

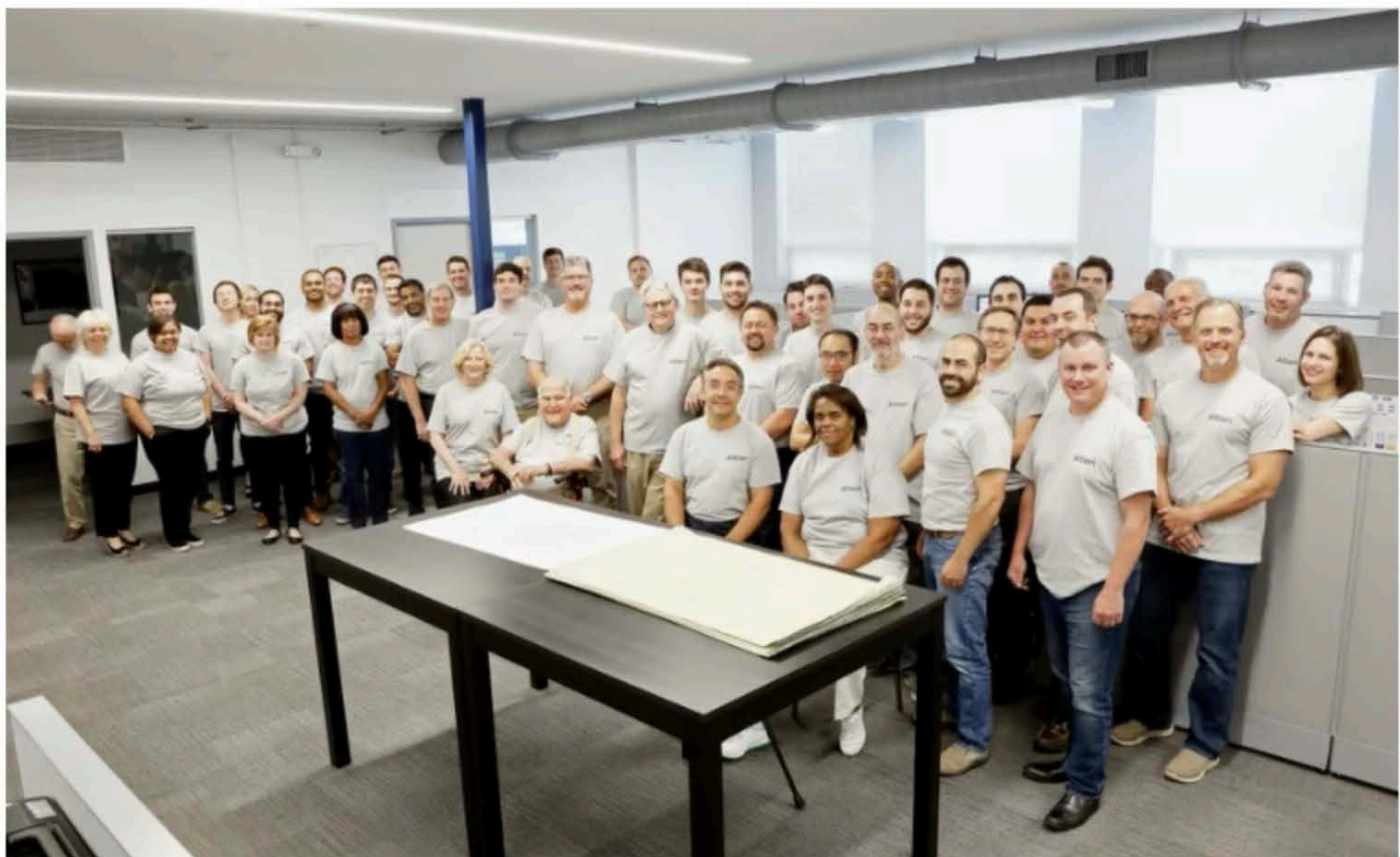
Award-Winning Norwalk Engineering Firm Builds on Legacy with Culture of Commitment to Employees

By StoryStudio on September 21, 2020 3:12 PM



These days, it's refreshing to find a company that puts its employees first. Recent articles in *Forbes* and the *Harvard Business Review* highlight the importance of employee engagement to a company's success, as well as a direct correlation to employee satisfaction. Things like positive feedback, education and training, and a positive work environment are central to employee retention and, as a result, the building of a culture of trust and respect. One Norwalk-based Small Business Enterprise is ahead of the curve, and the results speak for themselves.

Altieri enjoys a distinguished national reputation for excellence in creative engineering design, seen in its remarkable portfolio of projects. For over 60 years, the consulting engineering firm has designed mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and fire protection—or MEPF—systems for highly-controlled, architecturally challenging environments. Cultural icons including the American Museum of Natural History, Carnegie Hall, The Getty Center, Museum of Fine Arts Boston and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame are among Altieri's projects, as well as scores of buildings on college and university campuses. Cornell and Eastern Connecticut State Universities, Wellesley and Williams Colleges, and Yale University have called on Altieri's expertise and creativity, as have historic buildings including the New York Public Library, Mark Twain House, South Street Seaport and Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale.



