

Best Places to Work 2007: Kirkpatrick Phillips & Miller CPAs

At Kirkpatrick, Phillips & Miller CPAs, management's goal is offering flexibility and fun for the company's 66 employees.

"We're at the perfect size," said manager Brooke Liggett, who has been with the firm for about five years and characterizes the environment as professional, but not stuffy.

"I know everyone here, whether they're married, if they have children, how many, and probably their kids' names," she said. "We're big enough that we have our own expertise, but you'll never run into anyone in the hallway that you don't know."

KPM also tries to promote a family atmosphere and strong teamwork through activities outside the office, such as intramural softball.

Making employees happy, though, is about more than just having fun, and KPM backs up the fun atmosphere with a solid benefits package.

Employees get more than two weeks of paid vacation upon joining the company, they have no waiting period to join the company's 401(k) plan, and bonuses averaging more than \$1,000 are available to all employees on top of average annual salary increases of 7 percent to 9 percent.

According to Marketing Director Vickie Hicks, KPM's benefits are designed to attract and retain quality employees in an accounting market where demand vastly outstrips supply.

"Locally, the accounting firms are really pushing to hire," Hicks said. "To keep ... our quality employees is an issue, so we try to keep them happy."

The efforts appealed to certified public accountant Amy Jackson, who has worked full time for KPM for about a year after joining as an intern in 2005.

"Talking to the management, I felt they were the kind of people I wanted to work with," Jackson said.

Employees have the option to participate in flextime scheduling, telecommuting and job sharing. "Our policies related to flexibility evolved out of wanting to keep the great employees that we have as they reach the age where they start having children and building families," Hicks said.

Liggett, a mother of two, said the company's encouraging attitude toward families has helped her.

"Rarely do I miss something during the day that my children do," Liggett said. "I'm an early-morning person, so I'll come in early and leave early. We know everyone has family, and we want to make sure they have a good work-life balance."

Only a half-dozen employees left the firm in 2006, and most of those departures were due to career changes or employees moving out of the area.

"Our 13 managers want to keep people on board," Hicks says. "The low turnover we have is testimony to that."