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Pullman & Comley

Taking A Personal Approach

Ranked #4

SMALL/MEDIUM
COMPANY CATEGORY

“We’re a small firm that happens to have a lot of lawyers.” That’s the way managing partner D. Robert Morris describes Pullman & Comley, an 81-attorney Connecticut law firm celebrating its 90th anniversary in 2009.

It also hints at the firm’s management philosophy. According to Morris, it’s an approach intended to create a true team spirit among its 157 employees by building strong working relationships between all staff levels. It’s also one of the reasons that as a first-time entrant, Pullman & Comley was named this year to the Hartford Business Journal’s 2009 list of Best Places to Work in Connecticut.

Morris said that fostering the firm’s unique culture is a top priority. Paying close attention to the character of the people the firm hires and respecting them as individuals once they’re aboard is the way to do it, he said.

In addition to hiring candidates with exceptional legal skills and knowledge to handle the sophisticated, often complex legal work of the firm, partners try to identify a candidate’s interests within and outside of the practice of law.

“We like to hire people who are interested in the community in which they live. These are going to be people who are committed and involved, and someone we enjoy working with,” Morris said. “They’re going to be interesting people.”

This personal approach doesn’t stop with the lawyers. Diane Whitney, who leads the firm’s environmental law section, says she regularly and closely involves her paralegal and secretary in the cases she’s working on, as do many of the firm’s attorneys.

This approach pays long-term dividends for the firm through strong loyalty and very low attrition. A high percentage of both staff and attorneys have been with Pullman & Comley for more than 20 years. Callers and



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Pullman & Comley employees, pictured above, are credited for maintaining the law firm’s team spirit. From left, they are: Adam J. Cohen, attorney; Rene McNeil, receptionist; Anne Marie Burke, legal secretary; John F. Stafstrom, attorney; and Nancy A. D. Hancock, attorney.

visitors to the firm are greeted by energetic and personable Rene McNeil, the firm’s receptionist, who began working at the firm in 1964. According to Whitney, McNeil began working at the firm as a temporary employee. She added with a smile that McNeil is still trying to decide if she’ll stay.

It’s a kind of relaxed, free-flowing atmosphere expressed by firm employees that the firm’s partner nurture to create a stable, productive and satisfied work force, Whitney said.

The firm cares for the things that interest their employees. This is seen in the nature of the pro bono work the firm performs for nonprofits and others. It also includes its support of community and charitable causes identified by employees as well as backing the firm’s community commitment with contributions and volunteers.

The firm’s employees also look for opportunities to interact with one another, Morris says.

This may be at the firm’s annual summer outing or at an in-office charitable fundraising event. It’s the dynamic of interacting with one another that people enjoy, he added.

Keeping a productive, satisfied work force comes down to maintaining the firm’s culture. Being named among the Best Places to Work, Morris said, “validates and reinforces for everyone that we continue to keep the kind of environment that we set out to create and enjoy every day.” ■

Type of business: Law firm
Connecticut employees: 157
Connecticut locations: 4
Connecticut offices: Bridgeport, Hartford, Stamford, Westport
HR contact: Martin Hochstadt, executive director
Top local executive: D. Robert Morris, chairman
Founded: 1919