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BY SALLY POWERS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDY POTTS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY STUART MULLENBERG

REVOLUTIONARY COMPANIES

TRANSFORMING THE CITY THAT WORKS (AND YES, THEY'RE HIRING.)

TIRED OF BAD COFFEE, bad bosses and a greenish, fluorescent-light-induced pallor? Quick—scour your hard drive for that résumé and take a sick day to spruce it up, because Portland's hottest companies are recruiting. Get lucky enough to land an interview with one of these 12 fast-growing firms, and you'll see firsthand how they're changing the way Portland works, offering on-site preschools for your kids, nap breaks (for you) and offices that are so environmentally friendly you'll feel like you're saving the world just by showing up for work. Snagging a coveted place at one of their ergonomically designed workstations isn't easy, but put some serious effort into your statement of intent and you could be one of the lucky ones: a revolutionary worker driving the city's future.



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VISIONARY LEADERS

ZIBA Walk into Ziba, and you might not be able to tell who's boss. Fifty-year-old Sohrab Vossoughi doesn't have a posh corner office. In fact, he doesn't like sitting at a desk at all. Instead, the Tehran-born founder of this product-design consultancy constantly walks around the studio, asking his employees (110 in all, of 33 different nationalities), "What can I do for you? Do you need help?"—sometimes in four different languages.

So it's no surprise that Ziba's motto is "Check your ego at the door." Since founding the agency 23

BUSINESS: Design consultancy
LOCATION: 334 NW 11th Ave
EMPLOYEES: 110
1-YR JOB GROWTH: 16%
HIRING: Designers, copywriters, consumer analysts
CONTACT: www.ziba.com

years ago, Vossoughi has grown the firm into an international company with clients like Sirius Satellite Radio, for whom it conceived and designed the Sirius S50, the first portable satellite radio. Known for staying ahead of global trends, Ziba also was one of the first to send its own social scientists to study how people interact with objects, so that its designers could create more meaningful products for consumers.

Vossoughi's employees say there are two basic rules when working for him: Never call him "boss" (he prefers "friend" or "colleague"), and never satisfy yourself with anything in the "good enough" range. By creating a collaborative environment where people are inspired to do their best work, Vossoughi has been able to retain top designers for decades. "It's rare for creative professionals in their early 30s to choose to stay in the same company for 10 years," says graphic designer Chelsea Vandiver. "But I'm still here because Sohrab has found a way to continuously challenge me."

Vossoughi admits that Ziba is not for everyone—just those who demand a great deal of themselves. "I want you to blow me away with your work," Vossoughi challenges his staff. "When you make me feel small, I feel good." It's not something you'd expect to hear from the boss, but that attitude is what's inspiring Ziba employees to transform design across the world—from a new line of computers for China's largest PC maker to an interactive Discovery Center for South Waterfront.

of U.S. employers are actually prepared to meet the needs of the younger generation of workers with progressive policies, such as telecommuting and sabbaticals, according to a study by one of the country's largest staffing and recruiting company, Spherion Corporation

240%

XPLANE "There's a reason the best business plans are sketched on napkins," says Aric Wood, CEO and president of XPlane. "Simple drawings are easier to understand than a 120-page document."

That's the theory behind the "visual thinking" company headquartered in Portland. XPlane helps other companies communicate their complicated ideas and processes to the world through moving and still images. For example, when Boeing launched a new business, Avchem, it hired XPlane to create an eye-catching infographic detailing Avchem's services so that investors could quickly understand exactly what the new company would do. "Technology is accelerating the amount of information available," says Wood. "We cut through all the clutter to help people communicate visually across cultures."

So far, he's succeeding. Since joining XPlane in 2003, Wood has grown the company from 12 people to 55 worldwide, and turned it into one of the fastest-growing firms in Portland, with Fortune 500 clients such as Intel. He did this, in part, by giving employees flexible schedules and time to dabble in their own creative pursuits while on the job. Wood encourages staff to allocate 10 percent of their energy to "innovation projects"—essentially creative free time—because as Wood sees it, "You never know where the best ideas are going to come from."

BUSINESS: Visual communication consultancy
LOCATION: 926 NW 13th Ave, Ste 240
EMPLOYEES: 25
1-YR JOB GROWTH: 50%
HIRING: Project manager, consultant
CONTACT: www.xplane.com

BEHIND THE SCENES

What are the hottest companies offering? Take a look and you may find enough ideas to revolutionize your own company's culture.

POLICIES & PERKS	Policies & Perks														
	Health insurance premium	Vision/dental plans	Domestic partner benefits	Life/accidental death benefits	Contract fee-time policy	Flexible/seasonal hiring policy	Formal 401(k) share policy	Subsidized commuting	Subsidized parking/edu.	Financial wellness resources	Retirement plan	Vacation days	Public holidays	Yearly bonuses	
ACME BUSINESS CONSULTING	75%	+	+	25	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	401(k): 50% match up to 6% of salary	0+ years, 15 days	+	5%
COAXIS	70%	+	-	24	+	-	-	+	+	-	+	401(k): 25% match up to 15% of salary	1-4 years, 16 days; 5-9 years, 21 days; 10-14 years, 26 days; 15+ years, 31 days	-	8.5%
GERDING EDLEN	100%	+	+	24	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	401(k): 50% match up to 6% of salary	0-4 years, 12 days; 5-7 years, 18 days; 8+ years, 24 days	-	10%
HANNA ANDERSSON	80%	+	+	30	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	401(k): 100% match up to 4% of salary	0+ years, 23 days	-	less than 10%
MENTOR GRAPHICS	80%	+	+	20	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	401(k): 50% match up to 6% of salary	0+ years, 24 days	-	7.3%
NIKE	87%	+	+	20	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	401(k): 100% match up to 5% of salary	0-5 years, 15 days; 6+ years, 25 days	+	N/A
OP SIS	100%	vision only	+	20	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	401(k): Annual profit share starting at 3% of salary	0+ years, 14 days	-	20%
RIVER CITY TRAVEL	70%	dental only	+	32	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	401(k): 50% match based on an unfixed rate	0-2 years, 10 days; 3-5 years, 12 days; 6-10 years, 15 days; 11+ years, 20 days	-	less than 5%
UMPQUA BANK	100%	+	-	30	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	401(k): 50% match up to 6% of salary	1-4 years, 10-20 days; 5-14 years, 15-20 days; 15+ years, 20 days	-	5.5%
WIENEN+KENNEDY	80%	+	+	30	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	401(k): 50% match up to 6% of salary	1-3 years, 10 days; 4-9 years, 15 days; 10+ years, 20 days	+	10.9%
XPLANE	100%	dental only	+	30	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	401(k): 100% match up to 3% of salary	0-2 years, 10 days; 3+ years, 15 days	-	16%
ZIBA	90%	+	+	30	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	401(k): 3% contribution of salary	0-1 year, 15 days (add one day per year after, with max of 22 days)	-	10%