

Legal Intelligencer Blog

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Best Firms to Work for Women List Released

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Of the Legal Staff

With all eyes on cost-saving possibilities, *Working Mother* magazine and Flex-Time Lawyers are advocating now as the time to push through work-life balance initiatives as a way to retain talent and save through the use of part-time workers.

The groups are making this push through their annual list of the 50 Best Law Firms for Women.

Pennsylvania firms popped up only twice on the list -- not as much as in years past. Possibly to their credit, firms have to apply to be considered.

Drinker Biddle & Reath has made its first appearance on the alphabetized list that started in 2007. The magazine said it liked the firm's definition of flex-time as "the ability to work wherever, whenever, for whatever reason" because it opens up the door for anyone to take advantage of the program. Drinker Biddle also appointed a "part-time czar" to oversee the flex-time program and act as a proponent for reduced-hours lawyers.

According to 2008 numbers provided to the magazine, women make up 14 percent of Drinker Biddle's equity partners, 39 percent of its non-equity partners, 62 percent of its counsel and 47 percent of its associate ranks. The firm had 9 percent of its lawyer ranks working reduced hours in 2008.

Fox Rothschild was the other Pennsylvania-based firm to make the list, reappearing for the second time in a row. The firm launched a women's initiative in 2008 to advance the skills, professional reputation and business-generating efforts of its female lawyers. The program is overseen by three lawyers and has its own budget.

According to 2008 numbers provided to the magazine, women make up 17 percent of Fox Rothschild's equity partners, 17 percent of its non-equity partners, 29 percent of its counsel and 48 percent of its associate ranks. The firm had 8 percent of its lawyer ranks working reduced hours in 2008.

"To be honored for the second year in a row is especially meaningful to us, particularly in light of the economic climate that has pervaded the legal industry during this past year," Jean A. Durling, chief talent officer, said in a statement. "That we have been successful in sustaining our commitment to flexible policies that enable our attorneys to spend time with their families while nurturing their careers is a testament to the strategy that Fox has maintained for years in connection with firm growth and attorney professional development."

Other firms with ties to the area that made the list were Gibbons, Littler Mendelson and McGuire Woods. Gibbons is the only of the local firms to have made the list all three years.

“We are proud of our 2009 Best Law Firms for Women because they understand that when the market improves, the war for talent will return and they will be better positioned to recruit and retain the best and brightest,” Deborah Epstein Henry, founder and president of Flex-Time Lawyers, said in a statement. “Big salaries and bonuses will no longer be the pivotal means for firms to draw the best talent, and culture and environment will become more important ways for firms to distinguish themselves.”

According to the survey results, the 50 firms employ more reduced-hours attorneys than their national counterparts – 8 percent and 5 percent, respectively. They also employ more female equity partners than do firms nationally – 20 percent and 16 percent, respectively.