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From the St. Louis Business Journal:

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Lashly & Baer's Lisa Stump on how her firm is innovating its health care practice

Jul 26, 2019, 5:00am CDT

Lashly & Baer has been providing legal services in St. Louis for more than 100 years. The midsize law firm helped make history from 1972-1999, when it worked on a case that found the state of Missouri guilty of failing to properly desegregate St. Louis' schools. Today, Lashly & Baer has 51 attorneys in 10 practice areas and ranks 15th on this year's Largest Law Firms List.



Lisa Stump of Lashly & Baer

We spoke with President Lisa Stump to learn more about how Lashly & Baer continues to grow and innovate in the 21st century. The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Lashly & Baer recently formed a health care team. Tell us a bit about that. We have always had a significant practice area in health care law. We have a significant amount of health care corporate-type work, and then also we have a large medical malpractice department. But what we were finding was that there was increased activity that we were getting with existing clients in an area that doesn't really neatly fit into either of those two. And so we formed a health care advisory team, which is really to get involved with government investigations, payer disputes, licensure issues — all those types of issues that our clients were dealing with that hadn't really been that prominent, but have probably tripled in the past two years. I

think that's partly from the action that the government and the commercial payers have been taking with respect to the health care industry.

What is the biggest challenge facing the firm? I think our biggest challenge is just that we are growing, and we're in an old bank building downtown. So we are going to have to start considering where we're going to put everybody. We would never move — we own our building, and we've been down here since 1979. Being in the city of St. Louis is very important to us, and we're very active in the community. As we've grown, we have had access to more space next door, which we've used. We've had a bridge that can go over there. I would say we will expand within our existing space.

Lashly & Baer has said it values diversity, and has its own Director of Equal Opportunity Programs. How does the firm work to advance diversity? We have a diversity committee that meets monthly and tries to figure out ways to increase our diversity amongst our staff and amongst our attorneys. I think I'm one of the few local law firm presidents that is a female and that also has an active law practice. Our firm has always supported women, certainly in leadership positions, and we have events that are designed to facilitate our relationship with our women clients, too. But as far as diversity as a whole, we have a diversity committee, and we participate in the diversity hiring programs that the law schools have.

What are some trends you've noticed among local law firms? One interesting trend that's changing the practice of law a lot is just the addition of technology, with being able to practice anywhere at any time. A lot of people don't really even necessarily have to come into the office every day. Technology makes us always be accessible to our clients. With everybody having smartphones and being able to access their work emails, clients are able to call attorneys at all times.

How has Lashly & Baer managed to stay alive and relevant for 107 years? I think part of it has been our diversified client base. We practice in a lot of different areas, so I think that really helps us. For example, our top 10 largest clients right now make up no more than 26% of our overall revenue. So when, for instance, 10 years ago the medical malpractice business cut back because of some changes in law, the firm could keep going because we have other areas that we practice in. We've made a constituted effort to make sure that we don't lean too heavily on one or two clients.

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Data Reporter

St. Louis Business Journal

