

Firm History

ORIGINS

The firm was formed in 1970 as a four-lawyer, upstart subrogation and recovery firm making unlikely waves across the insurance industry in a sea of Philadelphia law firms. But the firm's roots reach back to the early 1960s, when Steve Cozen began working for his uncle's firm. That firm would later become Orlofsky, Cozen & Begier and ultimately Cozen O'Connor after rising star litigator Patrick O'Connor joined in 1973.

Built on a foundation of unflinching tenacity, intellectual rigor, entrepreneurial spirit, good humor, and a sense of family, the fledgling firm began catching the attention of some of the best legal talent in Philadelphia — talent that leads the firm today. Vincent McGuinness, now the firm's President and Managing Partner, was one of four students to join the firm's inaugural summer associate class in 1980. He became the firm's 19th lawyer in August 1981. Michael Heller, the firm's Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, joined in 1994 as the firm's first transactional attorney.

EXPANSION

Cozen O'Connor began expanding geographically in 1985 with the addition of a Seattle office and has continued to expand ever since, now boasting 33 offices across the United States and Canada, as well as London. The firm continues to add offices according to the principles established in 1985. A new office must be driven by client demand, staffed by top attorneys, and imbued with the firm's culture. By the early 1990s, Cozen O'Connor was 220 lawyers strong and widely recognized as a national leader in insurance litigation. But with changes in the insurance industry on the horizon, firm leadership realized that Cozen O'Connor would have to diversify in order to thrive. The decision to go full-service was not without risk, but the firm was used to risk. So Cozen O'Connor launched a corporate transactional practice



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in 1994, bringing on corporate, real estate, tax, and health care leaders, and made its first major waves as a full-service firm when that group handled the largest sports deal in the country in 1996 — simultaneously negotiating the sale of a majority stake in Spectacor to Comcast, the creation of Comcast Spectacor L.P., and the acquisition of the Philadelphia 76ers basketball team.

Over the next decade, the firm continued to increase its attorney headcount and handle some of the country's most significant matters, such as the multi-district litigation seeking to hold accountable the alleged material sponsors and supporters of the al Qaeda terrorist organization responsible for the 9/11 attacks. Many of the recruiting and integration techniques that Cozen O'Connor adopted as a matter of instinct are broadly recognized today as best practices in employee recruitment and retention. By 2001, the firm had established practices in the most critical corporate areas, including tax, real estate, mergers and acquisitions, employment, health, and bankruptcy. Cozen O'Connor's litigation practice had also continued to expand, and the firm had opened three new offices in Wilmington, Delaware (1999), Chicago (2000), and Washington, D.C. (2001).

It was at this point that the firm started to focus on building additional capacity in targeted regions and specific specialties, making another leap forward in 2002 with the addition of an Intellectual Property Department. And when WolfBlock — one of the oldest firms in Philadelphia at the time — voted to dissolve in 2009, Cozen O'Connor absorbed its real estate, private client services, New York-based finance, and government relations practices.

Meanwhile, Steve Cozen and Pat O'Connor were putting into place a succession plan to lead the firm into the future. Tad Decker became the firm's first Chief Executive Officer in 2007, viewing his role as a bridge between the founders and the future. Tad served as CEO of Cozen O'Connor until 2012, at which point Michael Heller and Vincent McGuinness — both of whom had been working closely with Tad on day-to-day management of the firm for years — took the reins. In 2015, the firm made another big move — literally — and relocated its Philadelphia headquarters to the city's most iconic skyscraper, One Liberty Place. With the next generation of leadership in place and a headquarters befitting an Am Law 100 firm, Cozen O'Connor entered its next phase of development.

Over the next several years, the firm executed a series of strategic expansions, further bolstering our capabilities and footprint. These expansions include the firm's addition of the country's premier State Attorneys General practice in May 2015; the combination in June 2015 with Meckler Bulger Tilson, a reputable 60-lawyer Chicago firm; the addition in February 2017 of a group of nationally renowned attorneys in the field of sexual and gender-based harassment and violence and child protection, launching the country's premier Institutional Response Group; and many other valuable additions.

In the early 2020s, Cozen O'Connor set its sights on Canada. Adding corporate, litigation, bankruptcy, and intellectual property lawyers to our existing Toronto and Vancouver offices in 2021 and 2022, the firm intends to continue to expand in Canada with the aim of going head-to-head with the country's top-tier firms, with the advantage of a truly cross-border platform.

In addition to steadily and strategically expanding our attorney headcount over the past decade-plus, the firm has also launched several ancillary businesses, expanding our offerings beyond the traditional practice of law. Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies is a lobbying and government relations firm that comprises a team of lawyers and professionals who have been active in the political world for decades, including running national, state, and local campaigns and holding high-level political offices in both Republican and Democratic administrations. Another example of our non-traditional offerings is Margolis Healy and Associates (now The Healy+ Group), a professional services firm specializing in safety and security and regulatory compliance for higher education and K-12 schools, government agencies, and private entities across the country. HomeBase, The Family Office at Cozen O'Connor was created by the Private Client, Trusts and Estates Practice of the firm to provide family office services independent of investment management or other encumbrances. The firm's cybersecurity affiliate, COSECURE, offers a range of enterprise risk solutions spanning the spectrum of physical safety and cybersecurity. And in 2022 we launched coDISCOVER, which delivers client-focused, defensible, and scalable solutions using advanced technology and intelligent review practices to meet eDiscovery, document review, and information governance needs that reduce the risks and costs associated with electronically stored information.

FUTURE

Moving into the future, the firm is targeting growth in Canada, the West Coast, the Southwest, and Colorado. However, as we enter new markets and tackle new challenges, the firm is equally determined to keep in place an unpretentious culture that prizes hard work, ingenuity, entrepreneurship, and philanthropy. We have received many awards and accolades in recent years for the work our lawyers do, and we are proud of that work. What we are most proud of, though, is who we are. For that reason, we were particularly honored when the firm was named to Newsweek's 2021 list of America's Most Loved Workplaces. Cozen O'Connor was the only law firm to be named to the inaugural list of 100 companies produced in partnership with the Best Practice Institute, which measures how employees feel about their organization rating the companies on criteria such as collaboration and teamwork, opportunities for advancement, and whether their employer is good citizen.

Throughout its history, Cozen O'Connor has been a place where the best and brightest lawyers, administrators, and professionals love to work. Though we are no longer the scrappy underdog we once were, the tenacity and unflinching sense of self that characterized the firm's early years remains part of our DNA. Whatever the future brings, Cozen O'Connor will meet it with the values that have guided us since our inception.



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