



(http://us.greatrated.com/)

Find a Workplace that Works for you™

FOR EMPLOYERS

(http://www.us.greatrated.com/)

(http://www.youtube.com/user/GreatRated-Gr)

Find companies

# South Mountain Company

> Compare

Contact us



From the on-site playground for kids, to the flexible scheduling, and the employee-ownership opportunities for all, it's family-first at this environmentally-focused design-build firm.

## What You Should Know

The onsite playground and toys at South Mountain Company Inc. might seem at first to be a trendy touch for the design-build firm's employees. But it's actually part of the company's "family first" philosophy. Kids (and dogs) are welcome to visit. Flexible schedules mean no one has to miss a school play. The company covers 100 percent of employees' -- and their dependents' -- health-care premiums. South Mountain Company takes care of its own just like family, too -- with a strong emphasis on fairness across all team members. The employee-owned cooperative offers ownership to all full-time employees after five years. Its profit-sharing program distributes payouts to all positions based on the number of hours worked, not earnings. Salaries at the top of the food chain can be no more than four times those at the bottom. "As a business, they care not only about profits

# EMPLOYEE RATINGS

<b>GREAT CHALLENGES</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>GREAT ATMOSPHERE</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>GREAT REWARDS</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>GREAT PRIDE</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>GREAT COMMUNICATION</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>GREAT BOSSES</b>	<b>100%</b>

**LEGEND**                      **OFTEN OR ALMOST ALWAYS**  
**SOMETIMES**

GREAT PERKS	EMPLOYEE QUOTES	HOW TO GET HIRED
-------------	-----------------	------------------

This review is based on 31 employee surveys, with a 95% of confidence level and a margin of error of ± 5.31. It was published on Sep 12, 2014. 48 Visitors



but also about the community and our planet,” one employee says. “My personal life is fully respected and my family comes first.”

## WHAT THEY DO

South Mountain Company is an architecture, building and renewable energy company that provides integrated design, engineering and construction for residential and non-residential projects. The firm works mostly in Martha's Vineyard and the immediate surroundings.

Website: www.southmountain.com (http://www.southmountain.com)	US Headquarters: WEST TISBURY, Massachusetts
US Sites: 1	Major Locations: WEST TISBURY, MA
US Employees: 34	US Revenues: \$11 million
Founded: 1975	Industry: Architecture & Design

# Great Challenges



How much responsibility would I have?  
What kind of support is there for professional development?

Great Rated! conducted an anonymous survey of randomly selected South Mountain Company employees to assess the quality of the workplace challenges the company provides. An average of 98 percent of South Mountain Company employees report the company often or almost always provides needed training, fair promotions and personally challenging work. Another 2 percent report the company sometimes provides these opportunities, for a combined positive rating from 100 percent of employees in the Great Challenges category.

South Mountain Company employees are architects, engineers, carpenters, wood workers, project managers, solar installers and administrators. The company has approximately 34 employees in the United States, where they operate one location.

Most employees (94 percent) say they carry a lot of responsibility in the organization, and all employees (100 percent) say that managers trust them to carry out these responsibilities without micromanaging them. For the vast majority of employees (97 percent), their work at South Mountain Company is more than just a job, and actually has special meaning. Specifically, many employees praise the opportunity it affords to own part of the company and work in an environment where family comes first.

At South Mountain Company, 100 percent of employees feel they receive the training and development they need to further their careers. While it is often difficult for companies to ensure that promotions are awarded fairly across



organizations, at South Mountain Company, an amazing 100 percent say that promotions consistently go to those who best deserve them, far exceeding what one can typically expect even at the very best companies in the country.

## SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Average annual training for full-time salaried employees: 22 hours

Annual evaluations include a discussion of training needs, desired level of responsibility and interests employees would like to pursue. On a case-by-case basis, the company will fund sending employees to outside professional enrichment programs.

Deirdre Bohan is a special example of South Mountain's development support in action. Deirdre came to work in 1995, to replace a bookkeeper for whom the job had become overwhelming. Within a year she had made what had previously been more than a full-time job into a half-time job. When she asked South Mountain Company's president, John Abrams, what she should do with her extra time, he turned that back around on her, and asked her what she wanted to do. She said she'd always been interested in interior design, so Abrams asked her to design a

multi-year educational program for herself that would culminate in the company being able to provide professional interior design services. The company funded her education. And soon she had started interior design services for the company and was doing it full time. Her growth didn't stop there: Today she is the company COO.

