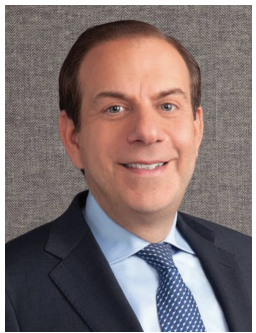


**COMPANY**  
**SPOTLIGHT**

**LMC Certified Public Accountants**

535 Fifth Avenue 12th Floor, New York, NY 10017  
212-967-2300 | [lmcohencpa.com](http://lmcohencpa.com)



**LEE M. COHEN**  
CPA, Managing Partner



**EPHRAIM FISHMAN**  
CPA, Partner



**SARAH FORSYTH**  
Director of HR

The name of the accounting firm— LMC Certified Public Accountants — lets you know right away that Lee M. Cohen is the man at the top. But Cohen himself has never forgotten that it wasn't always that way.

"I used to be an employee too," Cohen recalls. "And when I worked at other firms I learned what I didn't want. I said when I have my own firm, I'm going to try and make it the best place to be and build a family environment."

Cohen acknowledges that over the years some of his personal attention to those efforts waned, but the pandemic served as a reminder to him what he really wanted his company to stand for.

"I realized how important my employees are," he says, "and once we got back to the office I made

a conscious effort to do more in creating the best possible workplace.'

The company is one of Crain's Best Places To Work because of its efforts in three areas: LMC takes the idea of an open and communicative workplace seriously, the firm has made post-pandemic office life more fun, and it has taken crucial steps to enable employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

"We foster an environment that empowers the employees to collaborate organically with each other," says Sarah Forsyth, director of human resources. "We went from closed cubicles to an open workspace to allow people to communicate more easily."

Forsyth says new hires get assigned a "buddy," someone to train them on technical details of the work and

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help them learn about mundane things such as where to go for lunch. The firm has teams that do collaborative training, and it will send people to conferences to increase their knowledge. LMC sponsors a CPA review program in which staff members study for the CPA exam together.

"We get great feedback because people like having the support of a team," she says.

The company does surveys throughout the year about everything from training to new processes to office events.

"It's really important that we know what employees want and what's not working," Forsyth says, adding that employees voted recently in the surveys to return to having tax teams to create more collaboration and cohesion, so the firm implemented the change.

It's not just human resources that emphasizes communication. "The partners are always willing to listen," says Ephraim Fishman, an LMC partner.

Cohen himself holds a series of companywide meetings, "15 Minutes with LMC." The meetings may include discussions of new clients or spotlight an employee.

"It's very important that I stay in front of everybody," Cohen says, adding that he does this on a more intimate scale by having lunch with an employee once or twice a week. "It's very informal," he adds. "We order in and talk about the firm but also about their lives. It's another way to bring in some personal attention."

But all work and no play makes for a dull office life. and since the pandemic struck, LMC has spiced things up.

"We make a conscious effort," Forsyth says. "We want to create a balance of work and fun because it leads to a less stressful and more productive atmosphere. We offer a lot of office events, especially during the busy season, to break up the workday."

Fishman says the firm stepped up its game to get people to overcome their hesitancy about coming back to work after the lockdown. Beyond safety protocols, he says, "we added a level of fun."

"We started doing things on a weekly basis, having someone come in to make ice-cream sundaes or crepes or sushi or to give chair massages," he says.

After getting a positive response from the staff, Fishman says, the company kept it up, even after safety issues waned.— "We just re-booked the massage vendor," he says. "It's become part of our culture."

Sometimes LMC goes beyond bringing the fun in—the firm recently sent employees to a Yankees-Mets game. Everyone first gathered in a conference room for pizza, refreshments and beer.

employees create a solid work-life balance. "Pre-pandemic we didn't focus on that enough," he says.

Fishman notes the firm has stepped up on this front in two areas. It used to offer three Fridays off during the summer, but it required employees to put in their hours for the week and to give notice by Monday that they would be out. Then it expanded it to the entire summer and ditched the Monday deadline. Then the company decreed that employees could take any Friday off outside of the busy season—about half the year—as long as people put their hours in and got their work done.

In addition, this year LMC introduced unlimited paid time off. "I'm a big fan of that," Fishman says. "It's a great benefit and it shows we trust our employees and treat them as professionals by saying, "Do what you have to do here, but if you need to take off, we'll work with you."



LMC employees participated in the JP Morgan Corporate Challenge 5K run in Central Park on Thursday, June 2, 2022.

"This has been a tough couple of years," Cohen says, "and we really wanted to show our employees that we care about them and this is a great place to be."

The firm took that one step further in April, when it made Cohen's idea to offer every employee a seven-night, eight-day trip to a Mexico resort a reality. It added a gift card to help cover the airfare.

Fishman says the company emphasized that this was meant to be a getaway. "We told people not to bring their laptops or to call in," he explains. "We said, 'You work very hard and we want you to refresh.'"

Cohen adds that the pandemic was a "wake-up call" for him to help LMC

From pizza to PTOs, the firm's efforts keeps employees "engaged and happy," Fishman says, while making LMC attractive to new hires. Because the firm has increased their presence on social media about what they are doing, he adds, he frequently hears from clients who are impressed by the work environment.

"People want to be associated with us, which makes us feel really proud," Fishman says.

Cohen adds another layer to the reaction the company has received from clients: "They say, 'It's amazing what you do, and it makes a difference, and we're learning from you and will follow what you do.'"



LMC employees enjoyed a team outing after work at Yankee Stadium on Tuesday, August 23, 2022.

