

SAS Institute

2010 #1 Company to Work for in America



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SAS Institute is an organization that astonishes many people. SAS is an exceptional business that develops analytical software systems that are now used in virtually every industry across the globe. SAS has been financially successful for its 34 years of existence and has developed a stellar reputation for the quality of its operations. Their distinct success has resulted in numerous academic case studies, journal articles and critical essays by people trying to decipher what magic might underlie the continuous cycles of invention, creativity and performance that combine to make SAS unique.

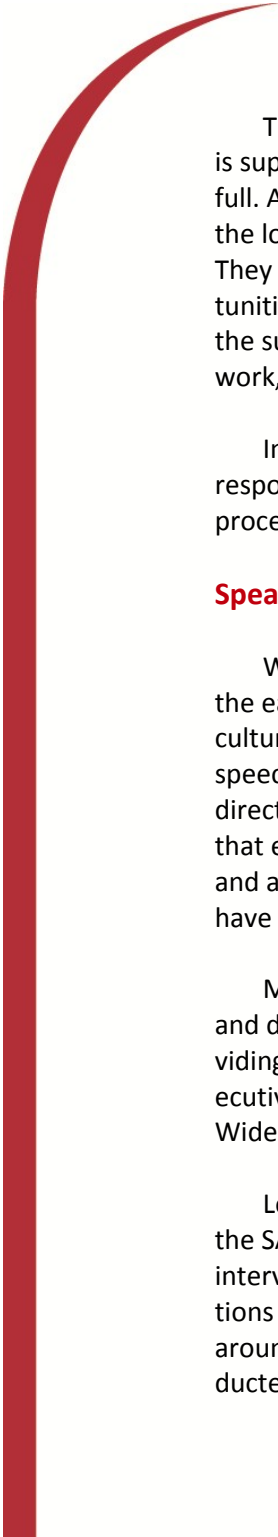
SAS Quick Facts

Website:	www.sas.com
Founder and CEO:	Jim Goodnight
Year founded:	1976
Location:	Cary, NC
US Employees:	5487
US Revenue:	818 million
Voluntary Turnover:	2%
Job Applications:	26,432
Jobs Filled:	156

And now there will surely be more assessments trying to document what has propelled them to the #1 position on the 2010 list of the 100 Best Companies to Work For.

“SAS starts with the belief that we are in the business of people - whether that is with customers, employees or business contacts.”

Jim Goodnight, co-founder and CEO of SAS for its entire history, often tells people that what makes SAS special is the people. Other business leaders have made the same claim yet have been unable to achieve similar results. Goodnight will say that the quality of their products is exceptional and that this quality brings in clients and creates intense loyalty to the brand. Others try to follow a similar path yet see their clients switch products with ease. Goodnight will praise the customer service representatives and tech support staff at SAS and affirm that their role in achieving high quality service is what keeps customers committed to SAS products. Other companies also make claims about the quality of their service and support, yet again, their results in terms of resolved problems, wait time for getting to a person on a service call, and satisfaction with service results fall short of those at SAS.



The difference at SAS is that what is ‘spoken’ with respect to people, quality and service is supported by behavior that reinforces every message. The words are not empty, they are full. And because the words are full employees trust their leaders. They have confidence in the long-term success of their organization and are able to focus on the quality of their work. They know they will be treated fairly, offered professional development and learning opportunities and will be supported in their personal lives. Employees know that they are critical to the success of SAS and they give their ideas, creativity, and thoughtful consideration to their work, their peers and the entire organization.


In affirmation of the strength to be found at SAS Institute, 98% of the employees who responded to the Trust Index[®] employee survey as part of the Best Companies selection process indicated that often or almost always SAS is a great place to work!

Speaking Clearly and Directly

While many of the great workplace practices at SAS were initiated by Goodnight during the early years, many other practices have recently been developed and integrated into the culture of SAS. Goodnight really enjoys question and answer time and eschews canned speeches. Employees benefit from this through the open and honest culture at SAS where direct communication is key. The basic framework for executive communication requires that executives speak directly and honestly with employees, answer their questions candidly, and ask for their ideas and feedback. One-on-one conversations and small group meetings have been in practice at SAS throughout its existence.

