



No. 1: Quicken Loans

Great benefits and trips to Las Vegas helped vault Quicken Loans to the top spot. But a common goal to succeed and autonomy for its IT workers sets the company apart. **PAGE 32**

The Top 100

A list of this year's Best Places companies, plus rankings for the tops in diversity, training, retention and other areas. **PAGE 44**



Best Practices

How Best Places are making great hires, communicating within IT and the business units, and fostering an environment for fresh ideas and innovation that benefits employees like Ruth Diaz of Hogan & Hartson. **PAGE 62**

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BEST PLACES TO WORK IN IT 2005



CHALLENGING PROJECTS helped make Publix Super Markets one of this year's Best Places to Work, say Bill McDonough, Ana Lorenz and Mike Imperiale of the Publix IT department.

FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS, Bill McDonough has been a project lead on one of the most stressful projects he's ever worked on in his IT career. Formerly an IT consultant, he is now senior systems analyst at Publix Super Markets Inc., an \$18.6 billion supermarket chain based in Lakeland, Fla., that is ranked No. 56 on *Computerworld's* 2005 list of the Best Places to Work.

The project — still in its pilot phase — involves replacing the point-of-sale (POS) systems in Publix's 852 grocery stores in Florida and four other Southern states. So far, five stores are live, with 120 more planned for completion by the end of the year. The remaining stores will go live by the end of 2006.

So why does McDonough sound so

What's the secret to building a strong and satisfied IT workforce? More than money and benefits, it's the value of the work itself. **By Mary Brandel**

happy? "It's been one heck of a project — high visibility, high stress, lots of hours but a ton of fun," he says. "Getting that point-of-sale system into the store has been a real achievement."

And McDonough isn't the only one feeling satisfied with his job. To work at one of this year's Best Places is to know the rewards of challenging projects, competitive salaries and career development. In fact, our survey of

20,435 IT workers at this year's Best Places showed higher satisfaction ratings than the 2004 Best Places employees reported in a variety of areas, including bonuses, morale, corporate culture and job security (see "Positive Gains," next page).

How to account for this increase in optimism? Certainly the economy has yet to hit its stride — although the job market is improving, growth is sluggish

at best, with the jobless rate holding steady at 5.1%. And the offshoring trend continues unabated, with this year's Best Places respondents reporting an increase in their companies' use of off-shore contractors, up from an average of 47 contractors last year to 69 today. Meanwhile, Forrester Research Inc. expects growth in IT spending to remain at 2004's 7% level.

But McDonough's satisfaction has very little to do with economic indicators. He says the answer may have something to do with living in Central Florida itself, as well as the stability of Publix, a 75-year-old, employee-owned organization where nearly a quarter of the IT staff has tenure of 10 years or more and where no one from IT was laid off during the downturn.

A bigger factor, though, is McDonough's experience of working on a