



Ready for some work, refreshments and fun at BLASTmedia (top left), Found Search Marketing (top right) and Pathfinders Advertising. Dedication to quality work, a healthy sense of fun and a family-like bond among employees is the winning recipe making these companies' workplaces stand out.

# WORK HARD, PLAY HARD

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Balance is the key to maintaining a fun and healthy work environment in the fast-paced, highly-competitive marketing and communications industry.

That sense of balance is achieved in a variety of ways – flexible work schedules, professional development, community service events, wellness programs and even the occasional free lunch. Ensuring that employees have time to pursue their own interests outside of work is also a priority.

BLASTmedia (Fishers), Found Search Marketing (Indianapolis), Hanapin Marketing (Bloomington) and Pathfinders Advertising (Mishawaka) have achieved that balance, and employees notice and appreciate the efforts.

“The reason we applied was because our employees came to us and said we should apply for this, which was pretty cool,” indicates Lindsey Groepper, president of BLASTmedia, a public relations and content marketing agency. “It was not driven by the executive team at all. It’s good validation that what we’re doing is being well received and that people believe in us and felt like we should apply for this award.”

### Fire in the belly

With payrolls full of creative types, it’s no surprise these companies are overflowing with drive and colorful personalities.

For instance, “Give a sh@#” is one of BLASTmedia’s core values. “In the technology and marketing world, you get away with a little bit

more!” Groepper qualifies with a laugh.

She explains that the management team struggled to phrase – in an equally impactful and PG way – the concept of employees being invested in their work and themselves. The value is listed on the company’s web site next to “Seek originality” and “Hustle hard,” which provide insight into the qualities these companies value.

“In the hiring process, we really look for what people are passionate about, what motivates them and what drives them,” Groepper emphasizes. “It’s important to us that people ‘give a sh@#’ about their clients, about the quality of their work, about the people they work with and about themselves.

“We like to hire people who understand that there needs to be a passion for life outside of work. We believe the more fulfilled you are in your personal life and outside of work, the better experience you’re going to have in your work life.”

Pathfinders Advertising, a full-service marketing and communications firm, also values a passion for work and life. Vice President Kelly Ball says when hiring, the team looks for individuals who exhibit the traits of a “Pathfinder” – tenacious, curious, dedicated, entrepreneurial and full of energy.

Ball explains some of Pathfinder’s employees come from Chicago, Detroit and other large cities seeking a better work/life balance.

“From a culture standpoint, bringing passion (to work) every day (is critical),” emphasizes Ball. “Work hard while you’re here, but be sure to disconnect and enjoy your life elsewhere. I think that very simple philosophy resonates with our people here. They all understand

By Katie Coffin

# Marketing Companies Build Successful Teams



Wellness and community service are integral components of Hanapin Marketing’s culture. One day employees enjoy “SaladFest” and another they are volunteering with My Sister’s Closet, an organization providing free workforce attire and Success Institute training to low-income and at-risk women pursuing employment.

what's expected of them.”

Kelley Swart, COO of Found Search Marketing, formerly worked for Google in Mountain View, California. She met Julie Warnecke there, founder and managing partner of Found Search, and they have incorporated pieces of that famous Google culture into the full-service digital marketing agency.

“We hire really smart people and everybody knows what they’re here to do,” Swart notes. “It’s fun, though it’s stressful at times when things get busy, but everyone is willing to work and help out. Mostly it’s laid back and everyone takes on their own responsibilities to grow and develop and do the best we can for the clients.”

### **Creativity for a cause**

Giving back to the community is a priority, and in some cases these companies are able to donate their creativity, so to speak.

A few years ago, BLASTmedia participated in the Super Service Challenge. Employees created a video documenting their volunteer activity with the Humane Society for Hamilton County, sharing information about the shelter’s needs. Their project was one of the Challenge winners, and the Humane Society received \$10,000 as a result.

“That was just a really cool experience for us because we were surprised at an awards ceremony along with the Humane Society,” Groepper acknowledges. “It felt good to be able to provide our people with that experience.”

In addition to company-wide service events, like sponsoring a family in need at Christmastime and participating in Relay for Life, Ball notes that Pathfinders gives staff flexibility to pursue their own charitable passions.

Recently, e-Media Director Garrett Gingerich submitted a design for the city of South Bend’s new flag and was selected as one of three finalists. The adopted design integrated elements from each of the finalists, so his work will soon be on display and waving throughout the city.