Altieri's mission is *"to engineer solutions that enhance the architectural vision by fostering a culture of creativity."* Complex museum and performing arts venues, libraries, and historic buildings can all present unique challenges: designing and integrating environmentally responsible building systems within architecturally complex environments such as the award-winning Corning Museum of Glass Contemporary Art + Design Wing and Amphitheater Hot Shop, is no small task. The firm, with its decades of experience and diverse team of talented engineers, continues to set the pace for the industry. And not just in a commitment to the roll call of distinguished clients, but in terms of the firm's enduring dedication to the well-being of its employees.

In July 2019, when Altieri gathered to mark its milestone 60th anniversary, the company recognized 26 employees with more than 10 years of service to the firm. That's more than 40% of Altieri's total staff. Numbers like these tell a compelling story of employee engagement. In the words of one 30-year employee:

"I have been working for Altieri since graduation because of the incredible diversity of fantastic projects. And because of the people. I have never felt I needed to go elsewhere to do more or earn more respect. Altieri is my extended family."

It's no wonder then that the dedicated staff at Altieri voted the firm a 2020 Top Workplace in the Hearst Connecticut Top Workplaces Survey!



Employee-led Programs Demonstrate Altieri's Commitment to Their Team

The company's core values of *integrity, quality, innovation, collaboration, work/life balance, continuous learning, and proactiveness* guide Altieri's aspirations. These values are at the heart of the company's ethos and contribute to the firm's extraordinary legacy. Three years ago, in order to foster a workplace where these ideals flourish, leaders at the firm introduced the employee-led *Altieri Initiatives Teams Program*. Teams were created as part of a concerted effort to involve staff in an ongoing dialogue about the business and opportunities for improvement. Six target areas were identified:

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- Team ET – Employee Education and Training – Furthering employee knowledge
- Team ICU – Internal Communications Unit – Sharing information throughout the organization on a regular basis
- Team MLB – Marketing Leads to Business – Developing business-building activities
- Team Nuts & Bolts – Continually improving Standards and Quality of Design
- Team Plus-Minus – Retaining employees through regular enhancement of employees' sense of belonging and workplace satisfaction
- Team QOOL – Quality of Office Life – Initiating team-oriented activities and a bit of friendly competition!



Though staff participation in the program is entirely voluntary, 80% of employees volunteered to join at least one team at the program's inception! Three years along, employee involvement continues at the same rate with the original teams, and a new one to boot:

- Team USA – United Strengths of Altieri – Building a more equitable, just, and inclusive future.

Since the program kickoff, the creative and diligent efforts of these employee-led teams have enabled Altieri to incorporate new concepts, processes, and activities throughout the firm. Philip Steiner, P.E., Altieri's Managing Director, believes the Initiative Teams Program is enabling a fundamental shift in the culture of the firm:



Rose Center for Earth and Space, American Museum of Natural History, New York, NY; Architect: Polshek Partnership (Ennead); Image © Jeff Goldberg/Esto

"We are benefitting from the critical thinking of team members throughout the firm, building an environment in which varied opinions are encouraged and respected, and incorporating employee ideas into operating and strategic objectives."

Employee ideas and teamwork have led to improvements in performance and employee satisfaction, and the implementation of initiatives including:

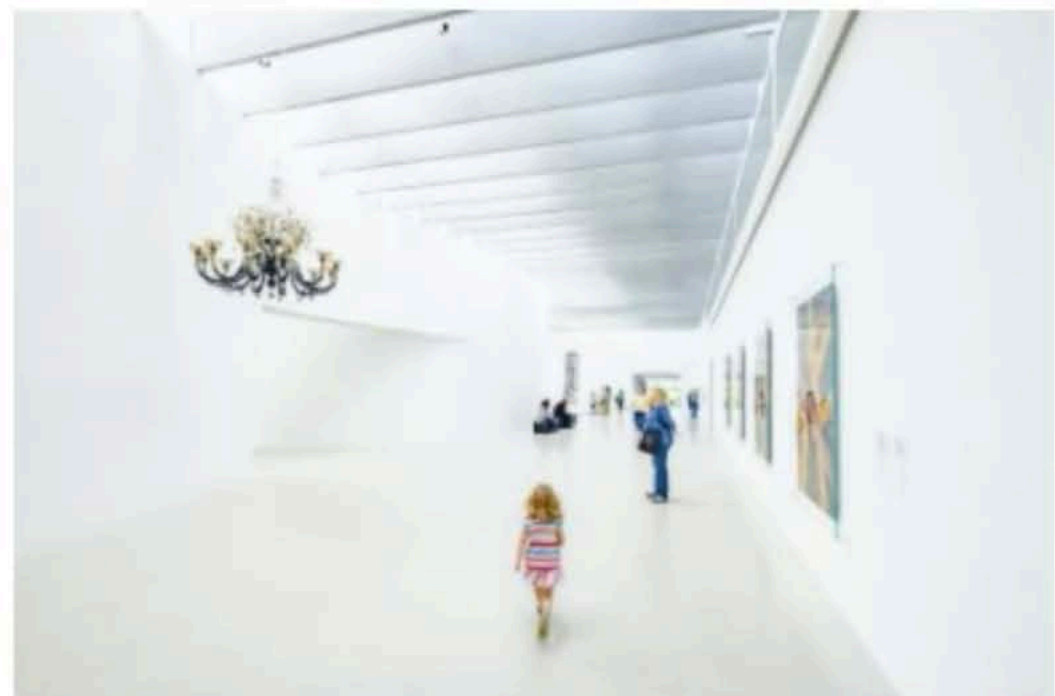
- "Team ET Presents" – A series of hour-long classes led by team members with specific areas of expertise. IT 101, Passive House basics, greywater systems, and presentation skills are examples of skills and knowledge that in-house experts volunteer to teach interested staff.
- "Project Spotlight" – A quarterly presentation to the staff that details a specific project. Last quarter saw an in-depth look at The National WWII

Museum in New Orleans, where Altieri's project team has been designing systems since 2004.

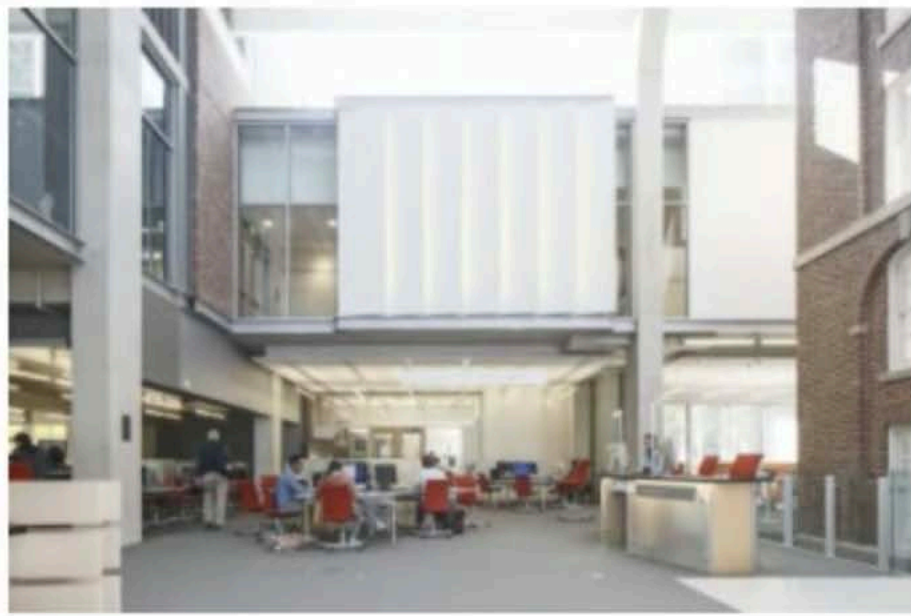
- Specific targets for regular industry conference attendance and session proposal submissions, yielding an important presentation at the 2020 Building Museums™ Symposium, and another in development for the Architectural Engineering Institute conference 2021.
- Improving design standards throughout the office – including project specification updates and technical process enhancements – making our work product more efficient for our clients.

Encouraged by these initiatives, employees have also shared personal interests and spurred greater firmwide engagement in the community: Altieri invites local grade school students for a hands-on look at engineering as part of the Carver Foundation's after-school and summer programs, and employees regularly take part in helping to plant the vegetable gardens that supply Person-to-Person's Darien Food Pantry.

With its Initiative Teams Program, Altieri is nurturing a culture of openness and transparency; one that encourages employees to voice their opinions, share their expertise, and engage in teamwork to consider issues and decisions impacting



Corning Museum of Glass, Contemporary Art + Design Wing, Corning, NY; Architect: Thomas Phifer and Partners; Image © Chris Walters/Courtesy of Corning Museum of Glass



Williams College, Sawyer Library, Williamstown, MA;
Architect: Bohlin Cywinski Jackson; Image © Susan Fisher Plotner/Altieri.

business success. For over 60 years, Altieri has set the pace for the industry by prioritizing its clients' design aspirations and meeting high profile design challenges with innovative solutions. As Steiner highlights, the firm recognizes the imperative to continually examine its culture, engage its employees, and put initiatives in place that will ensure it continues to lead the industry in designing the future for years to come.

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