

Coulter & Justus, PC managing principal: 'We believe our balance, the way we treat each other, and our opportunities for advancement are why we have the amazing people in our firm'

Coulter & Justus, PC, is a certified public accounting (CPA) firm based in Knoxville, Tennessee. It originally operated as the Knoxville office of Ernst & Young until 1993, when partners Sam Coulter and Ron Justus acquired the local practice. It has since grown to be one of the largest CPA firms in East Tennessee, serving both individuals and businesses throughout the United States and Canada.

Working at Coulter & Justus is unique due to its emphasis on a people-focused culture that balances professional excellence with personal well-being. Extensive training, career advancement opportunities, and flexible work arrangements are provided as part of the firm's stewardship philosophy, creating an environment where employees feel cared for and supported.

"As an independent CPA firm, we have the ability to truly offer a different experience for those with an interest in the public accounting profession," said

Mike Parton, managing principal at Coulter & Justus, PC. "We see ourselves as stewards of a firm that was formed over 30 years ago, with the responsibility to ensure it continues to provide a great place to work, grow, and live life well."

The work atmosphere at Coulter & Justus is described as exceptionally people-oriented and professional, yet relaxed and supportive. Employees enjoy a respectful environment that values balancing personal and professional lives. The firm fosters strong, lasting friendships among staff, with a shared commitment to taking care of each other and delivering excellent client service.

Parton said that Coulter & Justus seeks new team members with strong educational backgrounds in accounting, finance, math, or related fields and a demonstrated commitment to high-quality work and personal and professional growth. The firm values individuals who understand the importance of



Take Me Out to the Ball Game! We enjoyed a great game as the Smokies pulled off a win over the Chattanooga Lookouts.



Coulter & Justus, PC, Building

balancing work and life, show deep respect for others and possess a drive for excellence.

“Basically, smart people who want to enjoy the people they work with and who are themselves a pleasure to work with,” Parton said.

Coulter & Justus offers unique advancement opportunities driven by policies that offer an early retirement option at age 55 and a mandatory retirement program at age 62 for owners.

This structure fosters career growth as the firm consistently prepares the next generation of leaders. With a history of developing from two owners and less than 20 employees to a thriving firm, current leaders actively mentor young professionals, creating a dynamic environment where team members can progress and secure leadership roles. This ongoing development ensures the firm’s continuity and offers robust career pathways for dedicated employees.

“More than 90% of our staff have reached senior level or have at least three years of experience,” Parton said. “With a firm average of over 14 years of experience, this expertise plays a large role in how we serve our clients and the growth they see in return.”

While Coulter & Justus offers typical employee benefits, it also provides sponsored sports and community activities. What truly sets the firm apart, however, is the extreme flexibility it offers employees in terms of work timing and location. Work-life balance at Coulter & Justus is highly prioritized and practiced from the top down. Despite the demanding nature of the CPA industry, the firm ensures that employees can balance their professional and personal lives

effectively. This balance is demonstrated daily and is a core aspect of the firm’s culture, contributing to its ability to attract and retain talented professionals.

“We believe our balance, the way we treat each other, and our opportunities for advancement are why we have the amazing people in our firm, who are ultimately what leads to this recognition,” Parton said.

Coulter & Justus is deeply engaged in community involvement, actively participating in various social and charitable initiatives. Employees volunteer extensively, supporting local nonprofits and participating in fundraisers. The firm’s commitment to giving back is exemplified by events such as volunteering at the Second Harvest Food Bank, reflecting their dedication to making a meaningful impact in the communities they serve.

In the accounting world, it’s clear that Coulter & Justus has all the right numbers in the right columns. The firm’s commitment to a people-focused culture, professional excellence, and work-life balance, coupled with a supportive and flexible work environment and opportunities for career advancement, ensures that employees feel valued and motivated. Beyond professional achievements, Coulter & Justus values community involvement, encouraging employees to actively participate in charitable initiatives that make a positive impact locally. This holistic approach solidifies Coulter & Justus’s reputation as a top employer in the CPA industry, where success is measured not just in numbers but in the meaningful relationships built both within the firm and throughout the community.



Any “bunny” want a biscuit? There’s no better way to end this busy week than with Chick fil A biscuits and holding adorable bunnies.



C&J employees spent the day volunteering at Second Harvest Food Bank as a way to celebrate our 30th Anniversary and give back to our community.

“Coulter & Justus is fortunate to have so many wonderful employees who make the firm a great place to work,” Parton said. “We believe it’s our people who make the biggest difference... for each other, for clients, and for the community.”

Coulter & Justus, PC, has previously received regional Top Workplaces awards for 2017-2023.