

Firm Founders

Cozen O'Connor is one of the country's largest and most profitable law firms — an Am Law 100 powerhouse with more than 925 lawyers, 33 offices on two continents, and home to industry-leading practice groups and ancillary businesses.

Orlofsky, Cozen & Begier first opened its doors in 1970 under that name. The foundation for its extraordinary growth and transformation was laid by two principals, [Stephen A. Cozen](#) and [Patrick J. O'Connor](#). These giants of the law started as competitors, became colleagues and friends, and, after more than a half century of partnership, ended up more like brothers.

Steve was raised in a close-knit Jewish family in South Philadelphia and Wynnfield, Pennsylvania. He graduated from University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1964 and went to work for his uncle, Sidney Orlofsky, a locally respected insurance litigator. Soon after, he started developing a unique book of recovery business focused on a long-neglected area of the insurance practice that Steve saw as having vast potential.

When Orlofsky died suddenly in 1968, Steve could have easily moved to a more established firm. But he bet on himself and decided to build a new firm from the ground up. The first years were heady, with the upstart firm scoring some big verdicts in litigation relating to The Spectrum roof blow off and Connelly Containers fire. Steve earned a reputation as a lawyer who knew how to investigate, litigate and win, attracting more clients and, critically, interest from other attorneys also eager to try cases.

Pat O'Connor was one of them. Pat grew up in a large Catholic family in a blue-collar neighborhood of Kingston, Pennsylvania. His father died when he was 15, and his mother raised 10 children on her own. After graduating from Villanova School of Law in 1967, Pat was an up-and-comer at Pepper Hamilton when he and Steve first got to know each other.



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They were opposing lead counsel in a complex and contentious litigation. It was a hard-fought case—and each came to respect the other’s keen intelligence and competitive drive. At the conclusion of that case, Steve asked Pat to join the firm. Pat already knew that traditional lockstep was not for him and liked the idea of challenging the establishment. Moreover, he and Steve clicked personally; they complimented one another. Pat joined the firm on September 1, 1973.

Since then, they have both achieved more than either could have possibly imagined.

Steve became one of the most distinguished litigators and appellate advocates of his generation and has had a leading role in the most infamous catastrophes in modern American history, from Three Mile Island to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He is a trusted advisor to top business executives and political figures, relied upon for his strategic guidance and ability to broker high-stakes deals. He is also a nationally respected philanthropist and nonprofit leader, dedicating countless hours, dollars, and sweat equity to medical, educational, cultural, and Jewish organizations working for the common good.

Likewise, Pat became one of the toughest and most respected trial lawyers of the last half century. A true lawyer’s lawyer, his record of courtroom victories is unparalleled. But he also became a business leader par excellence, serving as CEO of Cozen O’Connor through its transition to second-generation management and sitting on numerous corporate boards. Devoted to Temple University and its mission, Pat served on Temple’s board for nearly 25 years and was its Chairman, alongside his work on behalf of other public safety, health, and educational organizations.

Together, they catalyzed Cozen O’Connor’s success. They hired other young and hungry attorneys (Joe Gerber, Richard Glazer, Bob Reeder, Dave Strawbridge, Mike Izzo, Mike Henry and Vince McGuinness) who were willing to work as hard and wanted to win as much as they did. They formed a novel corporate structure and put the firm on sound financial footing. They expanded in terms of headcount, geography, and practice areas. And they built a lasting institution that remains rooted in their shared values of excellence, entrepreneurialism, philanthropy, and service; and it is that culture – more than anything else – which attracts the best and brightest to practice at this great firm.



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