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BEST PLACES TO WORK

FOR FINANCIAL ADVISERS PAGE 8

BEST PLACES TO WORK FOR FINANCIAL ADVISERS

THE 50 FIRMS that earned a spot on the *InvestmentNews* Best Places to Work for Financial Advisers list are standout employers in the industry that have invested in creating supportive and appealing cultures to attract top employees.

Our inaugural list, the first ever for the financial advice business, was created by Best Companies Group through online employee and employer surveys. The collected information was combined to determine the strengths of each of the firms that voluntarily participated in the program, and each workplace is ranked according to this data.

The firms are organized on these pages into three categories based on employee counts. Their profiles offer insight into the human resources practices that successful firms rely on to retain skilled employees. Compelling perks at these winning firms draw a road map for others looking to make themselves more competitive in the race for the best workers.

—Liz Skinner, special projects editor



BALASA DINVERNO FOLTZ

Employees 54 | Firm Type RIA | Co-CEO Armond A. Dinverno
Location Itasca, IL | Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

"My personal passion is to build a great business," said Armond Dinverno, co-founder and president of Balasa Dinverno Foltz. "And part of our internal vision is that we put our [employees] first."

Underlying that vision was the decision to build a culture based on trust instead of mistrust, he said. This is reflected in the firm's perks, such as a paid, four-week sabbatical available to staffers after every five years of service (in addition to normal vacation). Instituted two years ago, about a dozen people already have used the benefit.

Mr. Dinverno wishes he'd had this option during his own career and thought it would be useful for employees to be able to reflect on their lives and futures, and to be with family.

Although sabbaticals can be challenging to manage, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Not only is it a personal opportunity for the employee, it also creates opportunities for co-workers to step up and show their talents while covering for the employee on leave, he said. In addition, it creates transparency, as others can see what's being done for the client.

The firm also holds many employee gatherings, such as weekly breakfasts and team lunches, monthly birthday lunches with the president and monthly after-hours socials.

"I'm Italian, so what matters most for the family? Being together and breaking bread," Mr. Dinverno said. "But it's not a family — it's a business and you have to perform."

— Deborah Nason

PERKS



four-week paid sabbatical after five years; flex time; summer hours; paid paternity leave; weekly breakfasts; monthly lunches



SIGNATURE ESTATE & INVESTMENT ADVISORS

Employees 69 | Firm Type RIA
CEO and President Brian D. Holmes | Location Los Angeles, CA
Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

When the four founders of Signature Estate & Investment Advisors started the firm, they wanted to maintain the independence of their four respective practices, even as they joined forces, said Brian D. Holmes, president and CEO.

"We realized we had to create a different model so that people wouldn't ever want to leave the firm," he said.

As a result, they created two classes of ownership shares. The first class represents ownership of the business in general, and the second represents ownership of an adviser's own practice. Now, 21 years later, there are 17 advisory practices across six branches — and no adviser has ever left the firm.

Another organizational policy that makes employees want to stay is Signature's

innovative career path program. Because the founders all started their advisory careers right out of college, they are strong advocates of recruiting new graduates. New recruits can choose among three career tracks:

1. Analyst, which feeds into the investment department
2. Operations, which leads to jobs in areas such as operations, technology, compliance, trading or fiduciary oversight
3. Financial advising, which assigns associates to work directly on adviser teams

"Many start in one direction and then decide to go in different ones," Mr. Holmes said. "There's a great impact on retention because of the flexibility. You can change career paths but stay at the same firm."

— Deborah Nason

PERKS



holiday party; summer celebration; chair massages; wellness program activities; weekly bagels and donuts; fresh fruit



GURTIN MUNICIPAL BOND MANAGEMENT

Employees 72 | Firm Type RIA
Co-CEO William Gurtin
Location Solana Beach, CA
Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

"This is the smartest group of people I ever worked with," said Bill Gurtin, founder and co-CEO of Gurtin Municipal Bond Management, about his employees. His goal for his 10-year-old firm is to be a microcosm of society, a "place where we can understand that we're all just people," he said.

The organization has been very intentional about the diversity it wants to embody and how it wants to achieve that. For one thing, it includes in its recruitment activities schools that traditionally serve less-advantaged populations. For another, the company provides interview training to help its employees understand and avoid unconscious bias during the hiring process.

"If you just want to hire the best people, all you should care about is what's inside the person," Mr. Gurtin said. "We want self-motivated people who have sought out help and overcome obstacles. While Ivy League schools are great, every school has the cream of the crop. You might need to search a little harder."

The organization's focus on diversity is a reflection of its intention to "do the right thing," a fundamental goal of its founder.

"Everyone in the firm knows that our heart's in the right place, and you can feel proud of the way you work," Mr. Gurtin said. "You have to be a profitable, not a profligate, firm. We want to be profitable enough to sustain doing the right thing."

— Deborah Nason

PERKS



onsite gym; access to personal trainer; workout/body transformation challenges; free healthy snacks; fresh fruit; firm outings; quarterly women's leadership alliance

- See the overall ranking of the top 50 firms
- Learn why it's harder for large firms to make the list (click on the About tab)
- Discover the areas where small firms get high marks from employees (click on the About tab)

BEST PLACES TO WORK FOR FINANCIAL ADVISERS | 50+ EMPLOYEES




4

TOLLESON WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Employees 145 | Firm Type RIA | CEO Carter Tolleson
Location Dallas, TX | Primary Custodian Pershing Advisor Solutions

Employees at Tolleson Wealth Management are encouraged to volunteer at nonprofits they care about and are given paid time off to do so. The firm also supports a wide range of community organizations. The staff is treated to lunch every Wednesday, birthday celebrations, a summer picnic and a holiday party each year. Annual bonuses range from 10% to 50% of an employee's salary, depending on the position.

