

Daily Herald

# BUSINESS LEDGER

# Best Places to Work in IL 2017

*A workplace analysis and competition*

## No. 1 Small Company

19-99 Employees



## No. 1 Mid-sized Company

100-499 Employees



## No. 1 Large Company

500-plus Employees



*INSIDE: A complete list and details of our 2017 Best Places to Work in Illinois companies*

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*“You are a shining example to the world that there is no downside to focusing on the employee experience, only an upside.”*



PHOTOS BY BEV HORNE/bhorne@dailyherald.com

Peter Burke, president of Best Companies Group, gives a talk at the Best Places to Work in Illinois ceremony at Abbington Banquets in Glen Ellyn.

## Sweet repeat for No. 1 companies

### Radio Flyer, Skender, Sheppard Mullin again top our list

BY RICHARD KLICKI  
Director of Content Development

What do a popular toymaker, a construction company and a Loop law firm have in common?

All three were named the Number 1 Best Place to Work in Illinois for their respective categories for a second year in a row.

Chicago-based Radio Flyer, Skender Construction and Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP were named top companies for 2017 at an awards ceremony at Abbington Distinctive Banquets in Glen Ellyn. All three companies were also the top companies named in 2016.

The three were among 76 companies from the city, suburbs and throughout the state to receive the Best Places to Work in Illinois honor. The program, now in its 11th year, is hosted by the Daily Herald Business Ledger in partnership with the Human Resources Management Association of Chicago, the Illinois State Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Advocacy



Radio Flyer's Taylor Neimes, left, Skender Construction's Lisa Latronico, center, and Betsy Zukley with Sheppard Mullin, right, accept the No. 1 award in their respective categories at the 2017 Best Places to Work in Illinois ceremony.

Council and MRA — The Management Association.

The two-part selection process, managed by Best Companies Group of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, involves an evaluation of a nominated company's workplace policies, practices and demographics, as well as an employee survey

to measure the employee experience. Best Companies Group managed the registration and survey process, analyzed the data and used their expertise to determine the final rankings.

Peter Burke, president of the Best Companies Group, noted the employee engagement among the

companies awarded this year averaged 91 percent, compared to a national average of 41 percent.

“You are a shining example to the world that there is no downside to focusing on the employee experience, only an upside,” Burke said. “You hire

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who fit into your routine, your core mission and your values."

Radio Flyer received the top honor in the small companies category, between 15-99 employees. Celebrating its 100th year of business, Radio Flyer is committed to building safe, quality products that spark imagination and inspire active play. Their products can be found in all major toy retailers including Wal-Mart, Toys "R" Us, Target and Amazon.com.

"It's an honor to be recognized along with all of you for our shared values and alignment of building environments where people can thrive," said Radio Flyer Human Resources Manager Taylor Neimes in accepting the award.

It is the third straight Number 1 honor for Skender Construction in the mid-sized category, between 100-499 employees. In addition to treating clients like gold, they do the same for their employees by offering catered

employees. In addition to treating clients like gold, they do the same for their employees by offering catered Monday lunches and weekly healthy and organic delivered groceries, along with fun outings like paintball and cooking classes.

Skender's Lisa Latronico gave credit to the company's People and Culture team for developing the work environment.

"They make all of this possible helping to keep our employees engaged, helping to create wonderful programs that made people want to come to work every day," Latronico said.

Number 1 company in the large company category, with more than 500 employees, was Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton, a full service global 100 law firm with more than 760 attorneys. The firm handles corporate and technological matters, high stakes litigations and complex finan-

cial transaction and offers monthly paid public transportation to their employees, along with longevity and profit-sharing bonuses, 100 percent paid medical premium, on-site fitness center and personal development & stress management workshops.

"We have a terrific culture," said Sheppard Mullin Office Administrator Betsy Zukley. "But, aside from being a fun place to work, it's a place that sets you up to succeed."

Profiles of the top companies will appear in the June 26 issue of the Daily Herald Business Ledger and online at [dhubusinessledger.com](http://dhubusinessledger.com).

Presenting sponsors of this year's awards event are B. Gunther & Co., Focus Capital Advisors, Ryan LLC, Shaker Recruitment Advertising and Communications and the Northern Illinois University Graduate School of Business.



#1:



## Radio Flyer Inc., Chicago

When Antonio Pasin started Radio Flyer in 1917, his dream was to “bring joy to every boy & every girl.” Today, they continue their dedication to bringing smiles to children and families around the world & to create memories that last a lifetime through their product offering.

