



THE SUNDAY TIMES

THE SUNDAY TIMES 100 BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR

Tristan Jones



Wired to reach the top

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4Com
Business communications



TOP SCORES

Leadership	1st
My Company	1st
Giving Something Back	1st

Male/female ratio	63:37
Average age	32
Voluntary leavers	18%
Earning £35,000+	60%

“OUR SALES STAFF have a three-minute challenge,” explains Dean Cartledge, 4Com’s telemarketing director. “They have to find out what type of biscuits the managing director likes at a company we are hoping to do business with, and chat about anything but telecoms to make the call memorable.” His bouncy team, cold-calling small and medium-size companies, do their research: then sales people take along the cookie of choice to sweeten the first meeting.

This personal touch extends to its employees,

helping 4 Com to top our mid-size league having grown large enough to qualify, after four years as a Best Small Company. Founded in 1999, it supplies 10,000 UK firms with telecommunication systems, software and hardware, including its jazzy new touch-screen handset.

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Based in Christchurch, Dorset, 4Com ranks top for Leadership, Wellbeing, Fair Deal, Giving Something Back and the 257 employees’ connection to My Company. There’s a real sense of family, too, winning a top score of 91% positive. Cartledge is just one of many employees with a relative here – his wife, Lynda, is human resources director.

But this cosiness doesn’t stop them being sharp about business: the office dress code is ultra-smart, and product manager Jon Guerra Fernandez describes a culture of quick innovation. “People are quite slopey-shouldered in corporate environments,” he says. “Here, we get excited. It’s easier to innovate in a company that supports it.”

Senior managers such as chairman Daron Hutt listen (87%) and many staffers are shareholders themselves, since they typically get an allocation through an EMI (enterprise management incentives) share scheme after every five years of service. Fernandez also describes the place as a “crazy family”, and there’s certainly a sense of

kinship in the shiny fleet of low-emission or hybrid company vehicles.

Nobody feels that health suffers due to work (90%), thanks to a breakfast bar and salad lunches when they hit targets, flower-filled offices and music and disco lights to keep up morale in the call centre. Everyone has private healthcare for the whole family.

Cartledge, who also heads the 4Com Foundation, organises a host of sponsored activities and spent last Christmas day at Poole hospital with the charity Amelia’s Rainbow, giving out presents to sick children. “I’ve run up a lot of hills in my life, but this was a bit different – it was very humbling,” he says.

www.4com.co.uk