// The benefits are amazing and the mission of the company is wonderful to be associated with. I have been encouraged to study my craft and I am paid for the hours I spend working to become better at my job.



# Great Atmosphere



What would my colleagues be like?  
How do people have fun? How formal a workplace is it?

An average of 94 percent of South Mountain Company employees say they often or almost always enjoy their colleagues and find their workplace to be fun and cooperative. Another 6 percent sometimes benefits from these qualities, for a combined positive rating from 100 percent of employees in the Great Atmosphere category.

South Mountain Company operates one location in West Tisbury, Mass. The company has an open door policy with its staff; in fact, there are no doors. It also has an outdoor eating area so employees can relax in nature during lunch.

## FUN AND CELEBRATIONS

South Mountain Company hosts monthly pizza and beer Fridays and quarterly social events for employees and their families. Many get-togethers are more spontaneous occurrences: sharing coffee breaks and lunches together, enjoying a custom birthday cake at each birthday, or spur-of-the-moment team lunches and barbecues.

## CARING AND SUPPORT

At South Mountain Company, family comes first, so there is schedule flexibility to accommodate the events of family and personal life.

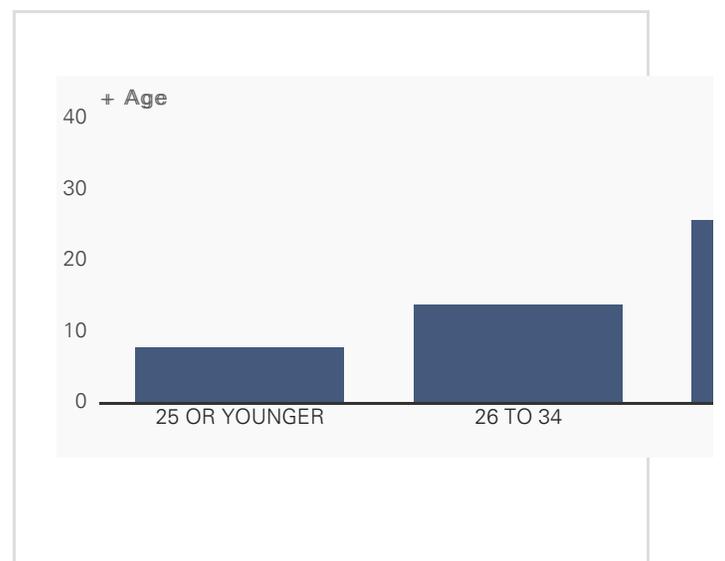
South Mountain Company offers a sabbatical program, which allows employees to take a long period of time away from work. While salary is unpaid during this time, all benefits are fully covered.

