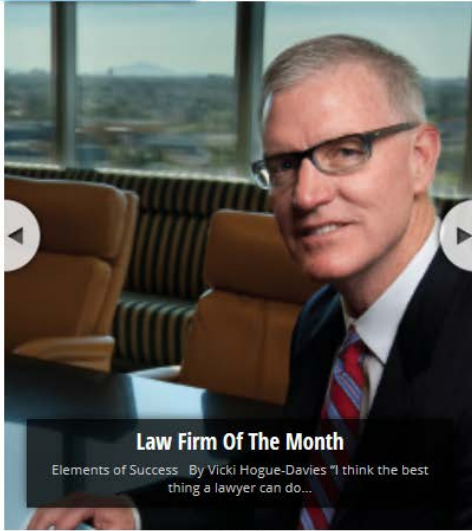


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ATTORNEY AT LAW

MAGAZINE

Elements of Success

By Vicki Hogue-Davies

"I think the best thing a lawyer can do is to learn to listen well," says Kevin O'Malley, lead attorney of Gallagher & Kennedy's commercial litigation group and member of the board of directors. "Over the years a lot has been written about lack of communication being a major source of problems between lawyers and clients. Fixing the problem starts with listening very carefully to your clients to really understand their goals, and then fashioning your advice and game plan to what they want to accomplish."



That strong respect for clients, their points of view and their goals has helped drive the award-winning firm's nearly 40 years of success. Founded in 1978 by Mike Gallagher and Mike Kennedy as a boutique litigation firm, Gallagher & Kennedy evolved into a full-service, business law firm that now has 85 attorneys practicing in a variety of areas, including environmental, personal injury, criminal and bankruptcy, among others. A staff of more than 100 assists the lawyers at offices in Phoenix, Arizona and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In spite of its growth and ranking as the fifth largest law firm in Phoenix, Gallagher & Kennedy maintains a small firm culture based on the values established early on by the founders: hard work, fairness, life balance and service to others. Those principles are always at the forefront in the ways the firm works with clients, treats its employees and engages with the community.

"We have steadfastly remained a homegrown, local firm," O'Malley says. "That attribute is attractive to a number of clients who want a more personal relationship."

The firm's collegial and teamwork-oriented culture is also attractive to its attorneys and staff, as evidenced by being named the Phoenix Business Journal's Best Place to Work in 2010 and 2011.

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ATTORNEY AT LAW

M A G A Z I N E

"That award is uniquely satisfying because it is the result of a confidential vote of our employees," O'Malley says. "We take great pride in knowing that while this is a demanding environment when it comes to quality of work, we have people who are happy to work here."

Employee satisfaction has translated into loyalty for Gallagher & Kennedy. O'Malley himself has been with the firm since it opened, first as a clerk and then coming onboard to practice in 1980 right out of law school.

"We hold an employee appreciation lunch once a year and present longevity awards for tenure," he says. "There are always lines of employees waiting to get their five, 10 and even 20-year awards. We have also had numerous attorneys who have left for one reason or another ultimately returning to the firm."

Recognition for employee longevity has been possible because of the firm's focus on slow and steady growth based upon client needs enabling it to weather economic downturns and avoid layoffs. Its commitment to employee development is also helping ensure its growth into the future.

"We have been a three-member board since our inception," O'Malley says. "About a year ago we added two younger partners to the governing board. We have also gotten our younger employees involved in other areas of administration and firm management. This helps to get the message out that we will continue to grow and focus on employee development well into the future.

"Another area of focus for us has been the underrepresentation of women, especially in the higher ranks of major law firms," he continues. "In the past few years, we have really focused on trying to support and enhance the business development of our female lawyers including developing a formal women's group within the firm. In the future, we hope the notion of having a women's group in a law firm will seem antiquated, but today there is still a need to promote its importance."

One key to Gallagher & Kennedy's continued growth and success is the trustworthy reputation when partnering with other law firms who have clients in need of the resources it provides.

"There is mutual respect for the dynamics of the referral relationship," O'Malley says. "Referring lawyers trust that we are going to serve their client well and return them a happy and satisfied client."

Just as important to Gallagher & Kennedy as its clients, employees and attorney peers is the community in which it practices. Nearly every employee of the firm participates in community service, supporting causes such as the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, Homeward Bound, the United Way and many others. The dedication to community service goes back to the values of its founders, with Gallagher & Kennedy employees volunteering in over 100 professional and philanthropic organizations.

"Practicing law is intense and deadline-driven," O'Malley says. "We believe getting out to support our community provides balance and makes for happier, and ultimately, highly productive lawyers."

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