Social responsibility came at #3 on this year’s survey’s list of major drivers for what makes a company a great employer, and this year’s top employers have found a number of creative ways to serve local communities. These efforts can range from drives to gather goods for the needy to helping out with local science fairs.

Regeneron employees volunteer when the Cell Motion Bio Bus, a molecular biology lab on wheels with research-grade equipment on board, comes to visit local schools, and they also mentor high-school students who come to work in the company’s labs. “There’s a lot of nurturing of science here,” says Grossman.

The Biocon Foundation invests heavily in the health and welfare of its neighbors. Its Arogya Raksha Yojana Health Micro Insurance Plan has more than 100,000 members, 90 percent of whom pay for their own insurance. Members are enrolled via mobile phone. The foundation also runs nine primary health care clinics in the rural and urban regions served by its micro-insurance plan and holds three to four monthly health camps in more remote areas. Other community efforts include construction of sanitation infrastructure at a pilgrimage site near Bangalore City and building and upgrading local primary schools.

STABILITY, CHANGE, OR BOTH?

This year’s survey respondents listed “stability,” including job security and industry growth, as one of the key advantages of working in biopharma. But respondents also named “change”—mergers and acquisitions, reorganizations, outsourcing, market forces, employees moving between companies, and decreasing innovation—as the main disadvantage of employment in the industry, followed by “negative image,” “workplace conditions,” and “government influence.”

Nevertheless, just one in five survey respondents said they were likely to look for a new job in the next 12 months. A third of those who expected to begin a job search said their goals were career advancement and professional growth; 17 percent were seeking new challenges and experiences; 13 percent wanted to leave their current job due to leadership, management, or supervision issues; 11 percent were planning to look for work because they were not happy with the work environment or culture or the stress of working for their current employer; while 11 percent wanted a better salary and benefits.

Working in biopharma can definitely be a wild ride, and many scientists will find themselves involved in multiple mergers, acquisitions, and spinoffs throughout their careers (see “Navigating Biotech/Pharma Mergers and Acquisitions” article, June 8, scim.ag/QfNmuM).

But the health of the industry means that talented, experienced scientists can expect to land another—maybe better—job after being laid off. R&D spending was essentially flat between 2007 and 2009, but has begun to climb again, according to Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) data. While the number of U.S. jobs overall fell by 6 percent between 2007 and 2009, according to data from Battelle, biotech jobs were up by 0.2 percent during the same period. Big pharma employment shrank 4.8 percent, while there was a 3.6 percent increase in jobs at research, testing, and medical labs.