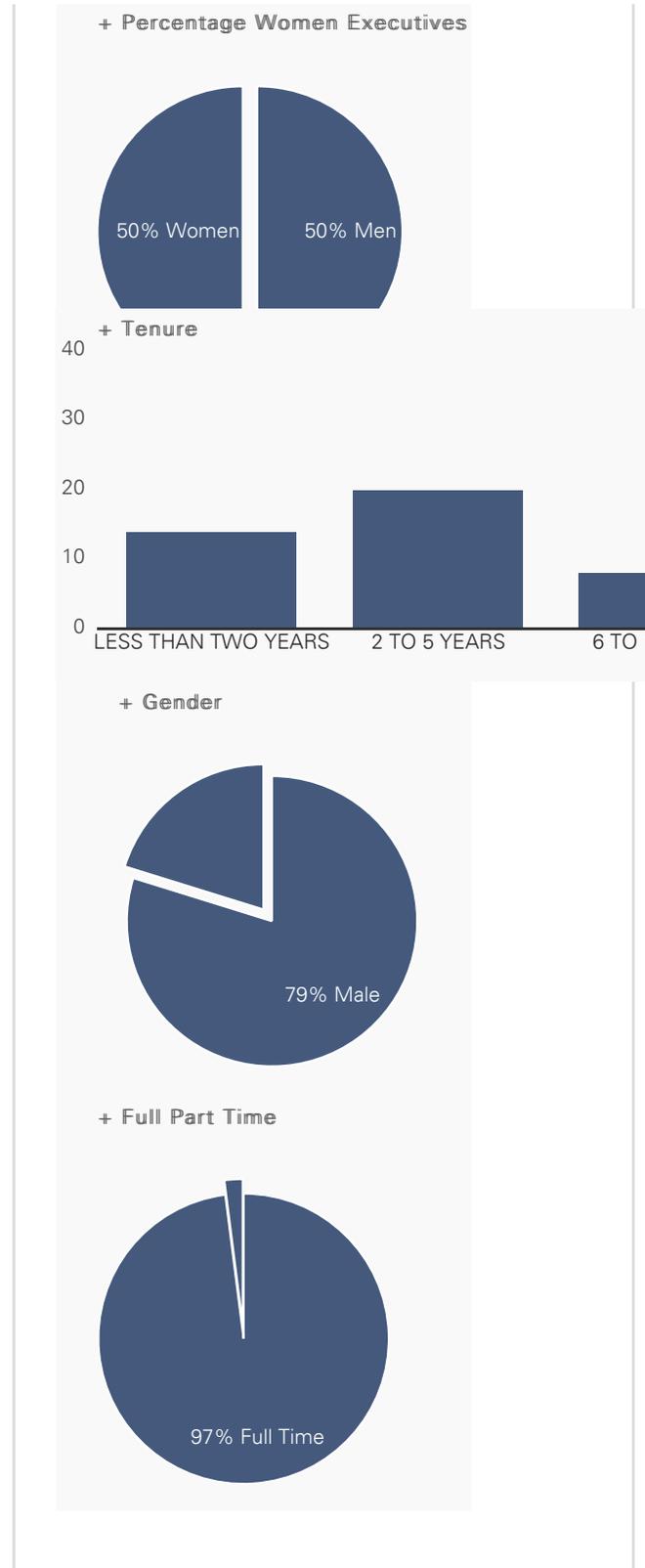
PEOPLE CELEBRATE  
SPECIAL EVENTS AROUND  
HERE.

100%

// I have never worked at a place where it seems that 100 percent of the people love their job. Turnover is almost nonexistent, and I felt so lucky when there was an opening for a position. I truly like to spend time with the people I work with every day.

## DEMOGRAPHICS







# Great Rewards



What kind of perks and benefits are part of the employment package?  
What is the work-life balance like?  
Does the company appreciate hard work?

An average of 98 percent of South Mountain Company employees often or almost always find the company compensates them fairly, provides special and unique benefits, supports their work-life balance and shows genuine appreciation for their contributions. Another 2 percent reports they sometimes receive these benefits as well, for a combined positive rating from 100 percent of employees in the Great Rewards category.

// We have great benefits, we are employee-owned and have flexible work schedules and the company is very accommodating to employees' needs.

## COMPENSATION BY THE NUMBERS

<p><b>\$42,190</b> Average salary and additional cash compensation for Carpentry</p>	<p><b>\$126,210</b> Average salary and additional cash compensation for Executive Management</p>
<p><b>100%</b> Company-paid health coverage for employees</p>	<p><b>100%</b> Company-paid health coverage for dependents</p>

## COMPENSATION PROGRAMS

401(k) or 403b plan

## PERKS TO MAKE LIFE EASIER

Free snacks during the day

Free beverages during the day

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE BY THE NUMBERS

<p><b>15 days</b> Holidays &amp; vacation days after one year of employment</p>	<p><b>60 days</b> Job Protected Leave maternity provided above and beyond FMLA</p>
<p><b>20 days</b> Paid leave for adoptive parents</p>	

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE PROGRAMS

Unpaid Sabbaticals

Flexible Schedule (56% use it)

Telecommute

Option (6% use it)

Compressed Work Weeks (6% use it)

I AM ABLE TO TAKE TIME OFF FROM WORK WHEN I THINK IT'S NECESSARY.

**100%**

PEOPLE ARE ENCOURAGED TO BALANCE THEIR WORK LIFE AND THEIR PERSONAL LIFE.

100%

// The goal is to get your job done the best you can, but family comes first. Management does everything they can to encourage a real life. Beyond family and work we have regular social events that are fun.