“If we can support (our employees), we believe in not worrying about if you’re not here at 8 a.m. every morning because you’re doing something positive in the community,” Ball shares. “We love people to have other things they are interested in.”

A community focus comes from the top down at Hanapin Marketing, a digital marketing agency specializing in pay-per-click advertising. CEO Pat East is actively involved in community business and job development in Bloomington. Rebecca Reott, associate director of HR, says the staff volunteered with four different organizations around the city on Martin Luther King Day. Employees are also provided a certain number of hours to volunteer during the work day for a cause that’s important to them.

### **Staying well**

Balancing the natural stress that comes from working in an intense environment with opportunities to improve wellness is another way these companies maintain healthy workplace cultures.

“In any business, there is good stress and then there is ‘distress,’ which is the bad stress and what we’re trying to eliminate,” Reott says in describing the company-sponsored wellness group, HanaFit. “We want people to feel like they can come to work and that they’re not giving up their fitness and their healthy lifestyle.”

A few examples of how the organizations are encouraging their teams to do just that:

- In January, Hanapin launched a water challenge, counting the number of cups employees were drinking per day. Since the highly-competitive contest concluded, the company has seen a continuing increase in the amount of water consumed in the office.
- Found Search recently purchased exercise ball chairs to improve ergonomics.



Found Search Marketing’s work environment is “very open, not only our atmosphere here in the office, but in general you can go to whomever to get help,” emphasizes CFO Janet Khalil. “It’s a family thing.”

- Pathfinders offers a smoking cessation program with monetary incentives to quit.
- BLASTmedia recently hired a personal trainer and offers 30 hours of his time per week to its employees.

### Fun families

A strong, family-like bond holds each of these companies together, evidenced by the fun employees have together.

“Two summers ago we had six BLASTmedia weddings,” Groepper recalls. “In all those weddings, there was at least one BLASTmedia employee, current or former, who was a bridesmaid. We laughed because it was kind of a BLASTmedia reunion of people who built strong relationships and became good friends.”

Pathfinders has a special tradition each time a James Bond movie is released. Staff dresses up in tuxedos and Bond girl outfits and attends a matinee. The company also hosts a Christmas party, summer cookouts and devises some creative Halloween costumes each year.

“When we have holiday parties, we invite all the staff, all their spouses and significant

others and their kids because we want to think of this group as family,” Ball declares.

Warnecke is known for spontaneously providing free breakfast or lunch to employees at Found Search Marketing to de-stress from a busy day with clients or just as a pat on the back. Last fall, the company rented buses and took the staff to Three Floyds Brewing Company in Munster for a team-building experience.

“No one’s hungry or thirsty here!” Swart laughs.

### ‘It’s a longevity thing’

No one is kept in the dark either. Hanapin Marketing boasts a highly-focused management philosophy that balances keeping the team informed and responding to feedback.

Hanapin solicits employee opinions in many different forms. For example, TINYpulse is an anonymous, employee-driven feedback channel that emails designated questions to staff regularly. Managers also host Leadership Coffees to discuss topics spanning the entire organization.

“It creates this culture where people can share really honest feedback, and it helps us

figure out where we need to pivot,” Reott explains.

Pathfinders also promotes an engaged management style, making sure employees are satisfied with their work. Ball states the company is also willing to adapt and change. If there’s a new process or procedure that will make the team better, management will support getting that implemented.

“I think that gives the team some empowerment in feeling they can do a lot and really have an impact, not only from an internal perspective, but also on client initiatives,” Ball recognizes.

Though the benefits and perks are nice, the winning formula for these companies is part of what they do best for their clients – building strong relationships and open communication.

“We have clients who have been with us for a really long time, and it’s because we’re good at what we do, and I feel like it’s the same thing with employees,” Swart concludes. “It’s a longevity thing. We don’t have a lot of turnover. People are typically with us for the duration.”

**RESOURCES:** Kelly Ball, Pathfinders Advertising, at [www.pathfind.com](http://www.pathfind.com) | Lindsey Groepper, BLASTmedia, at [www.blastmedia.com](http://www.blastmedia.com) | Rebecca Reott, Hanapin Marketing, at [www.hanapinmarketing.com](http://www.hanapinmarketing.com) | Kelley Swart, Found Search Marketing, at [www.foundsm.com](http://www.foundsm.com)



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