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Meckler leads by his example

Attorney uses hard work and lots of energy to help his law firm meet its goals

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Co-chairman Bruce R. Meckler cannot recall the last time he took a true vacation.

Meckler, from Meckler, Bulger, Tilson, Marick & Pearson LLP, said on average he works about 80 hours a week on law firm issues and client matters. Besides his management duties, Meckler practices law full time, he said.

"I don't remember the last real vacation I had," Meckler said. "If you're on a beach or in courtroom, you're expected to be around to deal with client issues."

"When people want you on firm or client matters, you have to be responsive, particularly with the advent of technology."

Meckler said he likes to lead by example.

"You have to show people how to do things and how it's done," he said. "I mean by that your work effort, your effort to grow as a lawyer and develop business and continue to be a quality lawyer."

Steven D. Pearson, a partner at the firm, and Meckler worked together since 1990.

Meckler is "far and away the lightning bolt leader that keeps us energized," Pearson said. "He leads by example with respect to his energy and strategy for cases."

The firm's lawyers handle large, complex civil cases, Pearson said.

Meckler "has great clarity of vision from a case strategy standpoint," he said.

Meckler described his firm as a consensus driven operation with a four-member, executive committee.

"We decide things by consensus at all levels," he said.

Pearson agreed and said Meckler works at "building consensus

and solving internal problems by consensus."

Since the firm opened in 1994, Meckler served as either chairman or co-chairman. Joseph E. Tilson serves as the firm's other co-chairman.

The firm started out as Bates, Meckler, Bulger & Tilson, with 16 lawyers coming from Pope & John Ltd. and Katten, Muchin, Rosenman LLP, he said.

Robert J. Bates Jr. left the firm in 1999.

The firm did not remain small and now consists of 112 lawyers working out of offices in Chicago, Dallas, Phoenix and San Francisco.

"We didn't have particular plans to grow," Meckler said. "Our business drove it."

Pearson said, "I think our growth and expansion and being able to keep all that together speaks volumes about (Meckler's) leadership style."

The San Francisco office opened last year with 11 lawyers and now stands at 15 lawyers.

The firm's plans include continued strategic growth, Meckler said.

He said his firm continues look-

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Bruce R. Meckler

Co-chairman, Meckler, Bulger, Tilson, Marick & Pearson LLP

- **Headquarters:** Chicago.
- **Size:** About \$50 million in revenue during 2011.
- **Lawyers:** 112.
- **Offices:** Four.
- **Age:** 56.
- **Law school:** The John Marshall Law School, 1981.
- **Organizations:** Member of the Judicial Inquiry Board; and emeritus member, The John Marshall Law School Board of Trustees.
- **Interests:** Playing basketball and riding his Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

ing at Southern California as a possible location for an office. It expects to add an as-yet undetermined number of lawyers to its four current offices.

"We are looking at some lateral partner hires in all of our markets," Meckler said.

The firm remains primarily a litigation firm handling general litigation, insurance, labor and employment matters, along with attorney fees litigation, Meckler said.

"I'm a generalist trial lawyer, but certainly developed a specialty in attorney fees matters," he said.

Longtime firm clients include Zurich Insurance Co., Allstate Insurance Co., GEICO and Archer Daniels Midland Co., he said.

James R. Figliulo, a partner with

Figliulo & Silverman P.C., got to know Meckler about 25 years ago when they met as opposing counsel. Figliulo said he's counseled Meckler and his partners on various matters over the years.

Figliulo called Meckler "a very instinctive and intuitive manager as opposed to your traditional law firm manager."

When it comes to hiring partners and determining the firm's direction, Meckler "acts quickly and instinctively," he said.

"I think (Meckler's) a strong leader because he's got strong opinions," he said. "There's not a lot of ambiguity about (Meckler)."

The main challenges facing Meckler as co-chairman include keeping his firm's lawyers motivated to develop themselves and develop business, along with facing an uncertain economy, he said.

But Meckler said he "thinks things are getting better. I see our clients and their industries doing better."

Meckler grew up in Washington, D.C., as the middle of three children and said he "enjoyed arguing with everybody about everything."

Meckler, now a married father of two adult children, graduated from Bradley University in Peoria. He then worked for about two years as an administrative assistant in Chicago Mayor Michael A. Bilandic's office.

After graduation from The John Marshall Law School, Meckler worked as an assistant Cook County state's attorney for three years ending in 1984.

Meckler next worked at Pope, Ballard, Shepard & Fowle. In 1986, Meckler joined Phelan, Pope & John Ltd. and remained there until starting his own firm in 1994.

In terms of client relations and marketing, the firm puts on continuing legal education seminars and "webinars," Meckler said.

About two months ago, Meckler and other firm partners participated in a Web seminar about employment practices as well as noncompetition and nonsolicitation agreements, he said.

Earlier this year, the firm's lawyers also presented a seminar in Chicago for clients in the architect and engineer defense practice area, he said.

"Conducting seminars for clients is a big part of what we do" involving marketing, Meckler said.

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