## HEALTH INSURANCE COVERS

- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Dental care   | Vision care          |
| Prescription drug subsidy   | Mental health care   |
| Alternative treatments, such as acupuncture, homeopathy or chiropractic | Fertility treatments |

## ONSITE HEALTH BENEFITS

- Subsidized Offsite Gym Memberships



# Great Pride



What inspires employees' company spirit here? Do people stand by their teams' work? What impact do people have outside the organization?

An average of 98 percent of South Mountain Company employees report that they often or almost always carry meaningful responsibilities within the organization and are proud of their accomplishments, community impact and the company's reputation in the world. Another 2 percent report that they sometimes experience this pride as well, for a combined positive rating from 100 percent of employees in the Great Pride category.

South Mountain Company was established 39 years ago and is owned by its employees. The company works primarily with individuals, companies, and non-profits who care about things like collaboration, high performance, zero-energy buildings and the environment.

I'M PROUD TO TELL  
OTHERS I WORK HERE.

100%

// This company has a great reputation because we give back to the community. It makes it a place where everyone is proud to work.

## SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

Philanthropic donations in the last year:  
\$117,827

The South Mountain Company Foundation gives 10 percent of the company's annual net profits to mostly local charitable causes. An additional 10 percent of their profits is dedicated to pro-bono and discounted services for community projects for nonprofits. These have included extensive subsidized affordable housing work for decades and projects such as renovations to a family center, helping a local charter school, and supporting two local farming projects.

I FEEL GOOD ABOUT THE  
WAYS WE CONTRIBUTE  
TO THE COMMUNITY.

94%

// The company's emphasis on green construction and environmentally conscious work practices (are really unique).



# Great Communicati



How easy is it to talk with managers and get the information I need? Will managers listen to my input?

An average of 96 percent of South Mountain Company employees say they often or almost always experience a free and transparent exchange of ideas and information within the organization. Another 4 percent sometimes has this experience as well, for a combined positive rating from 100 percent of employees in the Great Communication category.

South Mountain Company employees are architects, engineers, carpenters, wood workers, project managers, solar installers and administrators. The company has approximately 34 employees in the United States, where they operate one location.

The managers at South Mountain Company do a good job of maintaining an open line of communication with their employees. Nine out of 10 surveyed employees find that management makes its expectations clear, keeps staff informed about important issues and changes and genuinely seeks and responds to suggestions and ideas. Most employees (97 percent) also say management is approachable, easy to talk with and will give a straight answer to any reasonable question.

// Such camaraderie exists between South Mountain employees. In a world where professional relationships are often mostly surface-level, this company has been able to maintain a rare and oh-so-genuine personal dimension in everything they do.



# Great Bosses



What are managers' leadership strengths?

An average of 97 percent of South Mountain Company employees say their managers often or almost always act with integrity and care, are competent in their positions and provide clear directions and vision for the organization. Another 3 percent say their managers sometimes display these characteristics, for a combined positive rating from 100 percent of employees in the Great Bosses category.

South Mountain Company employees widely appreciate the great challenges and company pride their leaders encourage. Nearly everyone has consistently positive experiences with their managers and find them to be competent at running the business. A full 100 percent of employees say management does a good job of assigning and coordinating people and delivers on its promises. South Mountain Company employees also appreciate the honesty and ethics their management team exudes, and 100 percent say laying people off would only happen as a last resort. Everyone agrees that management shows a sincere interest in them as people, not just as employees.

// We are employee-owned. The company has a spread-out management system that divides responsibility in really interesting ways. We have a board of directors and a management committee (made of board members), a production committee, design committee and many others.

# Great Perks and Programs

**Employees as Owners:** After five years of employment, all South Mountain Company employees have the opportunity to become owners. They gain a full voice in company policy and a share of the company's equity.

**A Family-Comes-First Approach:** Part of the South Mountain Company philosophy is the notion that family comes first. The company is flexible when it comes to altering work schedules, whether an employee has a personal problem or simply wants to see their child's school play. Both children and dogs are welcome in the workplace, where a playground, toys and dog biscuits are available.

**Focusing on Health:** In addition to the company's 100 percent medical coverage, South Mountain Company offers an additional health benefit that is entirely discretionary, meaning employees can use it for whatever health-related purpose they choose. This plan can go toward alternative health care, gym memberships or anything an employee feels will contribute to health and wellness.

