
News

IN THEIR WORDS

Published: 5/15/2009

This month we continue our series looking at Young Professionals Choice Award finalist companies. Young professionals from each company will write about their place of employment and why they feel it is a top company to work at. Participating companies are Bailey Lauerman, Ervin & Smith Advertising and Public Relations, HDR, Inc., Lamp, Rynearson & Associates, Lutz & Company, PC, and Omaha Public Power District.

Lamp Rynearson & Associates - A Great Place to Work

By: Joe Zadina, senior project engineer

So, where do you work and what do you do? We've all heard those questions and we've all robotically answered those questions countless times. Well, I love to hear that question asked of me almost as much as I enjoy asking it of others. I am a civil engineer for Lamp, Rynearson & Associates. I have worked there for six years and our firm is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. As a civil engineer at Lamp Rynearson, I am allowed the opportunity to work on a variety of community-changing projects in and around the Omaha metro area. I specialize in athletic facility design and get to visit track meets, football games, tennis matches, and other sporting events (on the clock) to research one of our niche markets! When friends and acquaintances ask me if I like where I work, it's a simple and natural response. I may surprise them by saying that I actually **look forward** to coming to work every day (who am I kidding, almost every day.) "Why?" you might ask. "How is it different from those places where people don't enjoy working?" As I entered the door to Lamp Rynearson offices this morning, I tried to consider what makes my company such a great place to work.

I began at Lamp Rynearson as an engineering intern while earning a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from UNO. The firm provided an internship opportunity to me and many others who have considered a career in the civil engineering industry. In addition to providing a place to work, they also provided tuition assistance to me and my family [s1]as I pursued a Masters of Business Administration degree. I was surprised at how supportive and accommodating my manager and colleagues were at work. I was going to school full time and working 45-plus hours a week on the exciting and historic Aksarben Village redevelopment project. Their support was priceless!

At Lamp Rynearson, training and encouragement are offered to employees on a regular basis through scheduled mentoring and goal-setting sessions. They support their employees when there is a need to juggle the work-life balance. For instance, when home life demands that I leave early on a given day, I am able to make up the hours rather than using precious vacation time. I personally have an arrangement that allows me to leave work early in order to be home with my two sons on a particular day of the week so that my wife can go to work. I felt hesitant to ask for the "special permission," but confident that I would meet all necessary deadlines and complete all required work, so management felt no reason why this request could not be granted. Lamp Rynearson trusts that every employee understands their personal and professional responsibilities, and allows them the flexibility to prioritize each accordingly.

The firm encourages its young professionals to become involved with a variety of professional organizations within the engineering industry and also within the diverse Omaha community. Our association fees and time to attend events is paid for by the firm, which makes participation much easier. I have been getting more involved with the Greater Omaha Chamber's Young Professional Council as of late, and it's reassuring to hear my boss commend my participation.

Lamp Rynearson is very community-oriented, as is reflected in our purpose statement, which reads, "Leaving a Legacy of Enduring Improvements to our Communities." I lead the Lamp Rynearson Community Involvement Task Force, and truly enjoy organizing events and opportunities for Lamp Rynearson to give back to the Omaha community. Both employees and the firm do their part to serve the community. The firm provides financial and material resources for community volunteer efforts, as well as support and encouragement from the top down. Every employee is allowed to introduce and organize volunteer efforts that motivate and inspire them.

In October of 2007 Lamp Rynearson began its Early Career Professionals (ECP) cohort within the organization. The ECP initiative provides a channel for young professionals to implement change and direct the future of their firm and has provided young professionals the opportunity to ensure the success of the programs they have determined are important. Lamp Rynearson has embarked on a variety of open discussion formats where all opinions are welcomed and received with open minds, and regularly hosts "roundtable" discussions where topics are solicited companywide. The ECP initiative has also provided a direct route for all young professionals to become engaged in topics that are valuable and relevant to their personal and professional lives, and has resulted in the recently implemented "Trends Forum" as well as a "New Employee Orientation" programs. In addition, Lamp Rynearson hosts company-wide meetings on a quarterly basis, administers and reviews an annual employee survey, and has always promoted an open door policy for all positions throughout the organization.

So, why does a firm like Lamp Rynearson appeal to a young professional like me? It is a firm that truly supports its young professionals, as well as all employees. Young professionals are allowed to speak up and take ownership in the future direction

of our firm. What's not to like?

Young Professionals Take Center Stage at HDR

By: Mary Zgodna, media relations coordinator

With a slate of national officers, a special internal collaboration site and a brand new electronic newsletter, young professionals at HDR are taking center stage.

HDR's Young Professionals Group took root in the Tampa office in the spring of 2006 and began to blossom in 2007. With full support of HDR, the group has experienced tremendous growth in the last year. Of HDR's 7, 500 employees, 2,800 (about 37 percent) fall within the ages of 18 to 35. At this time, 37 groups are operating or being started across the company.

According to Katie Stoddard Duty, national chair of HDR's Young Professionals Group, who is based in HDR's Tampa office, the success of the program is a testament to HDR's values and culture.

Meagan Hall, an environmental scientist at HDR who helped start the Omaha Young Professionals Group, is former chair of HDR's Omaha group and now national vice-chair.

Hall was new to HDR and to Omaha when she attended a brainstorming session facilitated by Duty. Hall learned that Duty had started a group in the Tampa office to help bring a sense of community, which inspired Hall to start a group in Omaha. "As the corporate headquarters, I felt that we should be on the forefront of this movement."

Hall said, "HDR is committed to creating Young Professionals Groups in our offices nationwide. The goal is to build a legacy by coaching, mentoring and empowering colleagues, and to provide a voice for young professionals. We are building our lives and mapping out our careers with HDR. We just need a little guidance to get there."

She added that YPGs offer professional development, community involvement and networking and other opportunities to young professionals that they might not otherwise have.

About her work with the group, Hall said she is proud to be able to work with other energetic and ambitious HDR employees who are on the forefront of architecture and engineering technology.

As a young professional at HDR, Bill Deroin, an architect in the Omaha office, has a vision for HDR. "I'd like to see HDR more aggressively position itself as a design leader in the architectural community. With the impressive resources available to our company and the great projects we get, there's no reason HDR's work shouldn't be popping up on the cover of an *Architectural Record* now and then, while still focusing on our clients-for-life approach, ever expanding growth, and all the other things that make this company so successful."

HDR is an employee-owned architectural, engineering and consulting firm with more than 7, 400 professionals in more than 165 locations worldwide

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Young Professionals Council
1301 Harney St., Omaha, NE 68102
13206 Grover St., Omaha, NE 68144

E-mail address

The Young Professionals Council serves as a catalyst organization to retain and attract young professionals to the Greater Omaha area through engagement, opportunity and advocacy.