



# Clifton Gunderson People Add Up to Firm Success

By Tom Schuman

**C**lifton Gunderson is a big player nationally in the accounting and tax consulting worlds. It's the little things, however, that have the 71 employees in the Indianapolis office feeling they belong among the top workplaces.

Leslie Boyd, a manager in the tax area, notes the flexibility offered in helping her pursue her master's degree. "The company seems to really take an active interest in helping you grow and develop, and making sure that whatever goals you have as a professional – that they can help you to meet them."

Alison Cameron, a senior associate in commercial assurance, enjoyed an adjusted work arrangement while studying for the CPA exam. She was also quite comfortable in approaching management with ideas to enhance the firm's wellness initiative. She confides, "I think ultimately it boils down to enjoying the people that you work with. I have great co-workers, great relationships."

The partner in charge of the Indianapolis office, Ed Marcum, cites Boyd as "very self-motivated" and on a fast track in accepting more responsibilities. Others, he says, prioritize flexible arrangements, whether that be reduced hours or only working certain days of the week.

"More often than not, the flexible work arrangement is just to make sure that people feel comfortable moving work around. It's all embraced, part of our culture. If somebody is walking out the door at 2 o'clock, no one is looking at them and saying 'where are they going?' Everyone knows they are professional and they're getting things done."

The Indianapolis office earned a national workplace flexibility award in 2009. There are plenty of other initiatives that help ensure productivity – and the individual growth that is so important:

- CG University offers what John Sauder, managing partner of the Indiana-Ohio Client Service

**2009**      **2010**      **2011**

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**Tom Chrzanowski, left, Nicholas Paluch and their Clifton Gunderson colleagues enjoy the opportunity to work closely with various team members – both in Indianapolis and in other company offices.**

Center, calls a “very structured program for the first four years of an individual’s career.” The GROW (standing for groundwork, results, opportunities and wisdom) effort then becomes more personal based on the employee’s work area and interests.

Bryan Jarvis, a senior associate in the assurance area, believes GROW is a ‘very productive way to obtain that education and to get a chance to collaborate with people in other offices within the firm.’ Overall, Jarvis confirms that he and all others are held accountable for the work they do. “I have a very vested interest in producing a quality product, both for management and the client.”

- A focus on people that begins locally with Megan Nail, senior manager for Priority One Human Resources. Krista McMasters, now CEO of the company, started the Priority One initiative. “We’re really in a people business,” attests Sauder, who

has been with Clifton Gunderson for 28 years but just came to Indianapolis in June 2010. “Our staff probably interacts as much or more with our clients than the partners do. We need to make sure they’re prepared, they’re trained, but also that they present a positive image to the client.”

- A HOT (hands-on transactional) system that helps employees manage day-to-day workflow as well as long-term priorities. The key is the relationships between staff and managers.
- A substantial rewards process that recognizes firm, office and individual success, along with a Hot Spot program. It provides gift certificates, time off and other benefits for a job well done – with all in the office able to initiate the recognition.

Clifton Gunderson, founded in 1960, is continuing its 50th anniversary celebration throughout this year. The Indianapolis office is in its 25th year of existence. The Best Places to Work honor only adds to the special time. Nail describes a project in which photos of all individuals were formed into a composite of the company logo – “helping show everyone here is an individual, but we’re working together toward the same goals.”

Marcum, with 33 years of experience in the industry, was attracted to Clifton Gunderson five years ago because of the culture. “We want people to be reminded that’s what we’re striving for. I don’t see it as an achievement that ‘we made it’; you want to always be a best place to work. You can hold us to a bar now that we don’t ever want to fall from.”

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