

JARKKO LAINE

"Insanely interested in everything"

[About this blog](#)



[What is RSS?](#)

November 22nd, 2007

20 Companies To Inspire You Today

It seems that this is your first time to my blog. Welcome! In this blog I will share my ideas on how you can make a living in a way that feels good to you, your family, your environment and everyone around you. If you want to know more about me and this blog, check out my [about page](#). And if you want to stay updated on my new posts, subscribe to my [RSS feed](#). Thanks for stopping by!

Everyone needs to be inspired every now and then.

What inspires me the most is when I see people doing what they enjoy and believe in. It doesn't have to be through business, but more often than not the truly inspiring actions are happening in that context. Today I'm listing the top 20 businesses that inspire me at this very moment.

20. [Apple](#)



There's no question about it: Apple is the leader in computer and consumer electronics design and development. I'm still collecting money for my first Apple computer and waiting for iPhone to arrive to Finland, but I must agree: There is no one who creates products with quite the style and elegance as Apple.

19. [Google](#)



The classic inspiration for every geek out there, Google is well known and appreciated for its "Do no evil" policy. However as the company is quickly evolving into a Microsoftesque giant, it's losing some of the glory it once used to have.

Google is moving from the club of the small and friendly companies to the big boys' league, but no one can claim that it wouldn't be setting a great example in treating your employees. The 20% rule allows employees work on their own projects during working hours [and the perks](#) at the Google campus are beyond imagination. This is what a big...huge company can offer at its best.

18. [Reaktor Innovations](#)



Reaktor Innovations (RI for short) is a software company from Finland. What makes it inspiring is their investment in continuously educating their employees in software development practices. RI is a leader in bringing agile methodologies to Finland and keeps organizing open seminars on the topic as well as practice sessions called *Coding Dojos* every once in a while. By making sure that their employees keep learning on the job, they help them be happy at work and appreciate the company a lot more

17. [Weekdate](#)



Weekdate is a new way of designing paper based calendars: it brings many of the features that you love about your computer based calendar systems, like recurring events, to paper and by doing that pretty much beats the digital counterpart. After all, a paper based calendar travels with you all the time and you can draw on it using a pen.

What's inspiring about this company is that it demonstrates that you can always come up with a new idea and create business from it, no matter how filled the market seems to be.

16. [Netura](#)



Two years ago my brother *Lauri* and our mutual friend *Joona Nuutinen* decided to start a company. Without a clear business idea they rented a small office ("because it was so cheap") and started thinking about what they should do. It's been inspiring to watch them search for their business idea and finally found a clear goal to work towards.

Lauri and Joona have promised to write some guest posts about their experiences, so you'll hear more about them soon.

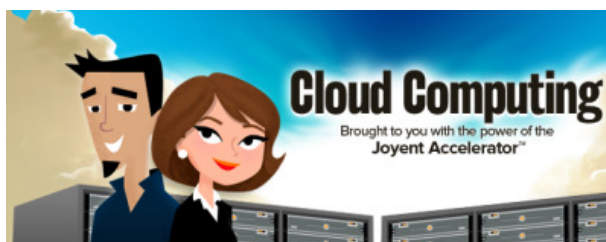
15. [gDiapers](#)



As a dad I have noticed that some things that used to be of no interest to me have become some of the most interesting ones. Diapers are a great example for this. What makes gDiapers interesting is that just like Weekdate shows that you can still innovate in the calendar business, gDiapers shows that there is room for innovation in Diapers.

Also, making ecological living into something comfortable is always a great thing. Plus, it's a small business started by a couple that wanted to make a difference. [And they have a blog.](#)

14. [Joyent](#)



In addition to being the coolest web hosting company on the planet, what makes Joyent great is their hiring policy. They try to hire the brightest minds no matter where they live and don't force them to relocate if they are chosen for the job: "In most cases we hire the best, wherever you are in the world. Just have lots of connectivity, caffeine, competence, and confidence."

And as a bonus, they just launched their free hosting plan (for a year) for [Facebook developers](#).

13. A tie between [Freshview](#), [Blinksale](#) and [CrazyEgg](#)



All of these companies are just great examples of the creativity and passion that goes into running a small internet based startup. They all have great products that I would be glad to recommend to anyone interested in a little help in handling their day to day business activities.

And here's how Freshview describes their working environment. Sounds cool, doesn't it?

Instead of a cramped high rise, our offices are [located](#) across from a park with a decked out kitchen, ping pong table and plenty of space for everyone. The fridge is always full of free soft drink and we'll often have lunch together at the office or head out to a local restaurant for a free feed. We also organise other events during work hours like golf days, ten pin bowling, tennis and a cool drink at many of the fine local establishments (um, pubs).

10. [Ben & Jerry's](#)



Ben & Jerry's is probably yesterday's news for you (or even news from the days when you were small kids), but I just tasted their ice cream for the first time last week. The ice cream was delicious, but what was even better was the company story. Two kids meet at a 7th grad gym class. Some years later they take a \$5 correspondence course in ice cream-making and start making ice cream. What an entrepreneurial success story!

