

Firm Fun:

Innovative ways to create team spirit



The rest of the world may think of accountants as sober, serious number-crunchers, but it turns out that they've got a pretty serious fun side – or at least Accounting Today's Best Firms to Work For do.

As part of its annual Best Firms ranking, now in its tenth year, Accounting Today gathers data on a wide range of firm policies and practices – including what they do to build team spirit and camaraderie while keeping things fun around the office.

Here, culled from a decade of research with Accounting Today's Best Firms to Work For, are five important tips to remember when planning fun activities for your firm – as well as a selection of the seven most common fun things the Best Firms do.

1. **KNOW WHAT YOUR PEOPLE THINK IS FUN – AND GIVE THEM SOME SAY.**

If your managing partner wants to take everyone to his favorite Verdi opera, but your staff is more into line dancing, no one is going to enjoy that outing. One great way to find out what your staff want to do for the annual outing or where they want to eat for the post-tax season celebration is to, you know, ask them. When they feel involved in the choice, they'll be more involved in the activity.

2. **'FUN COMMITTEE' IS NOT AN OXYMORON.**

A large number of the Best Firms to Work For rely on small teams of volunteers to come up with ideas for firm events, to hold birthday parties, showers and work anniversary celebrations for staff members, and to otherwise

find ways to keep things fun. Often they'll take the committee's ideas and let staff vote on them.

3. **GIVE THEM A PLACE TO DESTRESS.**

One thing almost everyone agrees is fun is not doing your work while you're actually at work – which may explain the prevalence of break rooms and comfortable places to relax at Best Firms. Comfortable chairs and a degree of privacy are a must; TVs, table games and, on rare occasions, beer on taps are pluses.

4. **AIM TO CREATE TRADITIONS.**

Any firm can hold an annual barbecue, but only yours can include a long-standing rivalry between your Tax and Audit Departments over who gets to hold the firm's Red Solo Cup of Champions for the next year. Traditions, whether they're silly or serious, are a great way to bring staff together and bind them to the firm, and the Best Firms go out of their way to build and maintain them over time.

5. **AIM TO CREATE MEMORIES.**

While traditions rely on repetition to make them special, memories rely on the uniqueness of the experience. Golf outings, however fun, are common – but a golf outing with a PGA pro stands out, as does one where everyone plays with gardening tools instead of clubs.

The most common fun activities reported by the Best Firms to Work For:

- ✓ Free food of any kind (often in the form of "random" or "surprise" lunches, or ice cream socials)
- ✓ Ugly sweater contests (variations include socks and ties)
- ✓ Table games (ping pong, pool, and foosball, most commonly)
- ✓ On-site miniature golf (temporary courses that can be set up around the office)
- ✓ Gambling (office pools on everything under the sun – with all proceeds reported to the IRS, of course)
- ✓ Puppies (partnering with a local animal shelter to bring a sampling of adoptables)
- ✓ "Pie a partner" events (exactly what you hope it is)