PERKS

step challenge; paid time off to volunteer; parental leave; holiday party; picnic; Wednesday lunches; birthday celebrations




5

SIGNATUREFD

Employees 64 | Firm Type RIA | CEO Jeff Peller
Location Atlanta, GA | Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

Greatness, growth, generosity and gratitude are SignatureFD's core values, which it exemplifies not only in how it helps its clients, but also in how it treats its staff. The company provides unlimited time off for vacation, sick leave and volunteer work. Employees are given a five-week paid sabbatical after five years of service. The firm also pays for child care expenses and allows flexible work schedules and telecommuting one day a week. Its top charitable organizations are the Chattahoochee River Cleanup, Salvation Army Angels and Open Hand Atlanta.

PERKS

five-week paid sabbatical after five years; paid child care expenses; unlimited PTO; telecommuting once a week



6


CEDAR BROOK GROUP

Employees 69 | Firm Type Hybrid | CEO Bill Glubiak
Location Cleveland, OH | Primary Custodian National Financial Services | Broker-Dealer Securities America Inc.

Cedar Brook Group coined the term "the humanity factor" to describe its approach to managing its clients' money, but it also represents the firm's commitment to community service — and not just locally. When a family in Houston lost everything after Hurricane Harvey, the company held fundraising events for a week to raise money to help the family. Cedar Brook also has quarterly community service projects closer to its home in Cleveland.

The staff also benefits from their employer's largesse. The firm provides random bonuses or recognition (like a new bicycle, in one case) for those who exceed expectations, and all employees are granted a great deal of flexibility in their work schedules.

PERKS

flexible schedules; jeans days; charitable outings; telecommuting

THE COLONY GROUP


Employees 97 | Firm Type RIA | CEO Michael Nathanson
Location Boston, MA | Primary Custodian Fidelity (Institutional Wealth Services)

The Colony Group prides itself on having a highly collaborative workforce. The firm has invested heavily in its open-architecture platforms. The company offers telecommuting and holds a summer outing for its employees each year. Employees are also allowed paid time off to volunteer.



7

PERKS

summer outing; personal development support; flexible schedules




8

MODERA WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Employees 56 | Firm Type RIA
CEO Tom Orecchio
Location Westwood, NJ
Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

All of Modera Wealth Management's offices hold a Day of Community Service each year and allow employees additional paid time off for volunteer work. In addition, the company provides financial literacy classes to the community. Employees are treated to summer Fridays, company retreats, anniversary gifts and mentoring. In addition, they are eligible to receive up to 15% of their salary as a bonus annually.

PERKS

summer Fridays; service days; company retreats; anniversary gifts

9 REGENT ATLANTIC

Employees 50 | Firm Type RIA
CEO George Stapleton
Location Morristown, NJ
Primary Custodian | Schwab Advisor Services

New parents get the royal treatment at Regent Atlantic: six weeks of paid leave, and upon returning from parental leave, they are allowed to work part-time for 12 weeks while receiving full-time pay. Everyone gets an anniversary bonus of \$250 per year of service. The company has casual-dress Fridays during the summer, and each employee may select six Fridays each summer to work only half a day. The company picks up the tab for lunch twice a week after the employee pays the first \$5. Regent also hosts a summer celebration and a holiday party, and significant others are invited to both.



10

ADVISER INVESTMENTS

Employees 78 | Firm Type RIA | CEO Dan Wiener
Location Newton, MA | Primary Custodian Fidelity
(Institutional Wealth Services)

Adviser Investments makes sure it offers plenty of activities for its employees — such as outings to Red Sox games and laser tag — along with Bagel Fridays and summer barbecues, which is what you would expect from a firm where millennials make up half the 78-person staff. But the 24-year-old firm with AUM of \$3.4 billion has a serious side, too. It supports local charities, including Rosie’s Place, Cradles to Crayons and the American-Ireland Fund, and gives its workers paid time off to support them.

PERKS

company outings; bagel Fridays; summer BBQs; women’s events; paid time off to volunteer; telecommuting



PERKS

generous paid parental leave; holiday party; summer celebration; subsidized employee lunches; monthly recognition and awards; annual anniversary bonuses; summer Fridays

11

SAVANT CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Employees 143 | Firm Type RIA | CEO Brent R. Brodeski
Location Rockford, IL | Primary Custodian TD Ameritrade

Savant Capital Management takes care of its employees as if they were customers, and many are thanks to its policy of not charging management fees for employee financial planning, tax management, estate planning and other services. The company also provides financial support for those seeking professional certifications, designations and training. Employees love the bus trips to professional sporting events and holiday shopping trips, cookouts, ice cream truck days, family picnics, a children’s holiday party and many other fun activities. The firm provides financial and volunteer support for several community arts organizations, Goodwill, food pantries and services that help the disabled and homeless.



PERKS

no-fee financial planning services; fitness club memberships; busy-season chair massages; family picnics; gifts at Savantiversaries; recognition breakfasts; team-building activities; children’s holiday party



12

MONETA GROUP

Employees 276 | Firm Type RIA
Managing Partner Eric Kittner
Location Clayton, MS
Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

Moneta Group offers abundant opportunities to volunteer in the community throughout the year. Its charitable foundation and a volunteer group donate hundreds of man-hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to Habitat for Humanity, food banks and toy drives. Employees can petition the foundation to provide grants for their favorite causes, too. Moneta is equally generous to its employees by organizing monthly (if not more often) bowling, food trucks, third-Thursday happy hours and other social events to keep the entire firm connected and happy.

PERKS

monthly social events; weight-loss challenges; third-Thursday happy hours; CEO meet-and-greets



13

BRONFMAN ROTHSCILD

Employees 88 | Firm Type RIA
CEO Neal Simon | Location Rockville, MD
Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

Bronfman Rothschild boasts generous incentive compensation, including a new-business-generation bonus of 20% of first-year annual fees and 12.5% thereafter for the life of the account, as well as merit bonuses of \$1,000 to \$15,000. As if that weren’t enough, the company also provides early closing on summer Fridays, office lunches and periodic all-company “summits” to promote teamwork and camaraderie throughout its offices on the East Coast and in the Midwest.

