

## Law Firm Leaders: Cadwalader's Patrick Quinn

By Aebra Coe

*Law360 (April 17, 2019, 12:47 PM EDT)* -- Patrick Quinn has served as managing partner of Cadwalader Wickersham & Taft LLP since 2015 and has served on the law firm's management committee for more than a decade.

In a recent interview with Law360, Quinn said the 225-year-old law firm is in active "growth mode," with plans to promote internally and add laterals to the firm's five existing offices. Quinn also offered up his thoughts on the evolving legal sector, the law firm's strategy, and the importance of diversity to the firm's success.

### How is the business of law changing and how is your law firm adapting?

I think the most significant thing from my perspective is that clients continue to become more sophisticated consumers of legal services. It's not common anymore that lawyers decide how to handle a matter for their client on their own. Clients have a real perspective about not only what their opportunities or issues may be, but also how an outside law firm ought to be handling whatever the matter is. And so it is even more important now than it ever has been in the past for lawyers to understand their client. Not only their clients' matters and initiatives, but also their clients' expectations as to how legal services will be delivered.

### What are some ways you work to do that?

I think all firms need to adapt to clients' expectations in terms of really finding the right lawyers for every component of a particular engagement. You have to make sure that the very creative or challenging parts of an engagement are handled by the most senior and experienced people. And if there are more routine parts of an engagement that those are handled by either junior lawyers or, in some cases, paralegals or other staff. It's very important to bring the highest quality of results, but to bring it with a high level of efficiency.

### What is your law firm doing to try to win the war for talent?

I think, if you're going to win the war for talent, it's important to distinguish yourselves by standing out



**Patrick Quinn**  
Cadwalader  
managing partner

and showing why a firm is different. So, if you think about recruiting for lateral partner talent, we distinguish ourselves by our strategy and the fact that we are so focused on who we are and how we're going to be better and better within our strategy. For law students and associates, I think it's really important to show associates that they've got an opportunity and a lot of upward trajectory. We want an environment where every associate who walks through the door has a very legitimate shot at spending the rest of their career at Cadwalader.

**You said that the firm differentiates itself in the fight for lateral partner talent through making its strategy clear. What is that strategy?**

For us the strategy begins and ends with our clients — knowing who makes up our natural client base, which for us, we're a quintessential Wall Street firm. Our clients are big financial institutions, our clients are large corporations and increasingly our clients include funds, both hedge funds and private equity funds. So, thinking about how Cadwalader can be the best law firm for those kinds of clients, is our strategy. So, as we grow — and we are very much in growth mode — we will grow in our ability to service our natural clients.

**Where do you see your law firm in five years?**

We are very much focused on growth. I see us continuing to grow and I see that growth probably accelerating through the next three to five years and perhaps beyond. I see us being a larger version of what we currently are, which is a firm that is very focused on excellence, a firm that's very focused on its clients and a firm that plays to its strengths for the benefit of its clients.

**What options is the law firm looking at when it comes to methods for growing — organic growth, laterals, a merger?**

We're very focused on organic growth. We have been on a very strong streak of large new partner classes up from the ranks over the last several years. We are also focused on lateral growth. We are bullish on growing within our existing footprint. We think there are great opportunities to grow within our existing offices. London, for instance, is a particular focus for us. We are finalizing a lease for new space that will accommodate better than twice the number of lawyers that we have right now. We think there's a tremendous opportunity for continued lateral and organic growth. You asked about mergers, that is not something that is part of our strategy.

**Why is diversity such an important issue for the industry and why is it a priority for your firm?**

I like to think about diversity as an opportunity for us and an opportunity for us to have three dimensions. It is as competitive or maybe more competitive than it ever was to attract the highest level of talent to our firm. Diversity, because it includes recruiting diverse and female attorneys, should be a huge advantage for a firm like ours that emphasizes diversity. I believe we are, but we clearly want to be, the firm of choice for very high-performing diverse and female attorneys. So it helps us in the battle for talent. Second, I think it is indisputable that diverse teams develop better and creative results. It is a priority for us, given our place in the legal industry, to be a very, very high-performing, very creative firm, and so diversity helps us deliver the absolute best results for our clients.

**What's the biggest mistake attorneys make early on in their careers?**

I think the biggest mistake is not being self-confident enough. I think young attorneys, if they really want

to be great attorneys, they have to be self-confident enough to take on really challenging assignments. And they have to be dedicated enough to put in the effort and put in the hours to make it their priority to deliver results, even though they may be working on something that's brand new to them or brand new to the market. A lot of what we work on is, in many ways, the first of its kind. So it takes a measure of self-confidence to say to yourself, "I haven't done this thing before, and maybe no one has, but I know I'm dedicated and hardworking and I'm smart, and I know I can figure this out."

**What well-known lawyer, alive or dead, would you most like to have lunch with?**

I'll say, from my current position, I have the opportunity to interact with some really remarkable lawyers. Interacting with the general counsels of our clients, large financial institutions and other great companies, I get to meet a lot of great lawyers. Interacting with the chairmen and managing partners of other firms, they are truly great lawyers. We have what we call our civil rights series here at the firm, where we invite in great figures from the civil rights movement who come in and they'll speak to us on various topics. So I had the opportunity to spend time with people like Richard Cohen, who is the head of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Vanita Gupta, who is the former head of the Civil Rights Division of the DOJ. Anthony Romero, who is head of the ACLU, was here. I get the opportunity to meet really outstanding, truly inspirational lawyers from time to time.

In terms of somebody I haven't yet had the opportunity to meet, maybe it's a little bit of an out-of-the-box answer, but the newly appointed president of the University of Virginia, a fellow named Jim Ryan. He is a graduate of the UVA law school and a former faculty member there. There's a tremendous amount of excitement at the university about his leadership. The reason I'd like to spend some time with him is because I think there are parallels between what he's doing leading a historic university and one that's known for the absolute highest levels of excellence and building on that tradition to bring the University of Virginia forward into the 21st and 22nd centuries.

There are some parallels there with my job because Cadwalader has this wonderful history — the oldest major law firm in the United States, a tremendous reputation for excellence. And I think about my job that same way, preserving and building upon that history and that reputation as we move forward in the 21st century and adapt to the changing needs of our clients and the changing climate in the legal industry.

--Editing by Katherine Rautenberg.