Components Group North America**

