



MICRO SUCCESS STORY: Ryan, LLC



Ryan, LLC was founded in Dallas, Texas in 1991 as a tax advisory services firm. The small start-up began with little more than five employees in a 900 square foot office with \$156,000 in annual revenue, and a vision for success. Twenty years later, Ryan has become the 7th largest corporate services tax firm in the country, with 45 locations in three countries, more than 900 employees and revenues of over

\$215 million. The company has grown its leadership position by consistently delivering the most creative, thorough and effective tax services to its clients. Its tax professionals and associates play a key role in maintaining the firm's "best of class" reputation.

That is why when the company's top talent started leaving because they wanted to start families or have greater work-life balance, Ryan's leadership began to think very seriously about creating a flexible work environment. In 2008, Ryan launched myRyan, an innovative work environment that changed the measurement of performance from hours worked to results achieved. The change required a dramatic cultural shift, as the company switched from a "face-time" culture to one focused only on results. "Prior to myRyan, Ryan was a by-the-book, traditional, clock-watching firm. When we made the decision to effectively do a 180 and abandon the traditional approach of managing employees, jaws dropped and heads turned. We completely re-wrote the rules," said Delta Emerson, SPHR, senior vice president, chief learning and organizational development officer.

In exchange for incredible flexibility and freedom comes the responsibility and accountability for producing results.

*--Brint Ryan, CEO and
Managing Principal, Ryan, LLC*

Program Description

The company formed a task force representing a cross-section of employees to find a way to create flexibility within the business. "We struggled with it, quite honestly, for over a year," Emerson said. But after running a successful pilot of the program during early 2008, the company rolled out myRyan to all of its almost 800 employees in the U.S. and approximately 100 in Canada and the United Kingdom.

Through myRyan, employees choose to work where and when they are most efficient and effective, while understanding that flexibility includes being available and responsive to client and firm needs. Ryan employees take full ownership and accountability for meeting and exceeding expectations, and career advancement is achieved by delivering results above and beyond expectations-- not when, where and how long someone works. In addition to offering a results-only work environment, Ryan also enhanced other employee benefits. It extended paid maternity leave (12 weeks), as well as paid paternity (2 weeks), adoption (6 weeks) and medical and family leave benefits, and enhanced salary increases for employees on military leave. Having flexible work schedules and locations gives employees the chance to, guilt-free, take care of personal priorities, like a child's school play, a spouse's day off, day care drop-off and pick-up, and other life activities.

Nontraditional work schedules were introduced along with ways to measure accountability, such as job-specific revenue benchmarks and client satisfaction scores. In fact, defining how the return on investment would be measured played an important role in overcoming resistance to myRyan. Successfully shifting a corporate culture requires much time and effort, but taking the time to “do it right” pays off in the end. “It’s not a light switch. It’s much easier said than done,” said Emerson. Additional drivers of success for the program were: gaining support from top management, involving employees in the process of designing the flexibility program to see what best fits the company’s needs, and anticipating resistance and making sure open communication and training are available to ensure the initiative’s success.

Program Success

Since its inception in 2008, the myRyan program has **dramatically reduced turnover and improved employee morale**. With client satisfaction scores higher than ever and strong financials, the company’s leadership knows it made the right decision. Before myRyan, voluntary turnover was about 20 percent, and the company consistently received low ratings for work-life balance on employee surveys. Now, **voluntary turnover is about 6 percent and former employees are returning “in droves.”**

myRyan also **helps to improve job satisfaction with the company’s administrative support groups**, such as with reception, finance, human resources, facilities and IT, according to internal employee survey data. This improved job satisfaction, in turn, translates into better client service.

Key Drivers of Success

- Championed and supported by senior leadership
- Involved employees in the original design
- Planned carefully – “measure twice, cut once”
- Equipped employees with resources needed to succeed
- Provided up-front and on-going training
- Determined exactly how to align systems, processes, and measurements
- Learned how to trust and empower employees
- Didn’t abandon the plan at the first sign of trouble
- Continually seek feedback from employees and others

Flexible Work Options Offered

- Flexible scheduling
- Telework
- Part-time work
- Compressed work week
- Paid maternity, paternity, adoption, medical and family leave and military leave

Because of the myRyan program, the company has been named as one of the **2011 Best Companies to Work for in Texas**, and has received “**Top Workplace**” honors in Dallas, Houston, Austin and Los Angeles. Ryan is a recipient of the

Alliance for Work-Life Progress’ **2011 Work-Life Innovative Excellent Award**, and was also one of only 31 organizations in the world to receive the prestigious **ASTD BEST Award**. It is also a recipient of the **Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility**. myRyan has helped to increase the company’s scores on the **Great Places to Work** survey-- the percentage of employees who feel that they are encouraged to find work-life balance rose from 42 to 85 per-

cent, and the percentage of those who plan on working there until they retire rose from 56 percent to 85 percent. The U.S. Department of Defense also honored Ryan, Inc. with the **Patriot Award** for personnel policies that support employee participation in the military.

A Business Champion for Flexibility

Ryan has further signaled its support for flexibility by joining Corporate Voices for Working Families’ **national workplace flexibility campaign** as a “Business Champion.” Champions sign a Statement of Support for Expanding Workplace Flexibility and commit to expanding flexibility within their own organizations as a tool to drive business results and to actively communicate the business imperative for flexibility to others. Ryan, LLC’s success story is one example of the many ways businesses in Corporate Voices’ national campaign are using flexibility to modernize workplaces to meet the needs of the 21st century workforce, and to become more competitive in the global economy. To learn more about the campaign, visit: www.corporatevoices.org/our-work/flexcampaign.