PERKS

summer Fridays ; company-wide summits; office lunches; telecommuting

BEST PLACES TO WORK FOR FINANCIAL ADVISERS | 30-49 EMPLOYEES




JMG FINANCIAL GROUP

Employees 49 | Firm Type RIA | CEO Anthony D. Cecchini
Location Downers Grove, IL
Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

JMG Financial Group must be doing something right. The average tenure for its 50 employees is 15 years, according to chief operating officer Yonhee Gordon, herself a 32-year veteran at the firm. Ms. Gordon, in her role as the unofficial “culture sheriff,” oversees employee and organizational development and generally promotes happiness. She shared several policies that make for a happy staff. Regular engagement with staff is a priority, as exemplified by the semi-annual evaluations during which employees speak both with their supervisors and Ms. Gordon. “It’s important to employees to know they can have a confidential conversation with just me. It’s an opportunity to address their individual development plans and any concerns,” she said. Also, feedback is given quickly. “We are all becoming more tech-savvy and tech-dependent,” Ms. Gordon said. “We

have to recognize that the turnaround time of response is important so that employees feel like they’re being listened to.” A clear career path is one of the core factors in the company’s growth, Ms. Gordon said. Finally, fun at JMG Financial is both planned and random. In addition to pumpkin-carving and office-decorating contests, an in-house DJ (Ed, the IT guy) sometimes spins tunes and takes requests over the office intercom. Employees have even been known to hold a spontaneous game of musical chairs in the conference room, during non-client meetings of course. — Deborah Nason

PERKS

telecommuting; casual Fridays; in-house DJ; birthdays off



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ACCREDITED INVESTORS WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Employees 41 | Firm Type RIA | CEO and Founder Ross Levin
Location Edina, MN | Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

The employees at Accredited Investors Wealth Management are encouraged to take it slow, said Ross Levin, CEO and founder of the 31-year-old firm. “There’s ‘fast’ work — reports, taxes etc., things that clients can get from technology. And there’s ‘slow’ work — relationship work, being a good listener, understanding clients,” he said. “One of the challenges

of this industry is, if you just work on the ‘fast’, you’ll end up being a commodity.” As such, the firm’s core values include the idea of practicing gratitude, compassion and mindfulness. “We treat our clients better when we treat each other better,” Mr. Levin said. “Spending time mindfully decreases anxiety.” He described the benefits of this mindset: • When you understand your individual triggers, you’re better able to manage your emotions and reactions. • If you can manage how you handle stress, you are more willing to deal openly with problems because you won’t fear repercussions. • When you are aware of your own strengths and weaknesses, you can “right” yourself more quickly when you slip into negativity, and adapt more quickly to changes. The company’s values and emphasis on integrating work and life responsibilities attract a certain type of person and have made a big difference in hiring ultimately successful and well-integrated employees, he said. “Out of the whole work environment, hiring for the culture is the most important predictor of success,” Mr. Levin said. — Deborah Nason

PERKS

gym; treadmill desk; standing desks; fresh fruit; veggie delivery; flexible hours





CASSADAY & COMPANY INC.

Employees 45 | Firm Type Broker-Dealer
President Stephan Q. Cassaday | **Location** McLean, VA
Primary Custodian Pershing Advisor Solutions
Broker-Dealer Royal Alliance Associates Inc.

When Stephan Q. Cassaday founded his firm 25 years ago, he knew what he didn't want. "When I worked for Wall Street firms, their model was to hire you for as little as possible and burn you out," he said. "The support staff turnover was tremendous, and I ended up paying for my own assistant out of my own pocket. It seemed logical to me that happy employees would do a better job for clients."

In setting up his business, he instituted policies that would make employees feel like owners. Everyone gets paid based on the firm's revenue, and salaries are a small part of overall compensation, which leans in favor of bonuses. "The interesting thing about it is

that not every [candidate] is as excited about this as you'd think," Mr. Cassaday said. "It's for people who are interested in entrepreneurship."

In addition, the organization practices what he calls "radical inclusion," empowering all employees to share their thoughts on how to improve the business. People send ideas to the CEO and speak their minds at company meetings.

"We tell them, 'Here's the vision and the desired outcomes. Tell me how you would do it,'" Mr. Cassaday said. "It provides them opportunities to create solutions and gives them a lot of empowerment."

—Deborah Nason

PERKS early release days; birthdays off; quarterly massages and spa days; regular social events and happy hours



MRA ASSOCIATES

Employees 45 | Firm Type RIA | **CEO** Mark Feldman | **Location** Phoenix, AZ
Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

The boutique firm of MRA Associates empowers its employees — more than half of whom are millennials — to take the lead on projects. It offers a flexible schedule and half-day Fridays, and makes a bonus-fund pool available to all employees after just six months on the job. The company sponsors the Arizona Children's Business Fair, which helps first- through eighth-grad-

ers develop a brand, create a product or service, build a marketing strategy and launch their own startup businesses.

PERKS half-day Fridays; weekly work-from-home day; flexible schedules; staff event prizes

'Robaton, Anna, "Preparing for the \$30 Trillion Great Wealth Transfer," CNBC, 2016.

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AXIAL FINANCIAL GROUP

Employees 31 | Firm Type Hybrid
Managing Principal Paul E. Miller
Location Burlington, MA
Primary Custodian National Financial Services
Broker-Dealer Commonwealth Financial Network

Axial Financial Group offers creative work schedules to accommodate employees with families or who work remotely. Staff are treated to paid lunches for all monthly team meetings. Support staff are eligible for annual bonuses, and all employees get a generous 401(k) match.