But that's not all. The company also has strong values and isn't afraid to stand up for them. And they give out free ice cream once a year.

9. [Eemukka](#)



Another diaper company!? What's the matter with this guy?

No, I don't think I have gone mad. I'm just really impressed on how the entrepreneur mothers running these diaper companies (there are many of them in Finland) have been able to create a business that is both successful and has room for their families.

I'm working on a bigger post on these companies during the upcoming weeks. So stay tuned if you want to know more about diapers and what kind of business you can make out of them. (You may even want to consider [subscribing to my RSS feed so you don't forget](#))

8. [MOO](#)



MOO is a perfect example of how business has changed in the last decade or so.

It's not that much about looking big anymore but rather trying to be seen as friendly and approachable. And these people are doing a great job in it. Just read the following two paragraphs in which they explain how they started making their most popular product, the MiniCards, and you can't help but believe that they are serious. They really believe in what they are doing, and they do it with pride and style.

All of the staff at MOO have active online social lives - not for work, just for fun. We love the web. Over half of us have our own website, or blog, and pretty much all of us share our photos online with our friends.

Our first product, MiniCards, came about when we realized that sometimes, we wanted to hand out details of our personal sites, and we just didn't have a nice way to do it. A business card was too cheesy, too serious, or too... businessy, and didn't represent us the way we really are. A hastily scribbled piece of paper is more personal, but who ever has paper or a pen when you want it? We needed something else.

Now I just have to find some excuse for buying some MiniCards...

7. [Blurb](#)



I've been a fan of Blurb ever since I first found out about them about a year ago. They are not the first company doing on demand printing of books, but they are the ones who made it accessible for everyone. We all have some things worthy of printing into books: pictures of our kids, war stories, childhood dreams, cooking recipes, wedding pictures... And now Blurb makes it easy.

And not only that. Everything at Blurb shows that these people are doing what they love. By reading their blog you can feel the passion and experience the feeling that they are building something great together as a team. To me that's what inspiration means.

6. [Davidville](#)



Once again an example showing that you can take something that everyone is doing, like blogging, and turn it into something new, creating a great product and putting it out there.

In case you don't know what product I'm talking about, it's [Tumblr](#). Go check it out. Blogging can't get any easier.

5. [Energia Productions](#)



"We excel in doing what we can't do."

The above quote describes Energia Productions very accurately. These people after all were the ones who created the hugely successful science fiction movie, [Star Wreck: In the Pirkinning](#). The story that lead to that movie is legendary. It all started from some really simple [computer animations](#) made by a young kid with too much spare time. At that time no one would have believed that one day this kid would be making movies for a living.

The determination paid off and now Samuli Torssonen and his company are about to have a great impact on the future of movies.

4. [Threadless](#)



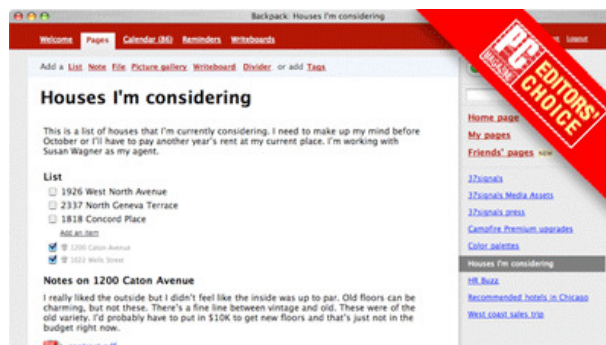
Threadless makes T-shirts.

While that's true, it doesn't say anything about what Threadless really is about. So let's try again: Threadless makes really cool T-shirts. But even more, they have been able to create a living and breathing community around their shirt business.

The shirt designs are done by customers. The promotion pictures are shot by customers. And I'm sure a big part of their marketing is also done by customers. It's word of mouth at its best.

And boy, have you seen their [head quarters](#)?

3. [37 Signals](#)



This should be no surprise to anyone who has been reading this blog for some time. I think 37 Signals is the best example today on how a software company should be run, not to mention that their products are elegant, smooth and useful.

Check out the book, [Getting Real](#), written by the partners of 37 Signals to learn their philosophy in more detail. For this post, I think it's enough to say that they are passionate, they have strong values, they are small and they work mostly from home.

And during summer they only work four days a week. Case closed. These guys know how to make work enjoyable.

2. [Iridesco](#)



Do I need to say more? Check out the company website and you'll know that these guys rock.

1. [Jellyfish Labs](#)



After the fall of Big Idea, Phil Vischer decided to start over with a new, much smaller approach to business. His new company, Jellyfish Labs only employs four people, but is still able to do big things like bringing VeggieTales to NBC.

This is the kind of inspiration that I'm most excited about right now: small companies showing that growing isn't always the number one goal. That you can do big things without being big.

What about you?

If I asked you to name twenty businesses that inspire you on some level, which ones would you pick? Surprise me with some great company I have never heard of before! Or tell me why some of the companies on my list aren't that great after all.

