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**Best Places
TO WORK IN CT**

5+ YEARS HARTFORD BUSINESS JOURNAL 2006-2011
**Best Places
TO WORK IN CT**

RANKED #5
LARGE COMPANY CATEGORY

Engagement key at Robinson & Cole LLP

By Lisa D. Bell

Special to the Hartford Business Journal

“We value all of our employees,” says John Lynch, managing partner at Hartford law firm Robinson & Cole.

“We create a professional working environment where everyone’s role is important. There is respect and dignity. We are involved in a fast-paced business. People get excited by that.”

Excited enough to keep Robinson & Cole on the list of Connecticut’s Best Places to Work for six consecutive years.

For Lynch, keeping employees happy and focused is a role he takes personally. “I interact with a lot of areas,” he explains, “from partners to staff.” He wields overall responsibility for leadership of the firm, sets the tone, maintains the cultural norm, makes sure people understand their role, insures they feel valued, sets policy, and deals with the compensation and benefits structures.

Lynch joined Robinson & Cole straight from law school. He was looking for a large firm with a sophisticated practice. He liked that the people he saw were engaged and happy. Unlike some hierarchical firms, the partners seemed to know everyone in the office by name. He’s making sure it stays that way.

Benefits are one part of the strategy. Employees have discount memberships in the ‘Y’ across the street; a place to store bikes; accommodations made for working parents; a lactation room; an infirmary/rest room; the same health care benefits for all employees from partner to messenger, including domestic partners; a 401(k) plan with matching funds and a discounted rate on life insurance.

There are firm parties; a summer outing; ‘dress-down’ Fridays; a softball team;



Robinson & Cole participated in the National Wear Red Day on Feb. 4 to raise money to fight cardiovascular disease. Pictured are, from left, David DaCosta, Nancy Ransom, Ronald Domin, Alexis Newton, Elizabeth O’Meara, Jessie Gagnon, Jean Devine, Ginger Michaud, Karen Thompsom, Nancy Hayes, Frances Ciotto, Allan Jagos, Carla Jervey, Lisa Carson, Chris Stewart, Irina Sirovskaya, Rosetta Hinds, Kathy Holland.

events during the annual United Way drive; Friday afternoon café social with snacks and adult beverages; and week-long foods, entertainment, and fun activities to say thank you during Administrative Professionals Week.

Many take part in employee originated projects like bake sales to raise funds for various charities. When employees raised money for relief in Haiti, the firm matched the funds collected.

“During tough economic times like these, we still had a successful United Way,” boasts Margaret Bowen, human resources manager. “We collected over \$67,000.”

“We are all proud of how long we’ve been a part of the legal and civic community,” Lynch says, “especially in Hartford where our firm started. Our employees

are proud of our high profile. We do in our communities: we serve on boards; we do pro bono work; we support charities; and we participate in community service. It’s all intertwined. Our associates are pretty positive. Our history of involvement goes back a very long time. We’ve grown much larger, but kept the cultural traits that people value as we grow in size and scope.”

The employee-friendly approach stretched beyond Lynch.

“I have an open door policy,” says Bowen, “If it’s only to let people vent or review an idea before presenting it to a boss. From John Lynch down to the HR staff, we make ourselves available to everyone. People really enjoy the open atmosphere; to talk about what they like or do not like. We do our best to make it a better place to work.”