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WEEKLY

LAW FIRM LEADER

Missouri
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AWARDS 2016

Richard Walters

Managing Partner, Spencer Fane, Springfield



BY ALLYSSA D. DUDLEY

When Richard Walters talks about establishing Spencer Fane's new office in Springfield, he frequently uses the words "we" and "us." He'll only say "I" if you ask him point blank about his role as managing partner.

"I have to remind myself that I'm the managing partner because, literally, it is

very easy to manage this group," Walters said.

Out of law school Walters worked for a small firm before joining what was at the time Blackwell Sanders. He stayed with that firm as it became Husch Blackwell.

Walters left for Spencer Fane in 2014. The level of autonomy Spencer Fane was offering him was appealing, he said, and he liked the idea of staying in Springfield, where he grew up, went to college, and spent some time as a summer associate at Blackwell Sanders in 1997.

It was there that Walters met with the late Richard Dorr. Dorr later became a federal judge. Like Walters, he had left a small boutique firm to join Blackwell Sanders. Walters said that Dorr acted as a model for leadership in establishing the new Spencer Fane offices.

"His methods and the way he approached things with that office and his strong work ethic was very important to me when we were thinking of opening the Springfield office for Spencer Fane," Walters said.

Under his leadership, the Spencer

Fane office more than doubled in size during its first year, growing from six attorneys to becoming home to 14 and three paralegals. That was no surprise to Walters.

"We knew that we would be growing, because our practices required additional attorney support," he said.

Such growth may seem better suited to a larger legal market, but Walters sees no restriction in his office's location. In fact, most of his work comes not only from outside of his hometown, but outside of the state.

"There's essentially no boundary limits for us as lawyers at Spencer Fane,

and in the Springfield office, to be able to handle projects from coast to coast," he said.

As the firm has grown in size, they have continued to grow their work within the community. Many members serve on local public service boards, or volunteer their time.

"We're beneficiaries of our community, and we want to give back," Walters said.

Whether inside his law offices or in his community, Walters just can't help but use the word "we."

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RICHARD WALTERS