

COOL COMPANIES

BigCommerce

It may be competing with the big guys such as Google, Yahoo! and eBay, but when e-commerce platform BigCommerce kicked off in 2010, the plan was to attract the best talent via a series of little things.

It worked. But the co-founder (and co-chief executive) Mitch Harper says keeping software designers and developers happy is about more than providing a kitchen full of drinks and chips. "That's a cliché about software companies from about the year 2000," Harper says.

"Our employees are the best at what they do. They can work anywhere; so when they are at work, they don't want it to feel like work."

At BigCommerce offices in Sydney and Austin, Texas, staff commit to their own deadlines and wear what they like (usually shorts and thongs).

"Killing the corporate aspect of coming into an office really appeals to our employees," Harper says.

Initiatives

❑ No micro-management – employees set and manage their own targets and deadlines, start and finish when they like, and there's no tracking of sick days.

- ❑ Strong focus on protecting work culture, "one of our greatest assets".
- ❑ Whole team welcomed into the interview process; any member can veto potential candidates.
- ❑ No formal probation period. Instead, buddies are assigned to new staff to help them settle in.
- ❑ No working past 6.30pm.
- ❑ Use of social-feedback tool Rypple to share stories and recognise achievements.
- ❑ Quarterly "hacking free-for-all", when staff get to design whatever they like.
- ❑ Employee share options.
- ❑ Top-of-market salaries.
- ❑ All staff travel to Austin to meet the team in head office.

The result is a company on a growth trajectory. Since January, staff numbers in the

Australian office have grown from 15 to 50, and in Austin (about 60 staff), business is

also booming. "The biggest surprise is the more rules you get rid of, the better everything goes," Harper says. "It's about really trusting your employees. If you give them some of the power about where and how they work, the really great ones knock it out of the park."

SUE WHITE



Happy workers ... co-founders Mitch Harper and Eddie Machaalani. Photo: Nic Walker