The company actively supports Habitat for Humanity and gives employees paid time off to volunteer.

PERKS holiday party; charitable activities; monthly lunches; flexible schedules



SIGNATURE FAMILY WEALTH ADVISORS

Employees 38 | Firm Type RIA | **CEO and President** Randy Webb | **Location** Norfolk, VA
Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

Signature Family Wealth Advisors offers its employees several unique benefits, such as paying 100% of its employees' medical premiums, extra time off in the summer, a yearly outing to a Norfolk Tides minor league baseball game, an in-house happy hour known as "brewdigitty," bourbon Fridays and board games. The firm raises funds for the United Way and takes part in the United Way's Volunteer Day at all of the firm's locations.

PERKS 100% paid medical premiums; extra time off in the summer; Norfolk Tides baseball game yearly; in-house happy hour; bourbon Fridays

BEST PLACES TO WORK FOR FINANCIAL ADVISERS | 30-49 EMPLOYEES




SYM FINANCIAL ADVISORS

Employees 45 | Firm Type RIA | CEO Jerry Yeager
Location Winona Lake, IN
Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

Employees at SYM Financial Advisors are invited to many client events, including baseball games, theater performances and trips to the zoo. The firm holds a March Madness event, a summer outing, birthday celebrations and a soup-and-salad club for staff. The company supports the Fort Wayne Children’s Zoo and Fellowship Missions in Warsaw, Ind., which helps the homeless in the community.

PERKS

 holiday party and summer outing; birthday celebrations; jeans Fridays; paid time off to volunteer; March Madness event




FRAGASSO FINANCIAL ADVISORS

Employees 49 | Firm Type Hybrid | CEO Robert Fragasso
Location Pittsburgh, PA | Primary Custodian LPL Financial
Broker-Dealer LPL Financial

Fragasso Financial Advisors offers above-average paid time off and free financial advice to its employees, almost half of whom are millennials. All employees are eligible for a company performance bonus, and discretionary bonuses also are awarded. In addition to the annual bring-your-child-to-work day, the company hosts a bring-your-dog-to-work day and a holiday decorating contest. FFA is active in several animal-welfare and veterans’ charities, including Pets for Vets, which matches companion pets with veterans, and the Veterans Leadership Program.

PERKS

 free financial advice; extra paid time off; bring-your-dog-to-work day; holiday decorating contest




EXEMPLAR FINANCIAL NETWORK

Employees 32 | Firm Type Broker-Dealer | President David Hubbard
Location Crystal Lake, IL | Primary Custodian Pershing | Broker-Dealer Cetera Advisor Networks

It isn’t unusual for Exemplar Financial Network’s managers to give employees a day off spontaneously or to provide free smoothie ingredients along with healthy snacks and beverages. Employees get to suggest a fun activity, such as lawn chair volleyball, for the once-a-month Fun Fridays. The company also offers a trip incentive for providing referrals. And that Salvation Army bell ringer might be one of Exemplar’s employees embodying the company’s name in its efforts to do good throughout the community.

PERKS

 flexible hours; wellness committee contests; monthly Fun Fridays; telecommuting




CARSON WEALTH MANAGEMENT GROUP

Employees 40 | Firm Type Hybrid
CEO and Founder Ron Carson | Location Omaha, NE
Primary Custodian TD Ameritrade
Broker-Dealer Cetera Advisor Networks

The primarily millennial (90%) workforce at Carson Wealth Management Group is treated to complementary concierge services, a bring-your-dog-to-work day and an annual Employee Appreciation Week, during which the company does something different each day for its staff. The employees are just as generous to good causes they nominate for a committee to select from each month. Funds are raised by donating \$5 for each Friday the staff dresses in jeans. The staff also can donate a PTO day to charity.

PERKS

 bring-your-dog-to-work day; employee appreciation week; flexible schedules; complementary concierge services




AEPG WEALTH STRATEGIES

Employees 30 | Firm Type RIA
CEO and Founder Steven Kaye | Location Warren, NJ
Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

Out-of-the-ordinary perks are standard at AEPG Wealth Strategies. Employees get their birthdays off, a bowling day and festive lunches; tenured staff are eligible for sabbaticals. The company culture of giving back is especially evident in its various charitable activities. Among the firm’s top community-service initiatives are Pre-school Advantage, One Step Closer Animal Rescue (OSCAR) and the Enright Melanoma Foundation.

PERKS

 telecommuting; flexible hours; birthdays off; bowling day; festive lunches




PRIVATE VISTA

Employees 32 | Firm Type RIA
Managing Partner Jeffrey M. Toner | Location Chicago, IL
Primary Custodian Pershing Advisor Solutions

Private Vista offers flexible work schedules, telecommuting, floating holidays and summer Friday hours. Especially notable is the free personal financial planning it offers its employees and credit toward preparing estate documents with an attorney. The fundraising committee organizes various activities, luncheons and events to raise money for charity.

PERKS

 free personal financial planning; summer Fridays; telecommuting; floating holidays; anniversary gifts




MERIT FINANCIAL ADVISORS

Employees 30 | Firm Type Hybrid | President Rick Kent
Location Alpharetta, GA | Primary Custodian LPL Financial
Broker-Dealer LPL Financial

Merit Financial Advisors wants to make work fun, so it awards gifts and cash bonuses for participation in office activities. These include golf outings, catered lunches and special-occasion dinners, as well as various volunteer initiatives. The company fully pays its employees’ insurance and awards additional vacation days as a performance incentive.

PERKS

 fully paid insurance; summer Fridays; telecommuting; chair massages; catered lunches; special-occasion dinners

BEST PLACES TO WORK FOR FINANCIAL ADVISERS | 15-29 EMPLOYEES



BERMAN McALEER

Employees 18 | Firm Type Hybrid | CEO David L. Berman
Location Timonium, MD | **Primary Custodian** National Financial Services
Broker-Dealer Kestra Financial Inc.

