

ADVERTISEMENT

THE 2011 BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON.

(hint: it just might be the coffee.)



And we'd like to raise a cup in their honor. Because last year, 1 in 4 of these companies chose our Mars Drinks Single Serve System, which offers ALTERRA COFFEE ROASTERS™ coffees, THE BRIGHT TEA CO.™ teas and DOVE® HOT CHOCOLATE, all delivered through the FLAVIA® brewer. We're glad to know that our office-only coffee service is helping to keep their employees engaged, productive, happy and connected.

Of course, we're not saying that our coffee alone makes the working experience an extraordinary one. But we'd like to think it plays a part. And we're proud to find ourselves in such distinguished company.

MARS

drinks



Scan for
FREE TRIAL

©/™/© Mars, Incorporated 2011. All Rights Reserved.



Smart Ways to Perk Up Your Staff

Alston & Bird keeps its law staff happy and motivated by offering incentives—everything from on-site massages to cappuccinos.

QUIETLY, EVEN IN the midst of economic uncertainty, there is a growing belief among management experts that happy employees are a company's most potent competitive advantage. It makes sense: If employees believe you care about them and what makes them

happy, aren't they more likely to care about your customers?

Richard Hays, managing partner of Alston & Bird, certainly thinks so. The law firm—one of the largest in Atlanta—has a history dating back more than a century and employs nearly 1,000 attorneys across nine offices in the U.S. and one in Brussels. For the past 12 years it has been named to *Fortune's* list of the 100 Best Companies to Work For, a first among law firms.

Over the past several years, especially in the aftermath of the economic downturn in 2008 and 2009, Hays says, it became clear to him that one of the best ways to boost employee morale was through better communication. "People were nervous and wanted to know what was going on in the firm and whether there were going

Alston & Bird employees percolate ideas in the break room.

to be changes," he recalls.

Though Hays has always believed that Alston & Bird does a good job keeping the lines of communication open with staffers, he redoubled the firm's efforts. "We started town hall meetings and initiated an online suggestion box," he says, where employees could comment (or vent) about anything on their minds. Hays also began spending more time in the firm's offices outside Atlanta, visiting with attorneys and other employees to hear their concerns. "We know that employees do their best work and are more secure when they don't have to wonder what's going on in the firm," he says.

But keeping employees happy isn't just a matter of talking to them more. Hays says it's important to listen better as well. "Working in a law firm can be stressful and involves a lot of hours," he acknowledges. When employees need a break to recharge or de-stress, there are chair massages available and their favorite coffee on every floor. For instance, the MARS Drinks single-serve system offers

Alterra coffees, The Bright Tea Co. teas, Dove hot chocolate, and cappuccinos delivered through Flavia brewers, allowing Alston & Bird staffers to go to the break room to brew their favorite coffee and tea however and whenever they want. It is an activity that helps attorneys and office workers connect with one another, fostering camaraderie and friendly conversation. It's a refreshing place where employees can meet and share ideas in a casual setting.

Furthermore, Hays notes, when employees asked for ways to better balance work and home, the firm stepped up with on-site dining, on-site child care, and financial experts who visit once a quarter to discuss saving for college or retirement. The goal: to reinforce the fact that the firm wants to help the staff attain career goals without sacrificing their personal goals.

"I truly believe that these details convey a message to employees that you care," Hays says. "It also instills a sense of pride among workers that the firm is genuine. It's one thing to say you care about what makes employees happy, but it's something else entirely when you back it up with actions." ●



Boost Employee Loyalty

Looking to reduce turnover and keep productivity humming at the office? Here are some strategies that can help.

- 1. Have fun together.** Aside from employee basketball and baseball teams, Hays says, Alston & Bird staffers have come together to build more than a dozen Habitat for Humanity houses. That sort of teamwork serves to reinforce how well employees deal with one another, Hays says.
- 2. Don't overlook the details.** Little things mean a lot. Respecting individual tastes is key. Offering stress-busters like MARS Drinks single-service system's coffees and teas in the office break room, and chair massages 24/7, conveys to workers that you care, says Hays. Having a meeting place to connect is also appreciated.
- 3. Acknowledge that workers have a life outside the office.** Even the most dedicated employees can wilt under the strain of work. Hays says Alston & Bird offers perks that make life easier, such as a child care center located at company headquarters and restaurant-quality dining options.

