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From the Phoenix Business Journal:

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Exclusive: Tech-minded millennial named big law firm CEO after starting as file clerk

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Mar 7, 2018, 11:49am MST

James Goodnow first landed at Fennemore Craig PC — one of the Southwest's top law firms — in 2000 as a file clerk.

Now, Goodnow, 36, has been named managing partner of the Phoenix law firm, which has 160 attorneys and has been around since 1885 — 27 years before Arizona became a state.

Goodnow, who got his law degree from Harvard Law School, was file clerk at Fennemore while in college. He interned at the firm during the summers of 2004 and 2005, and started as a lawyer in 2006.

Now, the millennial is becoming managing partner — a job that essentially serves as Fennemore's CEO. He's the youngest managing partner in the firm's history.

He's served on the firm's management committee and will take over managing partner duties from Steve Good next month.

Goodnow said he always wanted to be an attorney but didn't foresee having CEO duties at a large firm like Fennemore.

"Since I was a kid I always wanted to be a lawyer," said Goodnow in an interview Wednesday morning with the *Phoenix Business Journal*.

Goodnow — a business litigator — said he would keep some of his existing cases and clients but wants to dive into the management post.

"I'll keep a small caseload," he said.

He said traditional law firms are challenged by virtual firms and the technology that legal companies can offer to clients and prospects. He added law firms aren't unlike other sectors — such as retail — in facing changes in the marketplace often led by technology and e-commerce.

The Phoenix attorney said law firms need to look beyond their own industry and what other lawyers are doing if they want to be innovative and forward-thinking.



FENNEMORE CRAIG
James Goodnow

“Law firms tend to copy other law firms — to their detriment,” Goodnow said.

He said he’s toured offices and talked to executives at companies such as Facebook (NYSE: FB), Google (Nasdaq: GOOGL) and Amazon.com (Nasdaq: AMZN) subsidiary Zappos to see how they approach innovation and a changing marketplace.

“We’re also a business,” Goodnow said.

The lawyer said he picked up some ideas from Facebook by having organized and open-minded brainstorming. Facebook calls those hackathons, where employees can pitch new idea and changes.

Goodnow wants to bring those kind of ideas to the firm and his industry.

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