

MICRO BUSINESS

Young + Wright Architectural

BY JANE SCHMITT

Young & Wright Architectural is all about hard-working people delivering quality services that result in high-performance buildings.

Partners Jerry Young and Shawn Wright boldly state their philosophy on the company Web site, and they're happy to tell you about it in person, too; just ask.

"We have a culture here that encourages high productivity, and we're producing a lot because of the fact that our people are happy," Young says. "It's relaxed; it's fun. Our office is laid out without any cubicles or dividing partitions, so it's one big, open workspace where everybody is on the same team."

That team is a diverse group of 14 employees in Suite 612 of the Larkin at Exchange Building. Their hard work earned Young & Wright Architectural the No. 4 spot last year on Business First's Fast Track 50 list, which recognizes impressive growth rates for both sales and employment.

"Everybody is involved in all the decisions," Young says. "People feel that their opinions are valued and respected."

It's true, according to the Best Places to Work survey.

"The partners at Young & Wright have made the effort to ensure that we all feel more like a family, rather than the typical partner/employee/co-worker relationship. ... The success of the team is based on the success of the individual and this is a theory I think we all understand very well," one worker wrote.

Said another: "I love this place."

That's music to the ears of Young, who co-founded the company with Wright in 2003 and shared a vision of a unique corporate culture.

"We started working together to create an atmosphere where everybody's opinion mattered," he says. "We want people with great attitudes and who are willing to work. That makes it nicer for everybody because you don't have anybody that's pulling the company down."

The all-work-and-no-play concept doesn't fly here, however. The partners like to let their hair down, and they encourage their employees to do the same. They sponsor group excursions to Buffalo Sabres and Bisons games and they tailgate at Buffalo Bills games. They rented a bowling alley and invited workers' spouses to join the fun.



Jerry Young of Young + Wright, along with partner Shawn Wright, are to be commended, according to one employee respondent, for ensuring that "we all feel more like a family rather than the typical partner/employee/co-worker relationship."

Management even planned a weekend getaway to the Finger Lakes, where everyone took their mind off work long enough to enjoy swimming and boating.

The firm's generous benefits package includes contributions to employee 401(k) plans, Young says. As an extra treat, he and Wright regularly bring a spring for lunch to be brought in to the team.

"We aren't going to compete financially with

some of the very large firms," Young says. "Our employees would probably say they're not paid as well as some of their friends. The difference is that they are happy and they are in the same job while their friends have left and moved or are unhappy in their jobs. Part of being a Best Places to Work is that you are happy and willing to stay here."

Jane Schmitt is an Amherst freelance writer.