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The Corner Office: Q&A with Trey Cox



Photo courtesy of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher

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Trey Cox is an accomplished trial lawyer and co-partner in charge of the Dallas office of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher. Chamber USA rates Cox in its elite “Band 1” category as one of a handful of the leading trial lawyers in Texas and is the youngest trial lawyer to be included in Chambers USA’s Texas Trial Lawyers “Spotlight Table.” Cox is also a fellow of the American Board of Trial Advocates and the Litigation Counsel of America.

Kate Cassidy: How’s your practice going?

Trey Cox: Everything is going great. I’m blessed to work at a wonderful firm. I have fabulous partners here in Texas and across the country and a whole bunch of incredibly talented associates. Some of the most significant litigation in the country is here in Texas right now. Litigation is counter-cyclical or anti-cyclical. Meaning that in

my experience businesses continue having business disputes and fight over business deals, whether the economy is up or economy is down. The disputes and claims are just different depending on whether the economy is up or down.

Cassidy: Do you want to speak about the growth of Gibson Dunn in Dallas?

Cox: I’m one of the co-partners in charge of the Dallas office. Krista Hanvey, who is on the corporate side, and I have worked specifically on growing the Dallas office to keep pace with client needs and demands here in Texas. When we stepped into our shared role about three years ago, we had 53 lawyers in Dallas. Today, I am pleased to report that we’re up to 103, with the final members of our new class arriving next week. We’ve grown consistently and maintained high quality.

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Most importantly, utilization, revenues and net revenue have also grown consistently and appropriately.

Cassidy: Are there any trends that you've seen in Texas litigation?

Cox: One of the things that has been pretty consistent for the last few years is the number of big law firms from California, New York, et cetera, moving in setting up shop, such as Kirkland, O'Melveny, Paul Hastings (in Houston) and Quinn Emanuel. They've continued to grow and change the market here in Texas.

Cassidy: You practiced at a Texas litigation boutique (Lynn Pinker) and now global firm with Gibson Dunn. How would you compare the two types of firms?

Cox: I have enjoyed my time greatly at both places. I have great friendships and respect for my colleagues at both places. There is a need and demand in the market for both types of firms. There are certain cases, by virtue of the size of them, that it is more appropriate for big law and the number of resources and specialization they can bring to bear on the issue. I also think that there are other cases that because of their size or the firm's experience, that a litigation boutique is an excellent solution. I think there's plenty of room and demand in the market for both of them.

Cassidy: What has led to your career success?

Cox: That is easy. No. 1 is a supportive spouse. My wife Erin, who is also a lawyer, has been incredibly supportive of my career over the years. She's been understanding of the hard work, commitment and energy that you have to put into creating a successful law practice. Second, you need the support and guidance of good mentors. Someone that will teach you and bring you along and help you develop as a lawyer in the profession. And then ultimately, you need a great team to

work with. If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. Nobody does anything big alone and nobody ever does them overnight. It's a bunch of consistent hard work over a long period of time with a good team.

Cassidy: What are your thoughts on the debate on attorneys working remotely versus in my office?

Cox: Our firm has an official policy of flexibility. Our lawyers are responsible professionals that take care of their business. They come into the office when it is necessary and when it is needed in their professional judgment.

For me personally, I come to work every single day. I'm a little bit like a little school kid. I need to put on my uniform and go sit in my desk. I need the structure. For younger lawyers who are trying to develop, I personally think it's important for them to come in because of the mentoring and learning opportunities. I have always felt that learning takes place in what I call the interstitial spaces — those moments in between. When you're driving back from the courthouse after a hearing, and you talk about why we did this or how we approached it this way. In the breaks in depositions. After you hang up after a conference call or even a Zoom hearing. Also, I enjoy the interaction with people. One of the great things about being at Gibson Dunn is having so many really smart people around me. I have five former U.S. Supreme Court clerks, 53 appellate clerks, and 15 Fifth Circuit clerks as my colleagues. What I enjoy most is consulting with my colleagues about that how we attack issues and solve problems. It's just a pure benefit to be able to practice with folks like Mike Raiff, Ashley Johnson, Rob Walters and Jeff Chapman, to name a few.

Cassidy: Do you have any career advice for young attorneys?

Cox: Get involved and take as many

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opportunities as you possibly can. Get in there and, for litigation at least, take depositions. Anytime that you can, take a deposition. I don't care whether it's scary or it's difficult. Just get in there and take the deposition. Do the hearing, make the presentation and grab a role at a mock trial. Those are the experiences that allow you to develop. They are what I call "at bats." It gives you experience. Nobody can take those experiences away from you. You're going to continue to build on those experiences. One of the things that my dad told me when I graduated from law school was, "Congratulations. You have your law degree and passed the bar. Now, the only thing that separates you and me is 25 years of experience." He was right. You have to go get that experience. You have to make mistakes and fall down. You have to get back up. That is what develops judgment.

Cassidy: On the lighter side, what's your favorite travel destination?

Cox: My wife and I love to travel. We love to

take our children and have our family have lots of different experiences. We're big on experiences and memories as opposed to things. Nobody remembers what they got from Santa Claus four years ago. But they don't forget those trips you take and the sights you see. Our best family trip was a photo safari to South Africa. We made a stop in Dubai and went up in the tallest building in the world and skied at an indoor ski resort. We went to South Africa (Cape Town) for several days. And then ended with the safari for 5 days. It was amazing.

Cassidy: What are you reading for fun right now?

Cox: I'm reading *Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros. My colleague Rachel Robertson challenged me to read it. It's a fantasy — dragons kind of book. It just came out two days ago, and I'm already about halfway through, so I'm enjoying it. That's what I'm reading on the lighter side of things. Otherwise, you can usually find me reading a leadership book or a sports biography.