

# Brown & Carlson: Fun Culture Helps Insurance Law Firm Grow.

When workers' compensation defense attorneys Jeff Carlson, Greg Broos and Doug Brown visit law schools to recruit students for clerk positions at their Brown & Carlson P. A. firm, they invariably find that specialty is not on the radar of aspiring young lawyers radars—which is understandable.

Work comp cases rarely make headlines and none of the countless TV series about the legal profession have ever featured an attorney who practices in that area.

But these lawyers make a strong case that theirs is the most welcoming option for ambitious young attorneys.

"If you start out at a large firm, you will likely spend the first couple of years in a law library doing research for the senior attorneys," Carlson tells them. "But, in work comp defense you are right away out taking depositions; interviewing witnesses; appearing in court, and representing clients at hearings. Moreover, you will work in an environment that is not nearly as cut-throat as in other practice areas. You will find most of those in the plaintiff bar to be congenial, although still aggressive in representation of their



**Jeff Carlson at his stand-up desk. Ergonomics and high-tech features are prominent at the newly remodeled offices.**

clients. This atmosphere often equates to a long, healthy career. Another benefit is that you will try your case before a judge who focuses on only this law, which means that if you have a compelling legal argument, you will often prevail."

Another attraction, Carlson adds, is that young attorneys will not only learn about litigation, but the business of their clients. "If you are curious—and most lawyers are very much so—then the intricacies of the businesses you work with becomes engrossing. You learn the ins and outs of a wide variety of companies. At Brown & Carlson, we work with Honeywell, 3M and General Mills-sized clients, as well as much smaller ones."

"Each day is different and interesting—even after 28 years of this practice," he says, adding with a grin: "it certainly beats stewing over contracts."

Those recruiting appeals clearly work. With 28 attorneys and growing, Brown & Carlson is now the largest work comp defense firm in the state. Attorney Mark Pryor handles the liability cases.

The firm recently moved into 25,000 square feet at 300 S. Highway 169, suite 500 in St. Louis Park, from a much smaller space in a building Carlson and Brown owned in Golden Valley. Because the entire fifth floor in the new MetroPoint building location was unfinished, the firm could order construction to its specific needs and preferences. For example, starting from scratch enabled the easy installation of the wiring that facilitated many high-tech features that are ideal for client conferences and educational seminars, as well as staff productivity.

There are two large conference rooms where computer monitors with twin 70-inch interactive screens make teleconferences vivid and simple to produce. There are custom private offices in which the attorneys work, with desks that elevate, enabling standing while



**One of two large conference rooms where computer monitors with twin 70-inch interactive screens make teleconferences vivid and simple to produce.**

while working, if desired. A wellness room provides privacy for nursing mothers or an employee nursing a migraine.

A break area the size of a typical cafeteria offers comfortable space for attorneys and staff to eat or enjoy a drink from the “Epic Beer Refrigerator” that stocks a variety of craft beers, which have special appeal to millennials. Soft drinks and other beverages are stocked as well. The firm has a monthly “Thirsty Third Thursday” event to encourage sampling, and to celebrate accomplishments. There are also monthly potluck dinners as well as a holiday party.

But the unquestioned social highlight is the annual bowling tournament, says Carlson. “Since no one is a serious bowler, it is a pressure-free event that promotes good-natured boasting about sporadic talent. The high game winner gets named on a Heisman-like trophy, which is displayed in our lobby. Usually one person will bowl over a 200, with Darren Glur winning this year after rolling seven consecutive strikes.”



**A Heisman-like trophy goes to the top bowler.**

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Those working conditions led to the firm being named this year as one of the Top 150 Workplaces in the state, according to a survey by the Minneapolis Star-Tribune. Carlson said “That is the most satisfying recognition our firm can receive.”

“A pleasant, enjoyable employee culture is paramount to us,” he noted. “At some places work is a four-letter word, but hopefully not here. We all work very hard, but allowing for regular celebration and team fun makes the office a place where our people want to come. The firm’s culture is an important consideration for our shareholders. Some in insurance may view work comp defense as a commodity. We, of course, disagree and believe we add unique value . . . which is likely the reason for our sustained growth. We hire competitive people who love their jobs—and it shows in the work they do for our clients.” ■

**Photos by Jana Noonan Photography**



**Now the biggest work comp law firm in the state, Brown & Carlson’s 28 attorneys have moved to much larger quarters.**