They are committed to building safe, quality products that spark imagination and inspire active play. From well-known wagons to our tricycles, scooters, and other ride-ons, their products can be found in all major toy retailers including Wal-Mart, Toys “R” Us, Target and Amazon.com.

As a brand that consumers grew up with, they are proud to continue to be part of growing families and dedicate ourselves to bringing smiles to children and promoting active play.

It is the third consecutive year in first place for Radio Flyer.

**Q:** What makes working at your company so special?

**A:** We are proud to be celebrating our 100th anniversary. Radio Flyer holds a special place in families’ hearts. Our brand was built on love and our mission is to bring smiles to kids of all ages and to create warm memories that last a lifetime. There are not many brands that have been a delightful part of people’s childhood for generations. Our Flyers understand that this is unique and that the products we design fuel imaginations. This is inspiring and it also comes with a sense of responsibility. Our Flyers are motivated to continue the legacy created by those that went before them for a century.

**Q:** What are one or two specific things your company does to promote employee engagement?

**A:** All Flyers understand their direct impact on the success of the business. They know that what they do matters because we talk about it and we measure it. Flyers design their own jobs through our goals process. Annually they have the opportunity to shape and write their goals for the year.

We hire top designers and top talent. We hire Flyers who are both skilled



### Radio Flyer Inc.

6515 W. Grand Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60707  
(773) 637-7100  
www.radioflyer.com

**Industry:** Consumer products

**Top local official:** Robert Pasin,  
Chief Wagon Officer

**Number of Employees:** 70

and passionate about the work we need them to do in the role. A group of highly talented, innovative, passionate people working together promotes an environment of engagement. I beg candidates not to take a job with Radio Flyer unless they feel it will be the best job they’ve ever had. Engagement starts with commitment.

We also have a lot of fun together celebrating our successes and building relationships through parties, events, relay races, volunteering and wellness challenges. The fun translates into collaboration and creativity on the job.

**Q:** Who are your role models? How do they play into your philosophy?

**A:** I have learned a lot from my grandfather (Antonio Pasin) and my

father (Mario Pasin). My grandfather’s handshake was his word and people that interacted with him knew this. My father conducted himself in the same way and Live With Integrity is one of our core values at Radio Flyer today.

Through their actions they also taught me the importance of treating all people well. Both my father and my grandfather always treated everyone they met with respect and kindness. They did not change their behavior based on the person regardless of status, background, or situation. They never talked to me about how to treat people well, they just did it through their actions and this shaped me. This inspired the Little Red Rule, “every time we touch people’s lives, they will feel great about Radio Flyer”. This guides our interactions both internally and externally at Radio Flyer.

**Q:** Does your workplace culture extend into the community? How?

**A:** Our vision is to be the world’s most loved children’s brand. We have Flyers who are passionate about supporting our community, environment, and children. Flyers receive two (2) paid days off to volunteer. We have an employee lead committee called the SMILE Squad that plans local events where Flyers can volunteer at places like the Greater Chicago Food

Depository and Therapy Oriented Tricycles. The SMILE Squad led our eight (8) Kaboom! Playground builds in the Chicago area for schools and communities in need of a safe outdoor space for children to play. We have also partnered with Starlight Children’s Foundation for over a decade to provide wagons that are retrofitted and used in the hospital to transport children in lieu of a wheelchair or hospital bed to bring smiles in challenging situations.

We also have an EcoFlyer committee that leads our recycling efforts and the Little Green Garden. Radio Flyer is a LEED Platinum certified building. We repurposed our existing warehouse space installed geothermal heating and cooling, use natural light and other green design solutions such as cisterns to store stormwater retention for our garden.

**Q:** How has being the Number 1 Best Place to Work in Illinois helped you as a company?

**A:** It has helped us to attract top talent! As part of the application process, all Flyers participate in the survey process. The employee engagement survey results help us to identify ways that we can partner with our Flyers to continuously get better.

