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HERE COME THE MILLENNIALS

They outnumber boomers and Gen Xers, and some of them are now your partners. Here's what you're in for.

James Goodnow of Fennermore Craig is the youngest partner ever on its management team.

An **ALM** Publication



JAMES GOODNOW

PHOTOGRAPH BY TRAVIS NEELY

MEET THE NEW BOSS

THE YOUNGEST MEMBER OF FENNEMORE CRAIG'S MANAGEMENT TEAM, JAMES GOODNOW, SHOWS WHAT THE FIRM OF THE FUTURE MIGHT LOOK LIKE.

BY JULIE TRIEDMAN

INSIDE FENNEMORE CRAIG'S NEW “green room,” James Goodnow bursts into motion as the camera begins to roll. The 34-year-old litigation partner, riffing off bullet points scrolling on a teleprompter, holds out the new iPad Pro, reviewing its capabilities with the practiced ease and sunny enthusiasm of a Weather Channel newscaster. After minimal editing, the five-minute podcast will be ready to upload to his practice group's website, part of Goodnow's effort to build his personal Web presence and to create more “buzz” for his practice.

It's all in a day's work for Goodnow, a Phoenix-based litigator as comfortable in front of the camera as in the courtroom. After hours, colleagues say, it's not unusual to find him writing code for the landing page of his practice, very possibly the only plaintiffs personal injury group at a large U.S. law firm. (The firm last ranked on the Am Law 200 in 2013, when it was 199th and posted \$97 million in revenues.)

Firms that don't get on board with Internet marketing, cloud-based file sharing and mobile lawyering stand to lose client business, Goodnow

says. “Ten years down the road, you may not be getting your clients the old-fashioned way,” Goodnow says. “Your clients increasingly have an expectation that you're going to have an Internet presence. If you fail to do that, you're sending the message that you're rejecting modern business thinking.”

In January, in recognition of Goodnow's success in driving new clients to Fennemore Craig as well as his overall contributions, the firm appointed him the youngest-ever member of the five-member management committee. His fellow partners now look to him to help the six-office firm innovate and to stem lawyer departures. Sustaining growth, they say, means finding ways to retain youthful talent like Goodnow, who as a top recruit demanded, and was permitted, more control over his career path than most rookie lawyers.

Though Goodnow's choice of practice—personal injury—is far from typical, his ease with technology and his desire to chart his own course is widely shared by his peers. Lawyers of Goodnow's age “want their laptops. They want to be able to leave at 5 and

dial in from home so they can be with their families,” says Stephen Good, a tax lawyer who became managing partner last fall. “They want to know ‘Where am I headed if I become a partner at Fennemore Craig?’ I never thought about that coming up the ranks.” Still unclear: To what extent will Goodnow's peers in more traditional corporate work and defense-side litigation be able to adopt the collaborative and Internet-forward approach he espouses?

GOODNOW'S METEORIC RISE FROM associate to partner and from partner to firm leadership stems from a remarkably steady inner career compass. “A lot of friends went to law school by default. Not me,” says Goodnow, walking briskly across the Fennemore parking area to a new high-end espresso bar. Sipping a steamed milk (no coffee), he says he had known since childhood that he would follow in his lawyer-father's footsteps. His father, Gordon Goodnow Jr., 68, is “a classic leather briefcase, dark suits and cuff-links” lawyer, his son says, and for 24 years was a deputy county attorney. (He is currently associate general

counsel at the nonprofit health care system Banner Health.) “The whole Internet part, he just doesn’t understand. It’s mind-blowing to him. Even our ‘jeans days’ might raise an eyebrow for him,” Goodnow says.

After graduating first in his class at Santa Clara University in political science, Goodnow was admitted to Harvard Law School; but unlike his friends at Harvard, he was determined to return home. While they went on to top-tier firms in 2006, he moved back to his home town of Phoenix, accepting an associate position at Fennemore, a 200-lawyer, 131-year-old firm with deep ties to local mining, utility and real estate interests that was on a growth spurt; it would soon open offices in Denver and Las Vegas.

At Fennemore, Goodnow turned down the traditional litigation associate track of defense-side grunt work, dues-paying slow ascent up the ranks, the rare trial. Instead, he asked to be assigned instead to Marc Lamber. Lamber, 49, had carved out an unusual plaintiffs-side niche in catastrophic injury and wrongful death litigation. Trained as an environmental litigator, Lamber had gotten his first PI cases representing families of Fennemore lawyers and staff involved in accidents. Soon colleagues began sending over business clients needing similar help.