More recently, leaders have taken up blogging as a way of sharing their ideas with a large and dispersed group of employees – and many of these blogs are available to the public, providing outsiders with a peek inside. Over 24 executives have active internal blogs. When executives update their blogs, they are automatically featured on the main page of the SAS Wide Web so that employees can read the blogs and offer their comments.

Leaders have also begun sharing their thoughts in live webcasts with the introduction of the SAS Leadership Live program, modeled after Larry King Live. These shows enable topical interviews to occur between a moderator and various SAS leaders, and allow for on-air questions to be posed. The shows are archived for later viewing, which insures that people around the globe have the opportunity to hear the same stories. Live audience polls are conducted during the shows, and summaries of the webcasts are posted on the SAS Wide Web.



All of these communication channels help to insure that employees are kept current on all the moving parts in their fast-paced world of software development and technology innovation. And it also enables employees and leaders to reinforce the fundamentals of the SAS culture by encouraging open and honest question and answer time, direct sharing of information, and the solicitation of ideas and feedback. In response to a question asking what might be changed at SAS to make it a better place to work one employee responded: *“I don't think of anything. If I did think of something, I am confident that I could give that feedback to management, and have it considered”*.

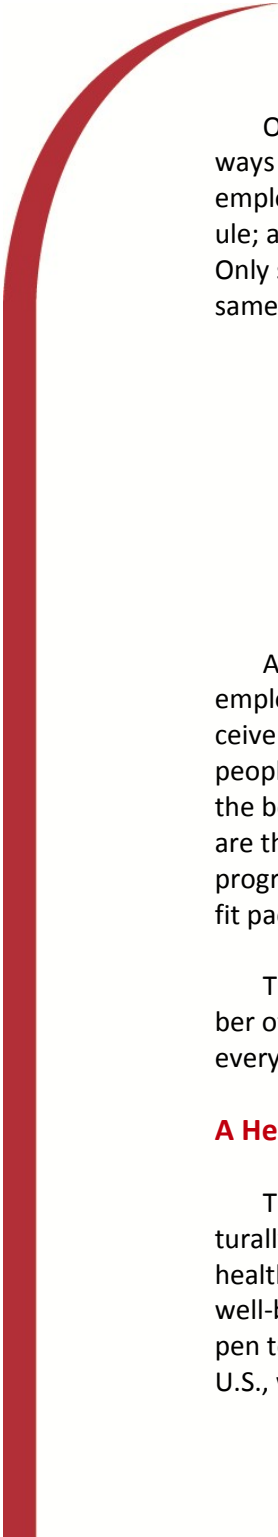
What started as small group meetings and one-on-one communication in a young organization has now grown into a system that promotes the same values yet uses different methods. The larger audience of employees that is now present at SAS has the same easy access to leaders and managers, it just might be via a webcast. What hasn't changed though is the commitment to straightforward communication.

Inviting People In

“It truly impresses me that SAS still maintains all staff in areas like landscaping, security, food service, healthcare, and recreation and fitness as SAS employees. There is no outsourcing in these areas, so each of these employees are treated exactly the same as those involved in the business of producing and selling SAS software. This means all the people I interact with throughout my day all have a vested interest in the success of our company - and it shows!”

As is true in all great workplaces, people at SAS take special care during the recruiting and hiring process to insure that they find the best people to join their organization. And what does the ‘best’ mean for SAS? They certainly look for people with specific job skills, yet more importantly they are looking for people with characteristics that parallel the company's five values. Employees are expected to be approachable, to focus on customer needs, to be swift and agile, innovative and trustworthy. While these qualities are certainly things many companies strive to find in their new employees, SAS does it very successfully.

What is unique about hiring at SAS is another perspective that is incorporated into the recruitment and on-boarding process. A specific guiding philosophy about people has influenced the organization from the beginning – ‘if you treat people as if they make a difference to the company, then they will make a difference to the company’. So at SAS, people are brought in with the clear expectation that they will make a difference – every single person.



