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Best Place No. 2: Genentech Inc.

A holistic approach to employee growth

By Gary Anthes

June 15, 2009 12:01 AM ET

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Computerworld - "The pace here at Genentech is incredible," says David Fowler, a senior manager in the company's corporate IT unit. "Even in this economic downturn, we are a growth company."

Growth at a company whose mission is high tech requires two major thrusts in IT: "innovation, and a focus on our development staff," Fowler says. "The two really go together. Our supportive environment around how you grow as a professional really fosters a high level of innovation and speed."

South San Francisco, Calif.-based [Genentech](#) doesn't just pay lip service to fostering a "supportive environment." Its Personal Excellence Program (PEP) invites employees to explore the whole self: mind, heart

and body. It features a facilitated group approach designed to support growth and change through coaching, feedback and peer support. Another program, called the Power of Mindfulness, explores the basic principles and practices of mindfulness and meditation.

Fowler, who grew up in the East, admits that these things may sound a bit like West Coast hocus-pocus, but he says they really work and employees like them. "These programs have changed the whole tenor of the conversation here in IT," he says. "We are trying to get a deep understanding ... of where we are coming from, what it

is our customers need, and exploring options."

Genentech's IT unit is also transforming itself by using products from innovative vendors like Salesforce.com Inc. and Google Inc. Says Fowler, "We really try to leverage the innovation going on in the marketplace."

Anthes is a freelance writer in Arlington, Va.

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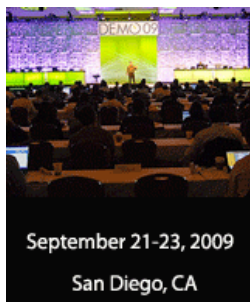
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