

100 Best Companies Ranking Gets It Right

By Wayne Visser

The 100 Best Companies 2009 ranking (UK) caught my eye on Sunday and I was surprised to find myself overcoming my usual cynacism and scepticism about indexes and rankings.

I am less inclined to comment about the actual results - see the link at the end of this post if you're dying to know - and more interested in the design. It seems to me, this list got a few critical things right:

1. Not the usual suspects - It was refreshing to see most of the names on the list were not the big-brand, household names that tend to crop up over and over on many of the other CSR-type rankings. In particular, many are small and medium-sized companies, which often get overlooked.
2. A holistic approach - Although very employee-focused, the categories on which companies are assessed seem to present a balanced picture of what sustainable and responsible companies should be striving for. They include for example: leadership, personal growth, wellbeing, giving something back and fairness.
3. A stakeholder perspective - Unlike so many CSR rankings which rely on either reported (PR-shaped) performance or questionnaires filled in by single managers, Best Companies uses employee surveys and even site visits to obtain a more representative picture.
4. Different lenses of analysis - The list is easily sortable online into ranks according to the various categories, as well as some sub-categories (like Greenest company and best Work/Life balance).

I should add a caveat. These kind of lists are no guarantee of responsibility and sustainability, as Enron demonstrated spectacularly - it was one of Fortune magazine's 100 Best Companies to Work For in America - just a year before their total lack of ethics was revealed and they imploded shamefully.

That being said, any system which encourages corporate assessment on a broader set of metrics than financials is, in my view, worth giving some credit. And especially those, like the Best Companies, that make a brave effort to measure intangibles like return on human capital investment.

Links

Results: http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/career_and_jobs/best_100_companies/best_100_tables/

Methodology: <http://www.bestcompanies.co.uk/>

Source:

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