Berman McAleer doesn't define its purpose by money, growth or success, said David Berman, co-founder and CEO of the firm. Instead, its core values are fulfillment, trust and respect.

"None of these are typical business objectives," he said, "but we recognize that everything we do must honor these principles with our three constituents: our employees, our owner/partners and our clients."

Nine years ago, the entire firm worked with a consultant for eight months to define its overall purpose.

"As a result of the process, a light bulb went on. It was scary, but we've never regretted empowering our people," Mr. Berman said. "We've learned that if you trust people,

they will trust you back."

The ideals of fulfillment, trust and respect have guided decisions such as:

- Extending support staff the ability to manage their own schedules, correcting a double standard for a policy that previously applied only to professional staff
- Posting the firm's financial results every week in a staff meeting
- Paying for employees to work with a life coach

Even though success alone is not a basic value, the firm's philosophy and energized employees have propelled the organization in that direction.

"We've been growing so fast that we temporarily had to close the practice to new clients," Mr. Berman said.

— Deborah Nason

PERKS



flexible hours; annual overnight spa retreat; boat days on the Chesapeake Bay; speakers on issues such as managing stress



LEGACY WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Employees 22 | Firm Type RIA | CEO and President James J. Isaacs
Location Memphis, TN | **Primary Custodian** Schwab Advisor Services

"When I worked in corporate America, I was frustrated that employees didn't have skin in the game," said Jim Isaacs, CEO of Legacy Wealth Management.

That's one reason his firm offers a percentage of company ownership to employees.

"I literally want everyone to be an owner," he said.

To that end, the firm extends a stock-purchase offer to the future shareholders and provides them a loan, underwritten by Fiduciary Network, to pay back the obligation over five years. The company, however, pays the loan for employees if they remain with the firm for five years. Program participants must sell the shares back to the company when they leave the firm.

The incentive to participate is huge because once the stock purchase is completed, the shareholder will enjoy annual profit-sharing and the increase in share value, Mr. Isaacs said.

The impact of the program shows up in various ways.

"Morale is dramatically better, as people are more accountable to each other, and all shareholders/owners are motivated to address any problems or inefficiencies," he said. "Becoming owners transitioned the responsibility of making activities efficient from a few people to everyone."

Mr. Isaacs also credits the program as a significant factor in the firm's growth.

"It has energized all the shareholders to bring in new business," he said.

— Deborah Nason

PERKS



early-closing Fridays; paid time off to volunteer; generous caregiver policy that extends to the family pet



CIC WEALTH

Employees 15 | Firm Type Hybrid
Founder and CEO Ryan Wibberley
Location Rockville, MD
Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services | **Broker-Dealer** Purshe Kaplan Sterling Investments

The relaxed attitude flows from the top at CIC Wealth.

"We are a very laid-back group," said Ryan Wibberley, founder and CEO.

"I'm that way. I'm an open book," he said. "I talk to everyone about everything business-related. I ask for advice."

The example he sets ripples through the organization and encourages open dialogue among workers. There is a culture of openness and kindness, and every person is very approachable, Mr. Wibberley said.

Employee reviews include a focus on thoughtfulness.

"One of the things we look at informally is, 'What kinds of things have you done for a co-worker recently?'" Such as buying someone lunch or flowers," Mr. Wibberley said. "We've been doing random acts of kindness for clients for years, and that led us to treat each other the same way."

Viewing his role as one of serving employees as well as clients, he makes it a priority for his staff to review him, too.

The company bonus structure rewards employee ideas; 60% of the bonus is based on the employee's efforts to improve things in the organization, and 40% is based on company performance.

Do these policies make employees happy?

"All these things add up to a general feeling of, 'Hey, the grass isn't greener over there,'" Mr. Wibberley said.

— Deborah Nason

PERKS



holiday party; social outings; office birthday celebrations; stocked refrigerator and kitchen



RICHARD P. SLAUGHTER ASSOCIATES INC.

Employees 16 | Firm Type RIA | CEO Brooks Slaughter
Location Austin, TX | **Primary Custodian** TD Ameritrade

At Richard P. Slaughter Associates Inc., strategic planning is a time for the entire office to get away from it all.

The firm conducts an off-site retreat every summer, alternating between a local hotel and, if financial goals are met, a long-distance destination with many employees' relatives and friends in tow. Over the past decade, the group has traveled together to far-flung mountains and cities and has even gone on a cruise.

It's important to get out of your normal environment, said Brooks Slaughter, president and CEO and son of the firm's founder.

"We've found that when you travel, you learn more in a different environment, out of your comfort zone," he said. "And when you learn about other areas, it helps you to be a better wealth manager for clients in other regions."

The getaway not only provides great bonding opportunities for the whole team, but also promotes skill development. For example, during one retreat, the firm hired a facilitator to teach every staffer how to facilitate. Then, every employee, from administrative to management, facilitated a part of the planning exercises.

Listed as one of the top 20 "Best Places to Work in Central Texas" (among micro-companies) by the Austin Business Journal for 13 years, the company is built on three pillars.

"You've got to equally love your employees, your clients and your shareholders," Mr. Slaughter said.

— Deborah Nason

PERKS



company trip; participation in corporate strategic planning

BEST PLACES TO WORK FOR FINANCIAL ADVISERS | 15-29 EMPLOYEES



5

APPLESEED CAPITAL

Employees 18 | Firm Type RIA | Co-CEO Joshua Strauss | Location Chicago, IL | Primary Custodian Pershing Advisor Solutions

The owners of Appleseed Capital added a new distinction to their company when it became a certified B Corporation in 2015. So-called “B Corps” are “for-profit companies certified by the nonprofit B Lab to meet rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability and transparency,” according to B Lab.

