

# MILWAUKEE BUSINESS JOURNAL



## 2020 BEST PLACES TO WORK

SCORE: 96.73

### **Fox, O'Neill & Shannon SC**

622 N. Water St., Milwaukee

**Describe your company culture in five words.** "Professional, collaborative, multi-generational, honest, opportunities."

**Examples of how company creates opportunities for individual development and career growth at all levels.** "A major goal of Fox, O'Neill & Shannon is to foster the professional growth and development of its attorneys and their practices. The firm's encouragement of attorneys to practice in areas of interest to them resulted in one attorney's creation of a new trademark practice for the firm. Similar efforts are made to help attorneys, especially associates, develop tools to obtain and maintain clients. In addition, our staff has the opportunity to craft their own careers. For example, one employee began with the firm as a messenger in 1978, rose to legal secretary and then legal assistant, and now handles many administrative duties in addition to being responsible for multiple attorneys' work."

**What is your remote-work status as result of the pandemic?** “Fox, O’Neill & Shannon is proud of its immediate and continuing response to the pandemic. The firm has remained open throughout this period and has been able to provide continuous service for our clients. Our employees, of course, are professionally and personally vital to the firm, and their health and safety is paramount. Remote work status is common, especially for employees with school-aged children and those at a higher level of risk from the virus. FOS outfitted all staff and many attorneys with functional equipment at their homes, purchasing new types of equipment to support the new demands and capabilities of remote work. The firm currently employs a workable and comfortable mix of in-office and remote employee services.”

**What is your biggest work-from-home lesson learned?** “Communication is key in all industries, including the legal profession. Fox, O’Neill & Shannon knows there is no substitute for in-person professional and personal communications. Nonetheless, the firm has learned that, as appropriate, reasonable remote work can support and even add to the firm’s bottom line. In some ways, our employees’ connections have improved from the combination of in-office and remote work. Information sharing, including confirming that all appropriate information is communicated to attorneys and staff, has increased and improved. All in all, FOS learned that it has the needed flexibility to adapt to the next emergency event. FOS knows that it can provide quality legal services, keep its employees safe, invested and productive, while bolstering employee morale.”

**Three specific ways you ensure your employees know they are valued.** “We show them. In addition to providing competitive compensation and benefits, Fox, O’Neill & Shannon maintains an open-door policy. Any employee can go to any other employee at any reasonable time and ask a question, discuss a matter’s strategy, herald a victory, bemoan an improper result, or even critique a fellow employee. When any employee does a good job, the whole firm knows. FOS further recognizes employees’ value through celebrations of individual employees and the firm as a whole.

“We are flexible. Especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, our attorneys and staff are able to perform their duties well, because they know that their reasonable personal needs can be accommodated. Remote work, Zoom firm meetings, rigid hygiene protocol, and similar measures have allowed FOS to

provide continuous quality legal services throughout the pandemic, addressing our employees physical and psychological needs.

"We aim for longevity. FOS is proud of its low turnover rate, a rarity in these times. Several attorneys and staff members have been with the firm 30 years or more. FOS founder William Fox, for example, remains a productive member of the firm into his eighties and, we hope, for many more years. The key to this longevity? Ensuring that all employees know they, and their contributions, are valued."

**What concrete steps do your senior leaders take to create a great work environment for all employees?** "Fran Hughes, FOS's managing partner, does not believe in leaders and followers. He believes, as do all FOS employees, that the firm's success is a shared one, based on the common goal of providing the most professional legal services to clients efficiently and at a reasonable cost.

"To the extent any FOS employee is a 'senior leader,' that person is an individual, not an autocrat – a listener, not a ruler – and a 'we' person, not a 'me' didact. As a result, cases and transactions are discussed and determined collegially, with both beginning and experienced attorneys and staff. Less experienced employees are assigned mentors, for the success of the employee and the firm. Regular attorneys and staff meetings occur to keep everyone apprised of firm and client matters and issues, and to allow individuals to check-in with others, professionally and personally. Our senior leaders are authentic and trustworthy."

**How does being a Best Place to Work affect your bottom line?** "This is the second consecutive year Fox, O'Neill & Shannon has been so fortunate to have been named a Best Place to Work. This incredible opportunity has tangibly contributed to the firm's bottom line. Judging by the congratulatory emails and phone calls the firm received last year, it has bolstered existing client satisfaction. It has similarly increased the firm's visibility to potential clients. Being named a Best Place to Work has also provided public confirmation to the firm's staff that their hard work pays off. Most awards in the legal field focus on attorneys, not the hardworking staff. This recognition strengthens employee confidence and satisfaction, which ultimately adds to the firm's bottom line."

**How would you describe your company in 30 seconds to someone you meet at a cocktail party?** "FOS is a full-service law firm located in Milwaukee, WI, which has provided a full range of high-quality legal services for nearly 60 years. We diligently

counsel successive generations of businesses, individuals, and families. In addition to our well-known business practice, we provide expert legal advice and services in civil and criminal litigation, family law, and estate planning. Our close-knit members come from and understand individuals from all walks of life, which allows us to understand and empathize with our clients' needs and goals. Everyone at FOS works hard to fulfill the firm's core value, as reflected in our motto: our clients come first."

**What are the most popular perks you offer to employees?** "In addition to competitive compensation, Fox, O'Neill, & Shannon offers excellent benefits, including paid time off, profit sharing trust contributions, retirement accounts, medical reimbursements, educational subsidies, and paid parking.

"As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, FOS has worked with each employee to find the most efficient and flexible way to continue to provide legal services while keeping that employee safe. Employees have received specialized equipment to allow them to work remotely. Sanitizing, right-of-way, and contact protocols have been instituted in the office. Anxieties have been acknowledged, validated and addressed. To maintain the collegiality of pre-pandemic social gatherings, the firm periodically issues gift cards and other tangible perks.

"When it becomes safe to do so, FOS will resume its pre-COVID-19 celebrations of career achievements, family milestones, and 'just because' moments through cheerful happy hours, convivial parties, relaxing office lunches, the annual "Fox Open" golf outing, and festive holiday gatherings. Many of FOS's employees are anxiously awaiting the return of the famous 'FOS Shotski'."