And a year from today, November 22nd 2008, I'll compile a new version of this list to see how my favorites have changed. Maybe your company will make it to that list. (In fact there are two more companies that I would have wanted to list today, but I have been linking to them so much already, that I thought it's fair to give others the chance today. I'm sure you know who I mean.)



If you enjoyed this post and don't want to miss any of my new content, [subscribe to my RSS feed](#) or have the latest posts [delivered straight to your e-mail inbox](#).

9 Responses to “20 Companies To Inspire You Today”

- [Jason A. Hoffman](#) Says:
[November 22nd, 2007 at 5:04 am](#)

Hi Jarkko, thank you for the mention of Joyent! And the one thing we've continued doing is hiring from our community: everyone on the Joyent payroll has come from the the forums, the blogs, and were people who stepped up to help solve a problem they felt passionate about. Again, thank you thank you for noticing.

- [Jan Wikholm](#) Says:
[November 22nd, 2007 at 1:58 pm](#)

Thank you Jarkko, for introducing me to MOO! This is exactly what I need for an upcoming PR project done in collaboration with a client. Cheers!

- [Pete White](#) Says:
[November 22nd, 2007 at 7:06 pm](#)

Great list - I get brain freeze every time I eat Ben & Jerry's though!

- [Allison](#) Says:
[November 22nd, 2007 at 10:08 pm](#)

Hi Jarkko. I shared this post with the folks at Blurb. We appreciate being included on this very cool list. To know that you can use our services, read our blog, and sense our true commitment and excitement, well, that's a real compliment because that is what we strive for. Thank you so much.

- [shane](#) Says:
[November 23rd, 2007 at 10:54 pm](#)

Hey Jason, I'd love to chat staffing with you some time. What you said really caught my attention and I am curious to know more of how it has been playing itself out.

- [William Profet :: OneJobTwoSalaries.com](#) Says:
[November 25th, 2007 at 12:48 am](#)

That's really inspiring! I love the post. Thank you!

Regards from William :-)

- [Jarkko](#) Says:
[November 25th, 2007 at 1:04 am](#)

Jason: Great to see you here!

I would assume that your method of hiring assures that the people you get are ones that are excited about your company and working for/with you. What kind of interviewing do you do with the people you hire, or is that even necessary when you already know the person from your forums or blog?

Jan: I'm glad I could help!

Pete: Is that a good kind of brain freeze or a bad kind of brain freeze? ;)

Allison: Thank you! You'll get my first book order in just a few days - if I just have the time to get the book finished... :)

William: Thanks! I guess I said this already, but I'm happy that you're back in the blogosphere!

- [Joy](#) Says:
[November 27th, 2007 at 7:00 pm](#)

These are nice companies..^^..Hope mine will be included next time..^^

- [Jarkko](#) Says:
[November 28th, 2007 at 6:22 pm](#)

Thanks, Joy! You have now one year to make a lasting impression that will get you to the next version of the list. ;)

1 mentions in the press

- [Finland » Blog Archives » CONSTRUCTION COUNTS FOR CLIMATE](#)

Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website

Submit Comment

☒ Enable [CommentLuv](#) which will try and get your last blog post, please be patient while it finds it for you

☐ Notify me of followup comments via e-mail



NAVIGATION

- Previous: [A Dream Job - My Definition](#)
- Next: [Why Most Business Cards Don't Mean a Thing](#)

RELATED ARTICLES

- [Are You Too Old To Become An Entrepreneur?](#)
- [Jarkko Laine dot com Turns One](#)
- [Insanely Interesting Links: Something To Keep You Reading All The Time](#)
- [What Is Your Dream Job?](#)
- [Why No Company Should Have More Than Seven Employees](#)

LATEST ARTICLES

- [How To Lose Money With AdWords](#)
- [Eliminate Distraction: The 8 Things to Let Go First](#)
- [Getting Started With Zooming Out](#)
- [28 Ideas To Spice Up Your Mornings](#)
- [Focus Your Big Picture Every Day](#)

Topics

- [All](#)
- [Uncategorized](#)
- [Learning](#)
- [Reading](#)
- [Motivation](#)
- [Hands on Software](#)
- [Green Programmer](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Perfect Workplace](#)

- [Inspiration](#)
- [Blogging](#)
- [Reviews](#)
- [People](#)
- [Writing](#)
- [Family](#)
- [Time Management](#)
- [Life](#)

Archives

- [June 2008](#)
- [May 2008](#)
- [April 2008](#)
- [March 2008](#)
- [February 2008](#)
- [January 2008](#)
- [December 2007](#)
- [November 2007](#)
- [October 2007](#)
- [September 2007](#)
- [August 2007](#)
- [July 2007](#)
- [June 2007](#)
- [May 2007](#)

Top Commentators

- Dren
- [komodo dragon](#)
- [Deron Sizemore](#)
- [Bitten](#)
- [Terence Chang](#)

Other Blogs To Check Out

- [Escape Adulthood](#)
- [HELLO, my name is BLOG](#)
- [IttyBiz](#)
- [James Dalman](#)
- [My Tropical Escape](#)
- [Random Jabber](#)
- [Shane and Peter](#)