

Law firm Strauss Troy rebrands self as it grows

In the early 1980s, James Heldman networked with clients by handing out matchbooks imprinted with 'Strauss Troy & Ruehlmann' on the cover.

Today, Heldman hands out credit card-sized 2 Gig flash drives that launch a video presentation of the 59-year-old law firm now known as Strauss Troy Co. LPA.

As part of an aggressive rebranding effort that started two years ago, the firm also introduced a new logo and a sleeker, **more user-friendly web site**. Result so far: Strauss Troy has added staff and grown into a 45-lawyer firm that's claiming a niche with mid-sized, privately held companies in the region.

"Boy, have times changed," said Heldman, now president of the firm.

Undergoing a major remake wasn't all that difficult, even though "lawyers, like a lot of professionals, have egos," he said.

"Our senior attorneys who've been around for a long time said, 'We haven't done this in the past, why do this now?' " Heldman said. "But they realized we need to be progressive and move forward. It wasn't a difficult sell. There was tremendous buy-in."

To help with the transition, Strauss Troy last year hired consultant Pam Gilchrist, a corporate communications veteran, to advise the firm on its marketing strategy. Gilchrist has led strategic communications initiatives for three Fortune 500 companies.

"I was given a lot of trust to do research and present my findings," Gilchrist said.

Her team conducted internal focus groups, surveyed all the attorneys in the firm, and gathered anecdotal client feedback. "The biggest thing was getting to know the culture. Getting to know the success drivers and to capitalize on those," Gilchrist said.

In conjunction with its rebranding, Strauss Troy also expanded with the addition of new shareholders Erinn McKee Hannigan, who practices exclusively in domestic relations, and Bill Williamson, who has a diverse background in real estate, corporate law and estate planning.

"One of the reasons we're on such a solid growth track is the personal service we provide to clients," Williamson said. "It's always been a trademark of the firm."



From left: Erinn McKee Hannigan, shareholder, Matthew W. Fellerhoff, partner and former municipal court judge, Shawn Young, shareholder and chair of business practices, and Stephen Schilling, associate attorney, all of Strauss Troy Co., LPA, are photographed in their offices. / The Enquirer/Carrie Cochran

Strauss Troy also hired Matt Fellerhoff, a former Hamilton County Municipal Court judge who will practice in property rights matters and real estate law, and Steve Schilling as an associate.

"We're constantly looking for growth," said Heldman, who practices mainly in corporate and business law. Besides the lawyers, the firm employs about 50 support staff.

The firm also launched a revamped web site with a new name (www.strausstroy.com) and more user-friendly navigation and search capabilities making it easier for clients to connect directly with attorneys in a specific area of practice.

"What it comes down to is providing excellent service and representation of our clients," a reputation started in 1953 by founders Lucien Strauss, Ken Troy and Gene Ruehlmann, Heldman said.

Tom Fahey is vice president of Lamar Advertising, a client of Strauss Troy for 11 years.

"I've dealt with a lot of law firms over the years. What I've found is that Strauss is very responsive and accessible to what we need, willing to drop what they are doing to get to work for us quickly," Fahey said. "They have a good track record of success with us. Ultimately that's the best measuring stick."

Making a difference

Strauss Troy Co. LPA law firm is committed to community: Employees formed the 'Make a Difference' team in the early 1990s to support local charities and community endeavors.

The firm held its eighth annual 'Freedom Writers' essay contest for Cincinnati Public School students in May. The top 20 writers – the topic was reducing high school dropout rates – won tours of Paul Brown Stadium and a meeting with Bengals head coach Marvin Lewis.

And for the fifth consecutive year Strauss Troy is sponsoring the Market-on-the-Square, where vendors sell flowers, fresh produce, meats and cheeses. The market runs every Tuesday through Sept. 25 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Fountain Square.