



ADG Creative

ADG Creative Location: Columbia **Employees:** 29 **Who they are:** An advertising, design, and corporate identity firm **What we love:** Inspiring leadership, cool space, fun work

When you walk into the nondescript corporate office building that houses ADG Creative, the first thing you might notice is the space itself—it's sleek and funky in a way that most corporate office parks can't pull off, no matter how hard they try. Inside, there are all the elements you'd expect from a creative company: comfy collaboration spots where employees can trade ideas; the foosball table; the dart board (which is frequently in use).

What you might also notice, though, is ADG founder Jeff Antkowiak, a fixture in the operation. You're more likely to see him huddling next to an employee's desk or pitching in on a video shoot than commanding an executive meeting in the boardroom (although he does that quite well, too).

In ADG's culture, collaboration is the key word, and Antkowiak, the chief creative officer who says he's "still a producer in the company," leads by example. Although ADG attracts those with a passion for work—and long hours aren't unusual—"we don't crack the whip," says Antkowiak. "It's a culture of 'how can I help the people I work with?' And that's rare."

Those who thrive in that culture are also a rare bunch. And ADG is frank about that upfront. Instead of simply subjecting would-be hires to personality tests to see if they fit, ADG leaders give candidates the results of those leaders' own personality tests. "So they can see how nuts

we are," jokes chief operating officer Craig VanBrackle.

Once new hires are in, ADG focuses not just on getting work out of them, but also on "their skills and their development," says VanBrackle. "The expectation is that everyone in the organization is a leader."

Along the way, ADGers get to do some pretty cool work, whether it's creating web applications, dreaming up clever ad campaigns and branding messages, or creating videos onsite. Clients are large and small and come from a variety of fields (which is one reason Antkowiak says ADG should fare reasonably well even in a recession). Sometimes those clients are really big: In 2008, one ADG employee was asked to demonstrate a software application for then-President Bush.