Appleseed’s co-CEO and portfolio manager Adam Strauss adds that B Corps use the power of business to solve social and environmental problems. Advisory firms such as his tend to have a strong focus on sustainable and responsible investing, he said.

Reflecting this philosophy, the firm encourages healthy lifestyles, such as biking and working out, and supports the local Chicago community by giving employees paid time off to do volunteer work.

Mr. Strauss describes the company culture as one of learning and growth. For example, staffers are given projects to stretch their skills, such as implementing a new software system or carrying out new marketing initiatives.

“We believe the more you can enlarge your job description, the better you can do, whether serving clients or the firm,” he said.

Appleseed also fosters a trusting culture with its employees by measuring results, not time in the office. Being trustworthy, honest and open with each other translates into how the firm builds trust with clients, Mr. Strauss said.

“Increasingly, employees want to work for companies that are socially minded and integrity-focused,” he said. “The B Corp status helps distinguish us from other firms.”

— Deborah Nason

PERKS



flexible hours; paid time off to volunteer; subsidized gym membership



6

MIRACLE MILE ADVISORS

Employees 16 | Firm Type RIA | Managing Director Brock Moseley | Location Los Angeles, CA | Primary Custodian TD Ameritrade

The employees at Miracle Mile Advisors can brag that they have fitness classes, a fully stocked kitchen, weekly happy hours and a companywide trip based on revenue goals as perks. All employees participate in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Workplace Mentoring Program, and for the past three years, a team has ridden in Cycle for Survival, a national event that raises money for research on rare forms of cancer.

PERKS



company trip; telecommuting; summer Fridays; fitness classes; fully stocked kitchen; weekly happy hour; office bar



7

TRUE NORTH ADVISORS

Employees 20 | Firm Type RIA | CEO Scott Wood | Location Dallas, TX | Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

True North Advisors pays 100% of its employees’ medical premiums and contributes \$2,000 per year to their health savings accounts. All employees are eligible for year-end bonuses. True North offers great work-life balance, telecommuting, free snacks and beverages, and frequent catered lunches. All employees receive a Greenberg smoked turkey at Thanksgiving. The company allows employees paid time off to volunteer and actively supports the Red Cross, the North Dallas Food Bank and Human Impact.

PERKS



telecommuting; smoked turkeys for all employees at Thanksgiving; free snacks and beverages; catered lunches; paid time off to volunteer



8

BSW WEALTH PARTNERS

Employees 21 | Firm Type RIA | Managing Principal and Chief Operating Officer David Wolf | Location Boulder, CO | Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

“Make life better” is BSW Wealth Partners’ credo, and the company lives by it not only in how it serves its clients but also in how it treats its staff. If an employee had any involvement in getting a new client relationship, he or she receives a portion of the new-client revenues for three years.

Personal and professional mentoring are taken very seriously, and the company provides exceptional benefits and work-life balance, including on-site meditation. Employees love the company ski trip and summer and winter “fun days” — as well as “awesome” snacks.

PERKS



company ski trip; telecommuting; flexible hours; on-site meditation; yearly fun days



9

CENTER FOR FINANCIAL PLANNING

Employees 27 | Firm Type Hybrid | Managing Partner Timothy Wyman | Location Southfield, MI | Primary Custodian Raymond James Investment Advisor Division | Broker-Dealer Raymond James Financial Services Inc.

The Center for Financial Planning offers meals at work, a ping-pong table, and health and wellness contests to keep its staff engaged.

A community service committee run entirely by employees identifies organizations to receive donations and arranges volunteer days for the staff. The Center also has a volunteer day when clients can participate with employees.

PERKS



meals at work; wellness contests; paid time off to volunteer; ping-pong table




10

PENSIONMARK FINANCIAL GROUP

Employees 25 | **Firm Type** Hybrid | **CEO and President** Troy Hammond | **Location** Santa Barbara, CA | **Primary Custodian** Schwab Advisor Services | **Broker-Dealer** Captrust

Employees at Pensionmark Financial Group are encouraged to consider themselves “mini-entrepreneurs” and come up with new ideas for their roles. The company offers a flexible work schedule, telecommuting, a big variety of free snacks and numerous team-building activities such as lunches, wine tastings, happy hours and paintball. A charitable giving committee meets monthly to come up with ongoing activities that all employees can participate in.

PERKS  telecommuting; flexible schedules; happy hours; wine tastings; lunches; company-paid charitable events; big variety of free snacks




11

PER STIRLING CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Employees 29 | **Firm Type** Hybrid | **Managing Director** J.P. O’Sullivan | **Location** West Lake Hills, TX | **Primary Custodian** Fidelity (Institutional Wealth Services)

Per Stirling Capital Management takes care of all its associates at every stage of their careers, from providing support staff that handles administrative busywork to offering cutting-edge, cloud-based technology. This firm holds a day out for its operations team, monthly birthday-recognition events and an annual Appreciation Party. Per Stirling supports the Grammy Award-winning Conspirare choral group, St. Stephen’s and the Jeremiah Project youth ministry. The company also allows its employees paid time off for additional community-service activities.

PERKS  annual appreciation celebration; monthly birthday events; day out for operations team




12

COVINGTON CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Employees 22 | **Firm Type** RIA | **CEO** Jeff Glassman | **Location** Los Angeles, CA | **Primary Custodian** Schwab Advisor Services

Covington Capital Management believes in having fun at the office. Employees can play Pictionary and Nerf ping-pong during the day, and the company hosts lunches every other Monday, as well as barbecues and holiday parties. Covington is 100% owned by its employees, a quarter of whom are millennials. Despite its small staff, the company boasts high compensation, covers 90% of employee health insurance and matches 401(k) contributions up to \$10,800 per employee per year.

