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Pictured: Strauss Troy
President Jim Heldman

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STRAUSS TROY CELEBRATES 60-YEAR
COMMITMENT TO REGION, CLIENTS

By Steve Kemme

As the Strauss & Troy law firm's office lease in downtown Cincinnati neared an end in the late 1990s, its board of directors briefly considered moving to the suburbs.

Other long-established downtown tenants had left the central business district for more expansive, less costly spaces outside the city. But Strauss & Troy (now Strauss Troy) decided to stay.

"We overwhelmingly felt we were a part of the downtown fabric," says Jim Heldman, the firm's president, sitting in a conference room in Strauss Troy's offices in the Federal Reserve Bank building. "We've had good connections with downtown Cincinnati. There's a vibrancy and a presence here."

The mid-sized firm continues to be a mainstay of the downtown legal community as it celebrates its 60th anniversary this year.

CHANGING WITH THE TIMES

In 1953, Orville and Ken Troy, Eugene Ruehlmann and Lucien Strauss established a law practice in the Fountain Square Building where the Fifth Third Center now stands. Lucien Strauss wanted to call the firm Strauss Troy Troy & Ruehlmann because there were two Troys. However, the others decided that one Troy was sufficient. It changed to Strauss & Troy in 1986 when Ruehlmann, who was mayor of Cincinnati from 1967-71, left to join another firm.

Last year, the firm ditched the ampersand in Strauss & Troy as part of a branding initiative that included a transformation of its web site and new marketing strategies.

"We knew we needed to bring the company's branding into the 21st century," Heldman says. "I understand totally that it's a whole new world out there. But we're a bunch of lawyers. What do we know about marketing?"

EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE

About 18 months ago, the firm hired Pam Gilchrist to work on the branding and marketing effort. Gilchrist solicited information about Strauss Troy from its directors and other employees through surveys, focus groups and interviews. She also evaluated the competition.

A clear picture of Strauss Troy's strengths, goals and vision gradually emerged.

Gilchrist found that the old web site did a poor job of communicating what Strauss Troy could offer.

"It's important for any organization that its web site reflect its workforce, what the organization is and what its vision is," she says. "We have a lot of bright, energetic people here at Strauss Troy who have an awful lot to offer."

The new site provides biographies and photos of the firm's 45 attorneys. The bios include detailed information about the attorneys' areas of expertise, the types of clients they have represented and their significant cases, professional writings and lectures, professional group activities and community involvement. A short video of the history and overview of the firm that features chairman William V. Strauss and Heldman is also included.

The firm handles work in many fields:

corporate, real estate, tax planning, trusts, municipal government, labor, domestic relations and criminal defense. In recent years, it has added white-collar criminal defense and expanded its reach in labor and intellectual property law.

One special area of expertise is mergers and acquisitions. This includes the legal aspects of leveraged buyouts, the purchase and sale of stocks and assets, consolidations and roll-ups, joint venture partnerships, management buy-outs, joint ventures and corporate restructuring.

Another is franchising. Attorneys advise about the risks and benefits involved in various distribution methods and the nuances of licensed goods and services, compliance with federal and state laws and trademark protection and licensing.

"We have found a niche in the corporate business area," says Rick Wayne, a member of the board of directors who has been with the firm for 27 years. "Our clients range from old-line companies to start-up businesses."

Although it's a full-service law firm, Strauss Troy emphasizes its depth of experience and knowledge in business-related issues. Wayne says the attorneys understand business issues as well as legal issues.

NKY OFFICE

Strauss Troy opened an office in Northern Kentucky in 1987. Before then, the firm had a few lawyers in the Cincinnati office who were licensed to practice in Kentucky. But



Jim Heldman and Rick Wayne

"There's no substitute for doing excellent legal work and having satisfied clients. That's first and foremost."

– Jim Heldman, president of Strauss Troy

to take advantage of the growth potential the region offered, the firm believed it needed a physical presence there.

"We thought it was a natural growth area," Heldman says.

Although the law firm is always looking for good lawyers, expansion isn't a priority; it wants to remain close to its current size, which allows it to be more personal, flexible and efficient, Heldman says. That is also an advantage for its employees.

"It gives our attorneys the opportunity to work across areas of law," Wayne says. "You're not pigeonholed into certain areas."

That is appealing to many attorneys who are just starting their careers. "We have a different culture than the larger firms," Heldman says.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Throughout its existence, Strauss Troy has participated in many community programs. One of the most visible is the firm's title sponsorship of Market on the Square, an open-air market at Fountain Square. In addition, Strauss Troy has partnered with Cincinnati Public Schools for seven years to sponsor an annual essay contest at Taft IT High School.

Last year, the law firm hosted a session of the Institute for the Global Practice of Law at the University of Cincinnati College of Law. In the program, American attorneys teach those from outside the U.S. about the nuances of the American legal system, especially in connection with international business.

Despite the firm's foray into the digital age and its expanded use of social media, Heldman says the most important element remains unchanged from the time of its founding: top-notch services to its clients.

"There's no substitute for doing excellent legal work and having satisfied clients," he says. "That's first and foremost." ■