**Shared Breaks:** On most days, South Mountain Company staff can be found sharing coffee breaks and lunches together. With a kitchen and indoor and outdoor eating areas, employees have plenty of places to be social in the workplace.

**Equity:** When company president, John Abrams, received the Fred Case Entrepreneur



individuals and have different needs in and out of the workplace."

"While I think employee ownership fosters a heightened level of responsibility by its nature, my coworkers are all personally invested in our work, which I think comes through in both quality and craft. We all want our work to be beautiful and meaningful and we want it to endure."

"We are one of the few small businesses we know of that has actually quantified our carbon footprint as a business and is actively working to reduce it each year. "

"There is a very strong sense of all-for-one and one-for-all. Everyone works to make their own job productive but each also makes an effort to encourage others to enjoy their work and feel satisfied in what they do."

"Employee-owned, great people, great benefits, giving back to the community."

"It is a 'choose your own adventure' experience. Dream it and make it happen."

"We are an employee-owned worker cooperative and this makes all the difference. Each employee-owner has a voice and a vote on the board of directors, and this influence trickles down to the everyday care we take of each other."

"The people that work for the company are what makes it so unusual. When I first started working for the company, everyone was so nice, helpful, genuine and laid back that I thought something must be wrong. After a couple of weeks, I realized that's just the way everyone is."

"We have extraordinarily good and generous mental and health benefits, and outstanding opportunities are given to employees to shape

and change their job descriptions and roles within the company. "

"This company goes out of its way to make people feel good at work."

"We are an employee-owned company. Personally, this makes a big difference! Having worked in 'corporate America,' I know that the difference is real and profound. It is so great to have a say in everything, from the big decisions to the small."

# How to Get Hired



We asked South Mountain Company for some inside information on how to get hired at the organization. Here is what they had to say.

## **What key characteristics tell you a prospective employee will be a great fit for your company?**

Aside from a skill set that is a good fit with the particular job opening, we are looking for people who have the qualities that, in our view, will cause them to be great future owners of SMC: open-mindedness, integrity, intellectual curiosity, passion for life and work, thoroughness, thoughtfulness, compassion and empathy. When job applicants display those characteristics and give us a sense that they are self-starters who take the initiative, we know that it is likely to be a

good fit. Given that, however, we do not rely on first impressions. We try to dig deep to get a true sense of who we're talking to.

**What can prospective employees do to get your attention?**

We respond to letters that are well-written, insightful and indicative of the character of the writer. The writer should also indicate that they have taken the time to get to know this company before writing (there are plenty of resources available on our website and elsewhere). It doesn't matter if the letter is unsolicited or if we don't have a job for that person right now. If someone makes the effort to write to us and express themselves in a meaningful and articulate way, it gets our attention. We respond, and we often invite them for a visit.

**Are there any unusual or especially rigorous steps of your hiring process that candidates should be aware of?**

It varies depending on the job and the applicant pool. Sometimes we ask people to do a trial day's work — or a week! Sometimes we ask people to come back several times. And we always have people meet in a variety of settings: one-on-one, two-on-one, small group, large group, etc.

**Are there any positions or types of candidates you are particularly focused on hiring in this coming year?**

We are hoping to hire a production manager this year, probably from outside the company. It is a position that we have tried, unsuccessfully, to fill before. This time we will do an exhaustive and deliberate search to find the right person to fill the job.

**What should interested candidates do to find out more and get started?**

They should email John Abrams (jabrams@southmountain.com) and request our ad and job description. After digesting, and after a thorough reading of our website, they should write a letter saying why they might be a good fit for the job. Make us curious!

## HIRING OUTLOOK

<p><b>10%</b> Job Growth</p>	<p><b>30</b> Average number of applicants per opening</p>
<p><b>1%</b> Total voluntary turnover in past year</p>	<p><b>25</b> Applicants in past year</p>
<p><b>2%</b> New hires by employee referrals</p>	



© 2014 Great Place to Work® Guides LLC dba Great Rated!™. All Rights Reserved.

[Home \(/home\)](#)   
 [About Great Rated! \(/about-us/about-great-rated\)](#)   
 [Blog \(/blog\)](#)  
[Terms & Conditions \(/terms-conditions\)](#)   
 [Privacy Policy \(/privacy-policy\)](#)