PERKS  pays 90% of employee health insurance; flexible hours; lunches on alternate Mondays; holiday party; barbecues




13

NCA FINANCIAL PLANNERS

Employees 28 | **Firm Type** Hybrid | **CEO and President** Kevin Myeroff | **Location** Cleveland, OH | **Primary Custodian** Pershing Advisor Solutions | **Broker-Dealer** Royal Alliance Associates Inc.

NCA Financial Planners stands out for its diversity. More than 70% of its advisers are women, compared with only 30% industrywide. The company also stands out for the unique experiences it offers employees, such as hot-air balloon rides, helicopter tours and the creation of their own music videos. NCA treats its staff to chair massages, early closing on Fridays and treadmill desks to work off the calories from surprise food treats. The firm actively supports the Ronald McDonald House and makes donations to employees’ charities of choice.

PERKS  telecommuting; chair massages; treadmill desks; hot-air balloon rides; helicopter tours; early closing on Fridays




14

PRIVATE OCEAN

Employees 29 | **Firm Type** RIA | **CEO and President** Greg Friedman | **Location** San Rafael, CA | **Primary Custodian** Schwab Advisor Services

Private Ocean treats its staff to gym memberships, flexible start times, early closing on Fridays, free snacks and lunches, and Amazon gift cards for their birthdays. In addition, the firm hosts a yearly “Family Weekend at the River.” All employees are eligible for a personal-goal-achievement bonus and company net-operating-income bonus, each up to 10% of an employee’s base pay, as well as a client-referral bonus of 10% of net client fees in the first year, and 5% in each of the next two years. Employees are given paid time off to help with disaster recovery efforts, most recently after the Santa Rosa fires. The company donates up to \$500 yearly to employees’ favorite causes.

PERKS  gym memberships; flexible hours; paid time off to help with disaster recovery; family weekend event; free snacks and lunches




15

GREENSPRING WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Employees 17 | **Firm Type** RIA | **Managing Director** John Patrick Collins Jr. | **Location** Towson, MD | **Primary Custodian** Fidelity (Institutional Wealth Services)

Greenspring Wealth Management invests in its workforce by paying for up to two professional designations for each employee and providing an annual stipend to cover continuing education and conference attendance. Employees are encouraged to write thank-you notes to colleagues who embody the company’s core values. These notes are entered into a monthly raffle. Monthly team lunches and happy hours, an annual chili cook-off, a flexible work schedule and a business-casual dress code help keep the staff engaged.

PERKS  telecommuting; flexible schedules; holiday dinner; monthly lunches and happy hours; annual chili cook-off




16

PROVISE MANAGEMENT GROUP

Employees 29 | **Firm Type** Hybrid | **CEO** Raymond Ferrara | **Location** Clearwater, FL | **Primary Custodian** Schwab Advisor Services | **Broker-Dealer** Kestra Financial Inc.

Employees are in control of their own work lives at Provise Management Group — “no micromanaging” — and are allowed flexible schedules and telecommuting options. They also get generous vacation time. All employees are eligible for the company performance bonus and merit bonus, the latter of which ranges from \$500 to \$3,500. Those who take on special projects also are eligible for a separate bonus. Provise sponsors the Mease Morton Plant Hospital, the Homeless Emergency Project and Breast Cancer Awareness.

PERKS  telecommuting; flexible schedules; generous vacation allowance; paid time off to volunteer




17

ARMSTRONG FLEMING & MOORE INC.

Employees 17 | **Firm Type** Hybrid | **Principal** Alexandra Armstrong | **Location** Washington, DC | **Primary Custodian** National Financial Services | **Broker-Dealer** Commonwealth Financial Network

Despite Armstrong Fleming & Moore Inc.’s focus on high-net-worth clients, it keeps the less fortunate in mind, too. It has donated more than \$750,000 to the Foundation for Financial Planning, the country’s only 501(c)(3) nonprofit charity devoted solely to supporting free financial planning. The firm also has helped prepare meals for Cup of Joe, which are distributed to shelters around Washington.

The staff cited catered in-office brunches and anniversary luncheons at a restaurant of the employee’s choosing as the most popular perks. In addition, employees are entitled to incentive compensation of 6% to 13% after just six months with the firm.

PERKS  catered brunches; anniversary lunches; holiday parties with contests; paid time off to volunteer

CHARACTERISTICS OF WINNING FIRMS

COMPARE RESPONSES FROM COMPANIES THAT MADE THE LIST AND DIDN'T

Firms that made our list	EMPLOYER RESPONSES	Firms that didn't make our list
61%	Provide paid time off	56%
86%	Allow employees additional PTO for community service/volunteering	67%
64%	Offer telecommuting options	50%
90%	Promote any sustainable or "green" practices	61%
52%	Provide workplace facilities to promote fitness	22%
88%	Provide cafeteria, meal subsidies or free snacks or beverages	78%
20%	Paid sabbaticals	17%
50%	On-site personal development and/or stress management workshops, seminars or classes	33%
62%	Financial education workshops, seminars or classes	33%
76%	Paternity leave for birth or adoption of a child	67%
22%	Adoption assistance such as reimbursement of adoption, travel and other fees	6%
58%	Lactation facilities for breastfeeding mothers	39%
72%	Meetings and staff events limited to work hours	44%

Firms that made our list	EMPLOYEE RESPONSES	Firms that didn't make our list
95%	I understand the long-term strategy of the organization	88%
96%	I have confidence in the leadership of this organization	85%
91%	There is adequate planning of departmental objectives	77%
96%	I am given enough authority to make needed decisions	86%
95%	I feel part of a team working toward a shared goal	84%
93%	I am able to maintain a reasonable balance between work and my personal life	85%
95%	My job makes good use of my skills and abilities	88%
85%	My pay is fair for the work I perform	77%
90%	I'm satisfied with the organization's benefit package	79%
88%	I'm satisfied with the amount of health care paid for	81%
91%	I'm satisfied with the retirement-plan benefits	81%
91%	I'm satisfied with the tuition reimbursement agreement	62%
91%	The organization provides as much ongoing training as I need	81%
96%	The organization provides the technology, equipment and resources I need to do my job well	83%
86%	There is room for me to advance at this organization	75%
86%	I trust that if I do good work, I will be considered for a promotion	73%

