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Jack of All Trades

For 75 years, Cleveland law firm Walter & Haverfield has kept its midsized practice thriving by offering a diverse menu of specialties.

Beth Stallings

The year 1932 was not an ideal time to start a business. In the depths of the Depression, jobs were difficult to come by, especially for two recent law school graduates, Paul W. Walter and D. Rusk Haverfield.

So the two attorneys ventured out on their own, founding the general practice firm Walter & Haverfield LLP, which 75 years later, is stronger than ever.

"We have an entrepreneurial spirit," says Managing Partner Ralph Cascarilla. "That's really just a way of saying we look to add professionals who want to nurture their practices."

Located in the Tower at Erieview in downtown Cleveland, the view from its lakefront offices is as unhindered as the varieties of law the firm practices. Walter & Haverfield offers services in technology, bioscience and health care, litigation, first amendment and media defense, estate planning, environmental, education, and employment and labor law, just to name a few.

Today, the firm is 45 attorneys strong — a substantial growth since its founding, according to Partner Michael McMenamin. When McMenamin joined Walter & Haverfield in 1968, he was only the ninth lawyer on staff. It wasn't until the late '70s, early '80s that the practice grew to the midsized firm it is today. McMenamin attributes its 50 percent growth in 10 years to adding attorneys with specific areas of expertise so they can accommodate each clients' legal needs in a variety of ways.

Looking past simply what in-house services the firm could offer, in the early '90s, Walter & Haverfield started a network of midsized law firms made up of two Canadian providences and eight states to help connect its clients who conduct business from state to state to similar out-of-state practices.

And now, Walter & Haverfield has joined the consortium LexWork International — connecting their clients with other midsized firms all over the world.

"It's really good for the clients," Cascarilla says. "We're not looking for work coming to us. The key is, 'How do you meet your clients' needs?' It's a unique service we can offer our clients."

Also to its credit, Walter & Haverfield has one of the area's largest First Amendment media defense practices and was selected to handle the electronic patient information records for the Northeast Ohio Regional Information Organization (NEORIO), a consortium of all hospitals in Ohio. Last year, the firm added an education attorney focused on public entity law and school boards of education.

But perhaps the most well-known accomplishment was the role Walter played in helping to pass the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, a federal law that restricts the activities and power

of labor unions.

"That has established lineage in the firm as a labor lawyer practice that continues on to the present," says Cascarilla, who joined the practice in 1994.

Formerly chief of the White Collar Crime Section for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Ohio, Cascarilla joined Walter & Haverfield because he was looking for a quality practice and individuals, he says.

"Personal demeanor and character really matter," Cascarilla says. "Everyone who has ever entered these walls walk away with a strong feeling of confidence in the people here. I think that speaks a lot about the feeling in the firm."