One notable way that people understand their importance to SAS is through some of the ways that SAS handles compensation and employment status. All SAS regular non-exempt employees (fulltime and part-time) are paid on a salaried basis for their regular work schedule; and they receive additional pay for hours worked beyond their normal work schedule. Only substitutes and students are paid by the hour. And all salaries at SAS are set in the same way – by matching market data to the job title.

“There are certainly a lot of benefits to working here, but the biggest one I appreciate is the flexibility in the hours. We are expected to be here 9 to 5, and to put in extra time as needed, but in return there is no issue when we need to be off site for personal reasons, or when we need to take vacations. We are expected to behave professionally and handle our schedule as need be. That balance is probably one of the biggest things that has kept me here for so long. Strong health benefits, beautiful campus, interesting work, and a lot of good people to work with.”


All staff who might be contracted out in other organizations - gardeners, food service employees, healthcare staff – are SAS employees. So not only do non-exempt workers receive a salary which provides income security as opposed to the variability of hourly pay, all people who work at SAS are employees and are included in the SAS community, sharing in the benefits and contributing to its strength. The health plans available to service workers are the same ones available to senior leaders. It’s the same with child-care services, fitness programs, food service, parking, etc. SAS estimates that the average employees total benefit package is equivalent to over 40% of the employee’s salary.

The message these practices send is that everyone belongs and everyone is a full member of the organization. These practices reinforce the founding philosophy, affirming that every employee is important and can make a difference.

A Healthy Environment

The SAS campus in Cary, North Carolina is beautiful, many of the buildings are architecturally interesting, and the grounds are inviting. The walking paths, exercise facilities and healthcare offices on the campus all attest to the commitment SAS makes to the health and well-being of people who work there. This commitment is not just for the people who happen to be in Cary. Benefits are broadly dispersed to regional centers and locations across the U.S., with comparable benefit options for employees outside of the corporate office.

“The office buildings are amazing and we have all the supplies, computers, equipment needed to do a great job.”



SAS provides excellent on-site childcare facilities and subsidizes childcare costs for employees who work in regional offices. The campus fitness centers are open to all employees, and regional employees have fitness center memberships in their areas subsidized. The campus-based healthcare facilities can't readily be duplicated for regional office members, yet people from outside of Cary are eligible to use the on-site centers when they are in town. And everyone gets M&Ms, a tradition from the early days when SAS had twenty employees.

"This company has the complete package: benefits, work balance, family atmosphere, employees work hard and play hard for the good of the company."

Other benefits and programs available to people are so numerous that pages would be needed to list them all. Yet a list wouldn't begin to capture the reasoning behind the benefits. Benefits are provided as an outgrowth of the fundamental beliefs that guide the organization - everyone is valuable and everyone can make a difference.

"Jim Goodnight is a very smart man! He provides many benefits to the employees! He knows that if he provides ways for employees to stay healthy he will have a healthy workforce!! I often see employees walking the campus and the gym and pool and game fields are always busy during lunchtimes!!"

Creating a healthy work environment by providing people with services and amenities that support their ability to focus on work without worry about childcare or aging parents helps the business. Providing people healthy meal options, exercise facilities and healthcare clinics helps them to care for themselves, minimize stress, and do the work that they want to do. It all makes great business sense when looked at as part of a broad scale effort to create a healthy environment for the whole organization.

Ninety-five percent of respondents to the Trust Index[®] indicated that often or almost always SAS is a 'psychologically and emotionally healthy place to work'. The negative effects of stress that are avoided because of the healthy work environment more than make up for any financial expenses associated with providing a healthy work environment.

"I really like the 'fringe' benefits we get. The cafes onsite, the daycare, the gym/pool. But most of all, it's the sense that I matter as a person first and then an employee."

Contributing to the Future

One of the nice things for all of us who don't work at SAS is that it can serve as an excellent role model for our own companies. On every measuring stick, SAS comes out in the lead. Employee turnover is way below industry averages. The number of job applicants is extraordinarily high. Customer service is top notch with one of the shortest wait-times for customers calling in to speak with a real live person! And the company is financially successful – always, every year. All the business goals out there that people claim to be chasing would be more achievable by following the path laid out by the founders of SAS Institute, and continuously enacted by its current leaders, managers and employees.