SOURCE: BEST COMPANIES GROUP PUBLICATION REPORT FOR 2018 INVESTMENTNEWS BEST PLACES TO WORK FOR FINANCIAL ADVISERS



PETERSEN HASTINGS


INVESTMENT

MANAGEMENT

Employees 18 | Firm Type RIA | CEO Jeffrey Petersen | Location Kennewick, WA | Primary Custodian TD Ameritrade

Employees at Petersen Hastings Investment Management receive generous personal time off: three to six weeks each year in addition to 12 paid holidays. The company also offers flexible work schedules, education opportunities and monthly team-building activities. All employees are eligible for quarterly and semi-annual incentive bonuses. The firm actively supports the Rotary Club, Habitat for Humanity and Junior Achievement, which helps kids from kindergarten through 12th grade develop financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills.

PERKS

generous paid time off; flexible schedules; charitable matching funds; monthly team-building activities



CJM WEALTH

ADVISERS

Employees 19 | Firm Type RIA | CEO David D. Greene | Location Fairfax, VA | Primary Custodian Pershing Advisor Solutions

CJM Wealth Advisers provides alternate Fridays off in the summer, a flexible work schedule and monthly pizza and birthday cake. In addition, CJM holds team-building events such as luncheons, pot-luck meals and volunteer opportunities throughout the year. The staff cites the annual profit-sharing bonus and year-end gift (such as a TV, iPad or cash) among their favorite benefits.

PERKS

fully funded health savings accounts; telecommuting; flexible schedules; year-end gifts; alternate summer Fridays off

BEST PLACES TO WORK FOR FINANCIAL ADVISERS | 15-29 EMPLOYEES



WEST FINANCIAL SERVICES INC.

Employees 25 | Firm Type RIA | President Glen J. Buco | Location McLean, VA | Primary Custodian Fidelity (Institutional Wealth Services)

All employees at West Financial Services Inc. are eligible for a discretionary bonus, and administrative staff are eligible for a profit-margin bonus. The company boasts excellent compensation and benefits, flexible work schedules, telecommuting, casual Fridays and monthly birthday parties. West Financial supports the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, Meals for Young Minds and Rebuilding Together, which makes repairs to homes for the needy.



telecommuting; flexible schedules; monthly birthday parties; casual Fridays



HALBERT HARGROVE GLOBAL ADVISORS

Employees 29 | Firm Type RIA | CEO Russell T. Hill | Location Long Beach, CA | Primary Custodian Fidelity (Institutional Wealth Services)

Employees of Halbert Hargrove Global Advisors receive cash bonuses for every new target client signed. HHGA also pays merit bonuses quarterly and has an incentive equity program. Employees have unlimited vacation time, flextime and Friday hours of 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. with breakfast provided. Team-building events include a Marine Mud Run. A top community service initiative is providing lunch quarterly to the local Ronald McDonald House and sponsoring its annual fundraising walk.



telecommuting; flexible schedules; unlimited vacation time; short Fridays with breakfast; team-building events; charitable-giving match



LASSUS WHERLEY

Employees 21 | Firm Type RIA | CEO Clare E. Wherley | Location New Providence, NJ | Primary Custodian Schwab Advisor Services

The staff at Lassus Wherley knows how to have fun. Its Fun Committee organizes company-paid events throughout the year, such as miniature golf, ice cream Fridays in the summer, a potluck Thanksgiving lunch in the office and an afternoon on a pontoon boat in the New Jersey Meadowlands. Employees may bring their families to two barbecues and a holiday party. All employees are eligible for the company bonus (based on total revenue), a client service bonus and a new-client award. The company sponsors the New Providence, N.J., Independence Day celebration and a children's soccer team, among other good causes, and adopts two local families during the holidays.



telecommuting; flexible schedules; company-paid events throughout the year; two company BBQs; holiday party at a local hotel; casual Fridays; ice cream Fridays in the summer



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BEST PLACES TO WORK FOR FINANCIAL ADVISERS | 15-29 EMPLOYEES



PELL WEALTH PARTNERS

Employees 15 | Firm Type B-D | CEO Geri Pell
Location Rye Brook, NY | Primary Custodian Ameri-
prise Financial | Broker-Dealer Ameriprise Financial

Pell Wealth Partners recognizes the importance of family, so besides a flexible work schedule and telecommuting, it gives employees with children in elementary or middle school the morning off on the first day of school. Pell also recognizes loyalty by giving employees a \$100 gift card on every anniversary. The staff volunteers three times a year to pack food at the Westchester Food Bank and holds an annual Shredding and E-Waste Recycling Day that is open to the entire community, among other charitable activities.

PERKS



telecommuting; flexible schedules; anniversary gifts; morning off on first day of school for parents



BARTHOLOMEW & COMPANY INC.

Employees 24 | Firm Type B-D | President Thomas J. Bartholomew | Location Worcester, MA
Primary Custodian National Financial Services
Broker-Dealer Commonwealth Financial Network

Bartholomew & Co. Inc. has a generous vacation policy and gives a holiday bonus to all employees, including administrative staff. It also provides paid time off for employees to volunteer at the Worcester County Food Bank several times a year during normal business hours. A rotating employee committee selects other charities in the community to receive annual donations from a company-established fund.

PERKS



generous vacation; holiday bonus; paid time off to volunteer; annual employee recognition event; casual Fridays

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