Ranking	COMPANY Address Phone • Website	Top Local Executive Title	Total No. of U.S. Employees	Industry
1	<b>RADIO FLYER INC.</b> 6515 W. Grand Ave., Chicago, IL, 60707 800-621-7613 • www.radioflyer.com	Robert Pasin CEO	70	consumer products
2	<b>THE STEELY GROUP</b> 1211 W. 22nd St., Suite 303, Oak Brook, IL, 60523 630-756-1931 • www.TheSteelyGroup.com	Julie Heneghan founder/president	18	staffing
3	<b>THE SALEM GROUP</b> 2 TransAm Plaza Drive, Ste. 170, Oakbrook Terrace, IL, 60181 630-932-7000 • www.saleminc.com	Dori Lorenz CEO	26	staffing
4	<b>BALASA DINVERNO FOLTZ LLC</b> 500 Park Blvd., Suite 1400, Itasca, IL, 60143 630-875-4900 • bdfllc.com	Armond A. Dinverno president/co-CEO	53	financial services
5	<b>DRAGONSPEARS</b> 10 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 1520, Chicago, IL, 60606 312-897-2100 • www.dragonspears.com	Patrick Emmons president	15	technology
6	<b>SYNERGY BUILDERS, INC.</b> 850 Meadowview Crossing, Suite 13, West Chicago, IL, 60185 630-293-8070 • www.synergyhomeremodel.com	John Habermeier CEO	20	construction
7	<b>FUSION OEM</b> 6951 High Grove Blvd., Burr Ridge, IL, 60527 630-323-4115 • www.fusionoem.com	Craig Zoberis president	47	manufacturing
8	<b>TRANSTECH IT STAFFING</b> 248 Spring Lake Drive, Itasca, IL, 60143 630-250-8880 • www.trans-tech.com	Mary K. Davenport president/CEO	28	staffing
9	<b>MOTHERG</b> 248 Spring Lake Drive, Itasca, IL, 60143 800-676-7374 • www.motherg.com	Dave Davenport CEO	23	technology
10	<b>OPTIMAL DESIGN CO.</b> 601 W. Campus Drive, Suite B3, Arlington Heights, IL, 60004 847-818-1000 • www.optimaldesignco.com	Sajid Patel CEO	30	product development
11	<b>MUELLER</b> 1707 N. Randall Road, Suite 200, Elgin, IL, 60123 847-888-8600 • www.muellercpa.com	David J. Nissen managing partner	83	accounting
12	<b>MERIT SOLUTIONS INC.</b> 1749 S. Naperville Road, Suite 200, Wheaton, IL, 60189 630-614-7133 • www.meritsolutions.com	Bill Burke CEO	40	consulting
13	<b>RESOURCE BROKERAGE</b> 1501 E. Woodfield Road, Suite 110E, Schaumburg, IL, 60173 847-598-0025 • www.resourcebrokerage.com	Blair Farwell president	25	healthcare - insurance/services
14	<b>KRD-KUTCHINS, ROBBINS &amp; DIAMOND, LTD.</b> 1101 Perimeter Drive, Suite 760, Schaumburg, IL, 60173 847-240-1040 • www.krdcpas.com	Allen Kutchins partner	58	accounting
15	<b>COMMERCIAL PACKAGING</b> 1 Paper Chase St., Normal, IL, 61761 309-862-0144 • www.commercialpackaging.com	Janette Egbers CEO/chairwoman/owner	48	distribution
16	<b>STRATEX</b> 444 N. Michigan Ave., 28th floor, Chicago, IL, 60611 312-216-2200 • www.stratex.com	Adam M. Ochstein founder/CEO	73	HR services
17	<b>GRID CONNECT INC.</b> 1630 W. Diehl Road, Naperville, IL, 60563 630-245-1445 • gridconnect.com	Mike Justice president	28	technology
18	<b>TIGER PLUMBING, HEATING, AIR CONDITIONING &amp; ELECTRICAL SERVICES INC.</b> 1902 Vandalia St., Suite 100, Collinsville, IL, 60234 618-578-5924 • www.trusttiger.com	Amber Jackson marketing and social media associate	68	service
19	<b>ADAGE TECHNOLOGIES</b> 10 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 1500, Chicago, IL, 60606 312-258-1200 • www.adagetechnologies.com	Roy Chomko president	51	technology
20	<b>SYSTEMAX</b> 4501 Alex Blvd., Suite A, Springfield, IL, 62711 800-525-9995 • www.systemaxsolutions.com	Brett Jackson CEO	41	advertising/public relations/marketing
21	<b>3POINTS, LLC</b> 1100 Jorie Blvd., Suite 100, Oak Brook, IL, 60523 708-491-0300 • www.3points.com	Steve Banke CEO	36	technology