

## **Corporate Plan Sponsors Rate Equity Compensation Plan Administration Service Providers**

*Corporate plan sponsors rate satisfaction with equity compensation plan administrators and commercial systems – Bank of America Merrill Lynch and Transcentive’s Express Options are highest rated*

PRINCETON, NJ – October 30, 2009 -- GROUP FIVE, a corporate services research company, today announced results of its annual study of plan sponsor opinions of services provided by commercial equity compensation plan administrators and commercial plan administration systems. The study had 567 plan sponsors participating — representing 1,582 equity compensation plans including stock options, restricted stock, stock purchase, performance shares, and stock appreciation rights. The study is the only independent forum for corporate clients to make their opinions and priorities known to service providers. The annual study included the largest providers of outsourced plan administration services and commercial systems for internal plan administration. The highest rated plan administrator was Bank of America Merrill Lynch with an overall satisfaction rate of 77% favorable for full service plan administration and the highest rated commercial system was Transcentive’s Express Options with a 69% favorable rating. E\*TRADE received a 94% satisfaction rating for their co-sourced plan administration, the highest for partial outsourced administration services. Morgan Stanley Smith Barney’s received the highest loyalty rating with 86% of their clients willing to recommend MSSB as a plan administrator.

“Overall plan sponsor satisfaction increased 9 percentage points over last year which is especially significant given the difficulties in the financial services industries,” said Jack Sunday, chief executive officer, Group Five. “Over the past 5 years there has been a steady improvement in plan sponsor satisfaction. The higher satisfaction ratings have been driven by improved services to plan sponsors as well as plan participants resulting from major information technology investments.”

The most important element of plan sponsor satisfaction with outsourced stock plan administration is the easy and timely availability of accurate plan information on both the individual and company level via a robust web system. More specifically, the ability to generate standard and custom reports via the web and the responsiveness of the account support team is what differentiates the highest rated administrators from the others.

“Corporate plan sponsors continue to look to Group Five for objective and reliable information on Equity Compensation Plan Administration services,” said Kathy Huston, research director, Group Five. “This is our 9<sup>th</sup> Equity Compensation Plan Administration Study and the participation of plan sponsors increases each year which is indicative of the value plan sponsors place on the research.”

GROUP FIVE is a consulting and customer research firm located in Princeton, New Jersey. The firm is best known for its consulting and research expertise in equity compensation plan administration and transfer agent services.

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