Goodnow wanted to help individuals more directly than he could as a civil litigation associate, he says. He also liked that Lamber was approaching his practice in a new way. For example, in personal injury cases, a first step is sending the defendant a “demand” letter, a formal request laying out the plaintiff’s case and a monetary demand. Lamber, by contrast, began sending the letter in the form of a compact disc that included pictures and links to news stories and case law.

Goodnow soon helped Lamber ramp up the technology a few notches. If a

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picture was worth a thousand words, a video could be worth even more. With the firm’s approval, the pair funded and set up a production department and began producing video demands, delivering them to defense counsel on loaner laptops, and in 2010, on iPads. Loaded up with slick video demand letters—at a cost of as much as \$100,000—and sent to defendants in slick aluminum briefcases, matters started settling earlier and for more money. Goodnow “was always saying, ‘Let’s show them everything. Why shouldn’t we?’” recalls Lamber. “But that was novel. That led to moving cases forward more quickly and, when appropriate, settling them. Which for our clients can be a really good thing.”

IN 2008, THE BOTTOM FELL OUT OF THE housing and finance market, hitting Fennemore’s real estate and corporate practices hard. The personal injury practice, however, was humming along

on a quickening string of seven-figure fee recoveries. Good, the managing partner, won’t say how much the group contributed to the bottom line except to say it was “significant.” In recognition of his firmwide contributions, Goodnow was elevated to the partnership in late 2011 at the end of his fifth year, three years earlier than most.

That same year, he and Lamber took two trips to Silicon Valley businesses including Apple Inc., Google Inc. and Facebook Inc. to see firsthand the best practices at the most innovative companies—with the idea of “ripping them off and bringing them to the law firm,” says Goodnow. He tapped former Santa Clara classmates at each company for an insider’s tour. “What we saw was that the companies that were successful were the early adopters,” Goodnow says.

Over the next two years, Goodnow and Lamber—much like the most sophisticated plaintiffs firms, but unlike most large corporate firms—also began building a multimedia website to draw traffic to their practice, drawing on the latest Google search algorithms to maximize the number of potential client “hits” on the site. The effort paid off: 80 percent of the practice’s individual clients now come to the practice via Internet searches, and the practice has become a national, rather than a local, one. Their site is a top Google result for searches in Phoenix, and it’s climbing in Denver; the practice’s next target is Chicago. A call center set up by the group currently gets about 30 potential client calls per day. That’s giving the practice the ability to select only the largest potential claims, which largely involve vehicle accidents and defective products. The website has “turned into a massive revenue generator for us,” Lamber says.

Lamber credits Goodnow with convincing him to build a team of nonlawyers and nontraditional-track

lawyers to handle intake and oversee case management. The team—two contract attorneys, two case managers, two intake people and a practice group manager—meet weekly for “brainstorming” sessions in a “war room” covered with chalkboard and whiteboard paint to jot down ideas. At one such session, members of the group came up with the idea of providing clients, many located out of state or incapacitated, with loaner iPads fully loaded with their case materials; clients can also access their lawyers via Skype, making meetings simpler.

In 2013, after another brainstorming session, the team began giving some accident victims Google Glass to record the difficulties they faced in daily life, bringing their injuries

to light in new and powerful ways. The technology has since withered, but Goodnow says that it was a stepping stone to the group’s thinking about new ways to integrate wearable technologies into the practice of law. Nowadays, the practice’s lawyers and staff use Apple watches to contact each other via taps, avoiding the need for intrusive texts or calls.

“Historically, collaboration was, I don’t want to say frowned upon, but it certainly was not promoted in the legal industry. The concept is that ‘well, clients are paying for lawyers, and clients don’t want to pay for meetings to make sure there’s no overlapping work,’” Goodnow says. “The reality is that some of the best ideas are hatched in these brainstorming sessions.”

Goodnow’s rocketlike trajectory nearly came to a screeching halt later that year. In 2013, with his wife, Erin, nine months pregnant with the couple’s second child, Goodnow was diagnosed with a rare form of kidney disease. The illness could have been fatal, but in the end responded well to medication. It took nearly a year for the young lawyer to return to a full schedule. In late 2014, he launched a nonprofit, The Kidney Challenge, to raise awareness about kidney disease. The site now has over 26,000 followers from around the world.

