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Law firm rebuffs offers; prefers midsize

GRAY REED & MCGRAW WANTS TO BEEF UP REAL ESTATE AND HEALTH CARE

Texas-based Gray Reed & McGraw in May announced that, after 26 years of service and leadership, Tom Rhodus would step aside as managing shareholder in the Dallas office and from the firm's Executive Committee. Andrew Meyercord, who heads the health care section, will succeed Rhodus.

Rhodus, 70, started his 45-year legal career as a trial attorney with the Tax Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, and served as managing shareholder of Gray Reed's Dallas office since its opening in 1990. Rhodus will remain an active member at Gray Reed continuing his practice.

Meyercord focuses his practice on health care and transactional matters. Board certified in health law, he has advised physician groups, hospitals and other health care providers for more than 25 years.

Gray Reed, with more than 120 lawyers practicing in Dallas and Houston, offers a range of legal services including business litigation, corporate transactions, oil and gas, tax planning and litigation, real estate, health care, trusts and estates, employment law, family law, intellectual property and bankruptcy.

In this interview, Meyercord discusses challenges and opportunities facing the firm:

What are your goals for the Dallas office? The office will remain strong, and it will continue to grow. I see my role as to continue what Tom started. He started with two people and he has done a remarkable job. He has been the face of the office for a long time.

Do you have changes in mind or new directions for the firm? No. Tom has been the life and soul of the office since it started. I was the third lawyer here and we have grown as necessary to meet out clients' needs and are continuing to grow both the firm and the Dallas office. The firm several years ago made the decision that we want to be a midsize Texas firm. We will continue to grow. We have gaps to fill.

Where are the gaps? We've got a very strong IP (intellectual property) section, a very strong employment section, a strong health care practice in Dallas, and the firm overall has a strong litigation section. We could use some more real estate help in Dallas, and our health care section is understaffed currently. As we see opportunities for good lawyers, we will add them.

What lesson have you learned from Tom? Keep an open mind, and make sure that people come first.

Andrew Meyercord will lead the Dallas office of Gray Reed & McGraw. They are often approached as acquisition targets, but have no interest in joining some 1,000-lawyer firm.



What type of health care practice does Gray Reed have? Our health care practice is transactionally based. We represent providers – hospitals, physician groups, suppliers and other vendors in the health care industry. We do litigation. We do a lot of licensing and peer review type work for hospitals.

Does Gray Reed get approached regularly by law firms seeking to acquire the firm? Yes. But we want to be a midsize Texas firm. We don't want to be part of a 1,000-lawyer firm.

Will the consolidation in health care continue? It will continue in the foreseeable future. I'm not necessarily saying it will be true mergers. There will be a lot of joint ventures, joint operating arrangements and alliances.

What is the most challenging part of your job? Structuring transactions within a very complex regulatory framework.

What advice would you give employers? Work with the providers as well as the payers. One issue in the market today is narrow networks, which are limiting people's access. Like maybe now I can't go see the doctor I've seen since I was 12 years old. That's problematic with what we are trying to do to serve the community. That needs to change, and I think employers can help that change by working with the providers and payers.

ANDREW MEYERCORD

Position: Managing shareholder in the Dallas office of Gray Reed & McGraw

Specialty: Health care law

Experience: For over 25 years, he has advised physician groups, hospitals and other health care providers in all areas impacted by health laws. Represents large physician organizations. Advises clients on the structuring, organization, licensing and operation of ambulatory surgery centers and hospitals.

Education: Bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.; Law degree from Southern Methodist University Dedman School of law

For fun: Spends time with 2-month-old grandson; hangs out at Possum Kingdom Lake

How did you become interested in health care law? I was a tax lawyer with a law firm that represented hundreds of physician practices. I found the health care side of physician practices more interesting and challenging (than the tax side). There weren't a lot of lawyers providing those types of legal services.

What does the future of health care look like? It will be more complicated than the past. We're becoming more specialized in our health care practices, so as lawyers we're becoming more specialized.

—Bill Hethcock