

Greater Toronto's Top Employers 2021 step up and take action

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As the pandemic marches on, Greater Toronto's Top Employers 2021 continue to demonstrate the meaning of best practices in the workplace, even when the workplace is your kitchen table.

While early physical challenges were greater for some organizations than others – TD Bank Group moved thousands of call centre employees from its contact centres to working from home in just weeks – more complex challenges lay ahead.

As the base for over 40 per cent of Canada's business headquarters, the GTA offers a culturally diverse and dynamic environment. So how do you keep staff engaged when they're used to collaborating in a lively workspace? How do you keep communication open and inclusive? How do you help workers stay fit and healthy without the onsite gym? Nobody expected this "emergency" situation to still be with us several months later.

Greater Toronto's Top Employers 2021 answered with innovative and creative solutions, such as Questrade's introduction of weekly virtual yoga and workout sessions online. Employees can also access its LifeSpeak wellness platform for online sessions on everything from mental health and preventative healthcare to financial well-being.

In fact, many organizations became even more progressive in their human resources policies during this time. For instance, FreshBooks increased its top-up for maternity and parental leave, while KPMG added formal education on anti-Black racism and is conducting a review of its current talent processes to better understand and remove any biases and barriers in place for advancement.

Organizations were concerned not only for their own people, but also the community at large. Standouts include HP Canada, that organized virtual volunteer activities allowing employees to continue contributing in meaningful ways – help that included mentoring small business owners, new immigrants or participating in social entrepreneurial initiatives. As well, Holland Bloorview launched a dedicated No Boundaries Support Fund enabling employees to implement unique projects during the pandemic, such as virtual concerts for inpatients, a laptop loaning program for clients and gift bags for front-line workers.

There are examples here from every employer showing how resourceful and resilient an organization can be in challenging times. Read on.

METHODOLOGY 2021

Any employer with its head office or principal place of business in the Greater Toronto Area may apply for the Greater Toronto Area's Top Employers contest. Competition is tough as the region is home to over 40 per cent of Canada's business headquarters, with many exceptional workplaces. Here's how the winners are decided.

The editors of Canada's Top 100 Employers evaluate each employer's operations and human resources practices using the same eight criteria as the national competition of Canada's Top 100 Employers. Those criteria are: physical workplace; work atmosphere and social; health, financial and family benefits; vacation and time off; employee communications; performance management; training and skills development; and community involvement. The criteria have remained the same since the competition's inception.

Employers are compared to other organizations in their field to determine which ones offer the most progressive and forward-thinking programs.

More detailed reasons for selection, explaining why each of the winners was chosen, are published on the competition's website: www.canadastop100.com/toronto.