



Not Just for Law Firms

Law firms are not the only organizations striving to make themselves extraordinary places to work. Omega Legal Systems is among the vendors serving the legal community that are also seizing the opportunity to make their workplaces great.

SHORTCUT

Legal vendor Omega Legal Systems Inc. is also considered an extraordinary place to work, having recently been named a winner of an Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility.

While this third annual “Special Issue” of *Legal Management* focuses on what it takes for law firms to make themselves extraordinary places to work, it’s worth noting that many organizations are striving for the same goal – including vendors to the legal community. If law offices can be considered outstanding places at which to work every day, why not the businesses who provide goods and services to them?

Phoenix, Arizona-based Omega Legal Systems Inc. exemplifies this trend, having recently been named a winner of an Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility, an annual competition conducted through “When Work Works,” a project of the Families and Work Institute. These national, locally based awards recognize exemplary employers of all types and sizes for their innovative workplace effectiveness and flexibility programs and practices.

Using a rigorous scoring methodology that includes employees’ views as well as employer practices, the Alfred P. Sloan Awards honor organizations and worksites that are using workplace flexibility as a strategy to increase workplace effectiveness and yield positive business results, and

to help employees succeed at work and at home. Past winners have included Accenture, Dun & Bradstreet, Hewlett-Packard, Intel, KPMG, and Texas Instruments.

“It’s an honor to be recognized for our company’s innovative workplace,” said Don Gall, Omega’s President and Founder. “But the true reward is in knowing our employees genuinely enjoy working at Omega and how that is reflected in their devotion to our customers.”

AREAS OF EVALUATION

Each company that enters the Alfred P. Sloan Awards is evaluated in 13 areas that define how and when work gets done and how careers are organized. They are:

1. Having traditional “flextime” (setting daily hours within a range)
2. Having daily flextime
3. Being allowed to take time off during the workday to address family matters
4. Being able to take a few days off to care for a sick child without losing pay, having to use vacation days, or make up an excuse for absence
5. Being able to work some regular hours at home

A flexible workplace requires a real team effort, with shared goals and a shared dedication to serving the customer. This attitude extends to how our employees view our customers as part of the Omega family.

6. Being able to take breaks when one wants to do so
7. Having a work shift that is desirable
8. Having complete or a lot of control over one's work schedule
9. Being able to work part time (if currently full time) or full time (if currently part time) in one's current position
10. Being able to work a compressed work week
11. Being able to work part-year in one's current position
12. Seldom being required to work paid or unpaid overtime with little or no notice
13. Believing that one can use flexible work arrangements without jeopardizing job advancement

A NEW STANDARD

Based on 10 years of research revealing the benefits of workplace flexibility for employers and employees alike, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's Workplace Flexibility Initiative is a collaborative effort designed to make such flexibility the U.S. standard. This research, funded by IBM, shows that employees with workplace flexibility are more likely to be satisfied with and engaged in their jobs, committed to helping their companies succeed, and plan to remain with their employers. Nevertheless, while studies have shown that flexible work schedules improve employee morale and productivity, only about 28 percent of full-time and salaried workers in the United States have flexible work schedules, according to a 2004 report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Linda Brower, Vice President of Administration at Omega, cites Omega's emphasis on workplace flexibility as a key component of the company's recruitment and retention success. "It's a definite advantage in helping us to recruit the best people available and also in keeping them," she said, noting that the average Omega employee has worked there for more than nine years.

"We began this process over 10 years ago starting with our Software Development team," Brower

explained. "We then added our tech writers and quality assurance people to the voluntary program. Eventually, we added our Customer Support and Programming departments as the program continued to show success both in employee job satisfaction and in overall job performance."

UNIQUE SKILLS AND APPROACHES

Managing people in a flexible workplace requires a unique skill set and mental approach. Maintaining coverage with ever-changing schedules requires dedication, coordination, and communication. At Omega, online group calendars and first-class technology and infrastructure ensure 24/7 secure access to the system for all employees, whether they're at work or working from home. The management focus is on getting the work done, not on where the work is being done.

Stress reduction is a major benefit of a flexible work schedule, which could feature condensed work weeks (40 hours in four 10-hour days), telecommuting (working from home part or full time), job sharing (two employees share the same job on alternating days or weeks), or alternative work schedules (a specific daily schedule, just not the typical 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Going to work an hour earlier so you can leave the office earlier to attend a child's soccer game or entertain guests from out of town facilitates the work/life balance that employees seek. With less stress come more job satisfaction and an overall higher quality of work output.

"I know our customers can see the benefits of our program in the way they are treated by our employees," Gall said. "A flexible workplace requires a real team effort, with shared goals and a shared dedication to serving the customer. This attitude extends to how our employees view our customers as part of the Omega family. It's a major factor in why we've been able to maintain a 96 percent client retention rate over the past 30 years."

Learn more about Omega by calling (800) 356-1339 or visiting www.omegalegal.com.