


Secular State

Secular Funding Corp. has created a culture and lifestyle that is unique in the industry.



There are many mortgage loan companies out there—and then there is Secular Funding Corporation in Thousand Oaks, Calif.

“We’re the work-hard, play-hard company,” says John Mahoney, the company’s Vice President.

You understand exactly what Mahoney means when you step into Secular Funding Corp.’s building. There is a special energy and enthusiasm in the offices that is nicely mixed with professionalism, efficiency and fun.

“We’ve created a culture and lifestyle that is totally unique in our industry,” Mahoney says.

He’s right. Secular Funding Corp., which has generated billions of dollars in loans in its 30-year history, knows how to take care of its employees, prospective employees, guests and clients.

Ever hear of the red-carpet treatment? Well, Secular Funding takes it to another level.

Consider this: the company not only has valet parking for employees and guests, but when the valet operator takes your car keys he hands you a Cafe Latte from the company’s own in-house specialty cafe, Java Coffee Co. Unique? Wait, there’s more.

Once inside the offices, you hear in the background Secular Funding Radio (KSFR), a mixture of nice, light, pop music interspersed with sophisticated motivational slogans instead of a mindless stream of commercials.

**Secular Funding
Corp. CEO Leo
Littlefield**

With this kind of an environment, and these kinds of amenities, who wouldn't want to work for Secular Funding Corp.? Not many people.

For loan officers, there's even more of an incentive: a 50% commission rate on first mortgages and 45% on seconds--and the company provides all the leads, ending those agonizing days of cold calling.

For a bonus, Secular Funding throws in incentive trips to places like Las Vegas, Lake Tahoe and Catalina Island.

"What we've done is create an environment that not only people enjoy but look forward to come to every day," says Mahoney, the No. 2 man in the company behind president Leonard Littlefield. "To us, environment is more important than the work itself."

That's because Littlefield and Mahoney know a great environment produces great results from happy, satisfied employees. Trying to find a disgruntled employee at Secular Funding is like trying to find an unsatisfied Apple stockholder. Which means you just won't find one.

Secular Funding, which provides the comprehensive, competitive, and innovative mortgage loans through superior service, the use of the latest technology, and qualified, dedicated employees, was established in 1983 by Littlefield.

When he reeled Mahoney into the business in 1997, the combination of the two men elevated Secular Funding to another level. And the company is still rising to new heights today—and according to Littlefield it starts with the quality of the employees' character and work ethic.

"The thing about the home loan business is that there is no technology, no secrets," he says. "This is purely a business of getting the right people, keeping them, and motivating them to do a great job. What we've done successfully is bring in the right people at the right time. The employees are the ones who deserve the credit."

It takes a sharp eye to detect the right kind of employee—and Mahoney and Littlefield possess that kind of eyesight.

"If you want to build a successful business, you have to spend time to create the right culture and environment," Littlefield says. "But the No. 1 thing is building the right team. If you want a championship ring, you have to put together the right team. And they don't always have to be the top dogs. Look at NBA all-star games. They're terrible because the players play as individuals, not a team. You have to get people to play as team, like the New

England Patriots did when they won the Super Bowl the first time in 2001 against the Rams. They weren't not most talented team in the NFL, but they were the best team because they played together as one, tight unit."

Industry experts say there is more talent under Secular Funding Corp.'s roof than perhaps any business in the marketplace.

"There isn't one manager that isn't highly respected by all vendors and associates within the industry," says one industry insider. "That's uncommon in this business. You might have one quality guy in second- or third-tier management positions, but Secular Funding has a truckload of people like that. Any company out there would love to have any one of them representing their organization."

The characteristic that Littlefield and Mahoney seek in employees is character. "Character is everything," Mahoney says. "You can teach people the business, but you can't teach them to be good people. Without strong character, you'll be disappointed in the end. Another thing that makes us different is that we don't run our business based on money. We base it on morals. That's because if you win with integrity, honesty, character and morals, the money will be there. Money is nothing more than a scorecard of your success. It is not the basis of your business. Character is."

Another secret to Secular Funding Corp.'s success is its ability to change.

"Our company has grown and achieved greatness because of adverse situations and our willingness to change in environments where other companies struggle to change," Mahoney says. "Our philosophy is that wherever there is adversity, there is an opportunity. And we're good at seeking those opportunities and then changing our company to take advantage of them."

The rise of Secular Funding Corp. has competitors shaking in their wingtips. The balance of power is rapidly shifting.

"In the beginning, it was us against the world," Mahoney says. "We were the out-of-box thinkers. We were the underdog coming up coming up on the side."

The underdog is quickly emerging as the top dog.

Editor's note: Secular Funding Corp. was sold to a larger mortgage loan corporation in 2010 in a multi-million dollar transaction.