

Steady AT THE HELM

Leader of Wyatt Tarrant & Combs reflects on first five years leading firm

RON BATH | BUSINESS FIRST



Bill Hollander, managing partner of Wyatt Tarrant Combs, is shown at his standup desk on the 28th floor of the PNC tower.

WILLIAM HOLLANDER

Managing partner, Wyatt Tarrant & Combs LLP

Born: April 5, 1953

Wife: Lisa Keener

Son: Evan Hollander, 20

Residence: Crescent Hill

Education: Bachelor's degree, government, Harvard University, 1975; law degree, Indiana University, 1984

Community involvement:

Chairman, Leadership Louisville Center board of directors; vice chairman, The Library Foundation board of directors |

BEING AROUND LOUISVILLE'S FUTURE LEADERS 'EXHILARATING'

In July of 2012, Bill Hollander, managing partner of Wyatt Tarrant & Combs LLP, began a one-year term as chairman of the Leadership Louisville Center's board of directors. Hollander was a member of the 1994 class of Leadership Louisville.

"I really enjoy that work," Hollander said.

Since becoming chairman, he said he has been able to see that the city of Louisville has a number of talented leaders.

Seeing such leadership "will restore or maintain your faith in the future," Hollander said. "There's just so many bright and engaged people in the community. It's kind of exhilarating to be around them." |

By **ANDREW ROBINSON** | Staff Writer
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When Bill Hollander became managing partner of Wyatt Tarrant & Combs LLP in 2007, he didn't anticipate that within a few months he would be leading the law firm through a recession, which he believes has affected the law industry more than any economic downturn in his 28-year professional career.

"It's been an interesting period," Hollander said.

Nonetheless, his goal is to leave the 200-year-old firm in better shape than he found it, despite the challenges the profession as a whole has endured.

"I think we're on track to do that," Hollander said. "It's been a challenge, but it's nice to have a large firm with a mix of practices."

More than anything, the last five years for Hollander have

been about learning, something he enjoys.

"At a law firm, by far your most valuable resources walk out the door every day and come back every day," he said of the firm's attorneys. "Understanding people and trying to respond to their needs is something I work on every day. I'm certainly still learning."

Being prepared for future

Hollander said it was not easy to know at the beginning of the recession that it was going to be as prolonged as it has been, but he hasn't been caught off guard by much in the five years he has led the firm.

He said that lawyers generally did not expect that a number of the steps taken at the beginning of the recession — such as non-hourly billing, fewer large classes of first-year lawyers coming from law schools and a greater focus on efficiency and

project-management skills — would become permanent.

But as the recession lingered, those changes became entrenched, and "I think people are more inclined to think those are permanent," Hollander said.

Keeping it growing, keeping it personal

Hollander regularly travels from Louisville to the firm's offices in other markets, making frequent trips to Nashville and Memphis, Tenn., and Jackson, Miss. The firm also has offices in Lexington, Ky., and New Albany, Ind.

"I think it's very important, and I think it helps bind the firm together," he said. "I don't think there's any real substitute for sitting down in a partner's office or having a smaller meeting."

In 2012, the firm added 27 lawyers, including nine through the acquisition of a Memphis firm, Williams McDaniel PC, which was Wyatt Tarrant & Combs' largest acquisition under Hollander's watch.

The firm currently has about 200 lawyers.

Hollander said the firm gains value by adding experienced lawyers because they typically require less training than younger lawyers and bring their own client bases.

He said the firm's focus in the next several years will continue to be on growth, whether it be adding lawyers in existing offices or expanding in new markets.

"Our growth could come in a lot of different ways." |