SAS 2008 Corporate Social Responsibility Report lists a number of social and environmental goals to which SAS has made commitments of support. Locally, SAS supports a one-megawatt solar farm that generates 1.7 million kilowatt hours per year, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by more than 1600 tons annually. Recent efforts to improve water usage on the Cary campus resulted in changes to landscaping and irrigation practices that resulted in an estimated savings of 35,000 cubic meters of water. A new Executive Briefing Center is being built in compliance with LEED standards for water and energy conservation and includes solar-thermal water heating and regenerative drive elevators.

SAS software is being used by many non-governmental organizations working to address United Nations Millennium Development Goals. For example, since 2000 the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have maintained offices in Uganda, focusing on HIV prevention and treatment for people living with AIDS. In Uganda, the CDC relies on SAS software for all its data management, analysis and reporting.

In the United States, SAS has made available a unique web-based curriculum support program for high schools, called Curriculum Pathways. This free resource provides interactive standards-based resources in English, science, math, social studies and Spanish. SAS has long supported community-based education programs and with the growing crisis facing many public school systems, SAS has increased its involvement in programs that provide training, resources and support. SAS links their support for education programs to their fundamental activities as a company – they are an organization that seeks to enhance people's ability to use information and create knowledge. What better way to do this than through support for education.

"Our involvement in the Community, the attention paid to education and the thousands of dollars in free Software that we give to educational institutions makes me very proud to work here."

Words and Deeds

The reason SAS is so successful is that they actually do the things that people often say will contribute to the creation of a great workplace. SAS started small with a few key ingredients: a long-term view for making business decisions; a belief that people will make a positive difference if you let them; an egalitarian commitment to sharing rewards; and a good product idea.

“SAS is a unique place to work because of the environment that has been built. Creativity is sought out and nurtured. I enjoy the company most because of its ‘campus’ feel. In fact, we call it a ‘campus,’ because it has an academic sort of orientation. We’re always looking for the next big idea and encouraging each other to think creatively and work together.”

By sticking with their values and beliefs, their thoughtful approach to business has turned into a great company that has spread around the world. SAS has been recognized by the Great Place to Work® Institute for the quality of its workplace in Germany, Sweden, Norway, Mexico, The Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, Portugal, Denmark, and Australia. And now, in the United States, SAS employees have let it be known that their company is the #1 company to work for in America for 2010.

“Jim Goodnight treats his employees as if we truly are his greatest asset. The benefits here at SAS are unparalleled. SAS is not one of the 100 Best Companies to Work For..... SAS is THE BEST company to work for! I love it here!”

Great Place to Work® Institute, Inc. has conducted pioneering research on the characteristics of great workplaces for over 25 years. We believe all companies can become great places to work, and our mission is to help them succeed. Our Great Place to Work® Model® is recognized as the standard for assessing great workplaces. In 40 countries around the world, we are proud to:

Recognize the Best Companies for their achievements through our international Best Companies lists. In the U.S., these lists include Fortune's 100 Best Companies to Work For®, as well as the "Best Small & Medium Companies to Work for in America."

Help companies create and sustain great workplace cultures through our consulting services, based on 25 years of researching Best Companies. Our Trust Index® Employee Survey, educational workshops and training programs, action planning system, and strategic advising services all support the transformation process within any organization. The Institute's unique access to Best Companies' data allows us to offer unparalleled benchmarking opportunities, best practice information, and transformation insight to our consulting clients.

Share resources, best practices, and Institute research through our education services. These include peer networking groups, workshops, conferences, and publications which enable organization leaders to learn directly from each other, as well as benefit from our wealth of knowledge and lessons learned from the Best Companies and our clients.

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Additional Resources

Join us for the 2010 Great Place to Work® Conference, April 14-15th in Los Angeles, CA to learn more about how to create great workplaces directly from Best Companies leaders. For more information, visit www.greatplacetowork-conference.com