Back in health, but busier than ever, Goodnow tries to keep his professional and personal life in balance. A former nationally competitive cyclist, he is up by 4:45 each morning to work out before eating breakfast with his family,



**GOODNOW, RIGHT, WITH
MARC LAMBER AND
A 1970S ATARI VIDEO
GAME SYSTEM**

and tries to return home by 6:30 p.m., when his 3-year-old daughter Kelly and 2-year-son Brody go to bed.

WHILE 2013 HAD BEEN A BANNER year for the firm, the next two years were tough, according to Good, the firm's managing partner. Since January 2015, the firm has seen 19 partners and 11 associates depart, according to ALM's RivalEdge database. Profitability remained flat, Good said.

In response, last year the firm adopted a comprehensive plan for the future. "The main components are to keep our people happy," says Good. Committees, some including associates, are investigating alternative staffing models, such as part-time or "virtual" counsel; hiring and retention; succession planning; and reducing overhead. The elevation of Goodnow into senior management is a piece of that plan.

Some partners, particularly older lawyers, have resisted the tech initiatives, Good admits. And not everyone has welcomed the increasing profile of the personal injury practice. A few years ago, when the two stepped up their Web and media campaign and tried to raise the practice's profile on the firm's website, the then leadership "said, 'We do not want this PI practice highlighted on Fennemore Craig's website, which represents big business,'" Good recalls.

Lamber and Goodnow worked around that unease by building an eponymous website, LamberGoodnow.com, linked back to Fennemore but with distinctive branding, multimedia content, a "red phone" icon advertising free consultations and a "chat" box. The two are ubiquitous on-air sources for local and national news and talk shows, aided by a new website, legalcommentator.com, that they set up to facilitate interviews.

In 2014, for example, Goodnow appeared on CNN and "Good Morning America," representing the family of the gun instructor who died when an 9-year-old girl learning to shoot an Uzi lost control of the weapon.

THE NEXT TEST WILL BE FINDING WAYS to apply innovations in Goodnow's and Lamber's plaintiffs-side work to other practices. There are plans to help the firm's fledgling emerging companies practice to set up its own search-optimized Web portal in order to reach new clients, Goodnow says. "These are people starting new businesses that, by the way, have no connection to lawyers," Goodnow says. "They're going to go look for legal services in the way people of their generation do, via the Internet."

Several of the firm's newest "soft" initiatives promoted by Goodnow—casual dress days every day, whiteboard paint along the hallways and a well-stocked game room—are lifted right from the tech industry playbook. Even small cultural changes may be helpful in retaining younger talent; "what sets you apart from the competition can be measured in millimeters," Lamber says. "The little things like that can make an amazing difference."

Meanwhile, Goodnow has continued to serve as the flag-bearer for the new, more informal style. Inside his office on a recent springlike day, he was clad in neat dark-wash jeans—\$15.57 from Target—and a Banana Republic sports jacket. Beside his desk was a tiny putting course—Goodnow plays no golf, just "mini-golf"—and two walls are half-covered by giant monitors he purchased. Their screensavers play a loop of photos of his children, and his wife, a former associate editor at The Arizona Republic whom he met in high school. These days, she raises the children and occasionally

writes posts for LamberGoodnow.com's personal injury blog, like one in December on "teaching kids to be friendly—and safe—around dogs" in a tab labeled "dog bites."

Goodnow recognizes that his experience isn't typical at large firms, let alone at Fennemore Craig. His rapid associate advance—where he was quickly adopted as an equal partner by Lamber—remains the exception to the rule. The hierarchical model "permeates the legal industry," he says. In the past, when he got together with his five closest law school buddies, it turned into a gripe session. "It's all how grueling the hours are, or how poorly treated they are," he says.

He, on the other hand, has been free to experiment, and now, to bring the firm along for the ride. A few years ago, for example, unsatisfied with his public speaking chops, Goodnow flew himself out to Las Vegas to observe the World Championship of Public Speaking. He was so inspired that he convinced the firm to hire the champion to come out to Phoenix to address Fennemore lawyers and staff. The workshop drew an overflow crowd of 150 participants.

"I've been able to do what I think a lot of people my age are asking for," Goodnow says, "and that is to create their own paths."

And Goodnow has inspired other young lawyers to get involved in firm affairs, says Maureen "Mo" Watson, a Denver midlevel associate in health care defense litigation, who recently joined two firm committees, on retention and on legal technology. "A lot of us want to feel that we're going to have broader impact" within the firm, Watson says. Now, firm leadership "is inviting the next generation into the conversation."

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