



Not Your Typical Law Firm

Ridenour, Hienton & Lewis

By Alison Stanton

Walking into Ridenour, Hienton & Lewis for the first time, a visitor might not immediately notice anything different.

A quick glance around the multi-service law firm would reveal attorneys and staff members hard at work helping clients in person and over the phone in their Southwestern art gallery appointed space, with panoramic views from their 33rd floor offices.

But after spending just a few more minutes at the law office, the visitor would start to see what sets Ridenour, Hienton & Lewis apart from many other firms in not just the Phoenix area, but the entire state.

In one office, a partner is listening intently to ideas an associate has about a current case, taking notes on what he is saying and genuinely appreciating the input.

Down the hall, a young child is busy at a table contentedly coloring pictures while her mom, one of the legal assistants at the firm, works nearby at her desk.

In the hallway, an associate and a paralegal can be heard chatting about an upcoming charity event they are both participating in that weekend along with several other members of the firm.

And in a back office, a legal assistant is taking a break from her work to bottle feed a young puppy being fostered by a paralegal who is a Director and volunteer for Lucky Paws, a local animal rescue group.

These are just several examples of what makes Ridenour, Hienton & Lewis a different kind of law firm. And these snapshots



Ridenour, Hienton & Lewis supports various charities and community organizations including Lucky Paws, a local animal rescue group.

did not just happen by chance; they are all part of Bill Ridenour's, Jim Hienton's and Tami Lewis' vision of creating a law firm that is positive, supportive, comfortable and encouraging for everyone—employees and clients alike.

"Over the years, Bill, Tami and myself have talked about what makes a difference in a law firm, and for us it came down to the collegial atmosphere—all of us respecting each other, everyone working to the same level, and having a team approach," Hienton says.

"One of the things we strive for here is to have that kind of culture, and we hope that when employees get off the elevator in the morning they feel like they want to come to work rather than they have to. We believe that by being part of a cohesive group it will encourage us to do the best we can."

From offering workshops on "Teamwork" and "Leadership" that are conducted by an organizational psychologist, to encouraging employees to give back to the community by being involved in local charities, Hienton says he, Ridenour and Lewis all truly understand that in order to perform to their highest potential, everyone must feel appreciated and valued.

"For us, it's about more than just coming to work and billing hours," Hienton says. "People here can trust one another, and we can help each other. Partners, associates, and other members of the staff—everybody is looking at the same vision."

Margo Martin, a legal assistant at the firm, says she appreciates the atmosphere at the office, which she adds is different from anything else she's ever experienced in a law firm.

"I really enjoy working at the law firm—it's such a nice environment," she says.

"It's very family friendly, and by this, I'm speaking not only in terms of how they offer flex time, family leave, and the opportunity to work from home at times, but also everyone here is like one big happy family. Because of the culture and the positive atmosphere at this law firm, we work in an environment that allows us to take pride in our work and to focus all of our energy on the goal of turning out the most excellent work product possible."

As an example, Martin says that if someone has issues with childcare, rather than have to miss a day of work, the employee can bring the child into the firm for the day.

"We can just set things up for the child, and he or she can color, or help make copies, or sort mail and everybody feels comfortable and everybody works to help each other," she says.

Martin observes that once people begin working at Ridenour, Hienton & Lewis, they don't want to ever leave.



Bill Ridenour during an Administrative Professional's Day ice cream social. Partners dished up a buffet breakfast in the morning and served as "soda jerks" in the afternoon.

"And if they do ever leave, then they want to come right back - as I did," she quips.

Damien Meyer, an associate with the firm, agrees with Martin that he is experiencing a "one hundred percent difference" in the firm's values and culture than the previous places he has worked.

Meyer says that he and the other associates appreciate the firm's commitment to develop more than their legal skills.

The firm leadership also focuses on each associate's business development.

Although he's witnessed how other firms talk about developing associates to be partners, Ridenour, Hienton & Lewis takes this concept to a higher level.

"Here if an associate aspires to be a leader and eventually a partner, it's more than lip service. Our firm leadership has made clear that the firm views each associate as a potential partner. The associates are encouraged to think as business owners, and to offer ideas to the partners on the future direction of the firm and how to improve an already great place to work. Not only is the associates' input encouraged, it is valued," he says.

For Hienton, striving to offer such a supportive atmosphere will result in not only better employees, but more satisfied clients.

"This all goes back to the whole idea of 'I want to be here today, and this is where I want to work,'" he says. "An atmosphere such as this will allow everyone to do better legal work, and the clients will see it too."

At a Glance

Firm Culture:

Since its inception 30 years ago, Ridenour, Hienton & Lewis has been determined to shape a law firm with a different character; to provide a professional, albeit informal environment for our clients, attorneys and staff. Our Firm is dedicated to meeting the needs of its clients through teamwork and mutual support. We enjoy the personal and professional satisfaction that thrives in our unique atmosphere. This atmosphere, along with high-quality, timely legal services, has helped us establish many valued, long-term relationships with our clients.

Our Firm is distinguished by its ability to combine the resources and experience of a larger firm with the flexibility and attentiveness of a small one. We recognize the importance of balance in our lives and strive to achieve a healthy and fulfilling relationship between our professional and personal commitments. Our attorneys serve as counselors, strategists and advocates assisting clients in all aspects of their business or personal legal needs.

Number of Attorneys:

29

Focus of the Firm:

Ridenour, Hienton & Lewis is multi-service law firm that serves its clients in the following areas: banking, commercial finance and real estate finance; bankruptcy; business services; commercial litigation; construction litigation; criminal law; environmental law; estate planning; family law; federal, state and local taxation; government operations and affairs; labor and employment law; land use and entitlement; legislative and government affairs; mergers and acquisitions; municipal liability; personal injury, medical malpractice and wrongful death; public utility regulation; real estate; and securities and corporate finance.

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