

## EXECUTIVE PROFILE

# BOB PATTERSON

On his brush with astrophysics, remembering the big picture, speed dating at work and why he does not have a bucket list.

*Bob Patterson is the new managing partner of the Nashville office for Bradley Arant Boulton Cummings, one of the largest regional law firms in the Southeast with more than 100 attorneys in Nashville. Ten years ago, when he was managing director of the former Boulton Cummings Conner & Berry,*

### Q & A

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*Patterson led the firm's expansion and move out of downtown Nashville. His decision to anchor what would become Roundabout Plaza initiated a wave of development in the area.*

#### WHAT IS THE MOST OUTSIDE-OF-THE-BOX IDEA YOU HAVE EVER HAD IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER?

Four years ago, Boulton Cummings Conner & Berry merged with Birmingham-based Bradley Arant Rose & White. As the co-leader of the combined litigation section, I arranged a speed dating exercise so the 160 trial lawyers across our seven offices might make connections with one another.

**WHAT WAS THE RESULT?** It worked great through about three or four rounds, after which the lawyers were having too much fun to move on to their next "date." It likely helped that it was an after-hours event.

**WHAT SINGLE THING MAKES YOUR ORGANIZATION STAND OUT?** We deliver value. We are hired for our legal expertise, but take pride in helping our clients exercise business judgment to develop workable solutions to meet their goals. Internally, we were among the first to embrace technology and innovation as our response to a rapidly changing legal environment. By way of example, we implemented "legal process improvement" and "alternative fee arrangements" before those terms were coined in our industry.

**HOW DID YOU WIND UP IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION?** Our firm selects a new office managing partner every couple of years. I had previously served as the managing partner of Boulton Cummings Conner & Berry and embraced this as an opportunity to utilize the best of our Nashville heritage to leverage our firm's platform of 432 lawyers for the benefit of our clients.

**WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE BUSINESS LEADER?** The ability to assure that big picture goals drive daily decision making.

**FAVORITE HOBBIES?** Most anything involving exercise or sports; reading; gardening; traveling.

**GOAL YET TO BE ACHIEVED?** Too many to count; perhaps as a result, one of my goals is to appreciate the journey more than the destination.



NATHAN MORGAN | NASHVILLE BUSINESS JOURNAL

**Bob Patterson of Bradley Arant Boulton Cummings, managing partner of the law firm's Nashville office, enjoys his work. "I love helping people, and I love the intellectual challenge that each new case brings," he said.**

**PROFESSIONAL PET PEEVE?** Lack of perspective and/or empathy. We would all be better off if we could place our issues in the context of a larger framework and appreciate the perspective of others who must deal with those same issues.

**WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT?** (Darn) near everything.

**WHAT WORD BEST DESCRIBES YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE?** Creative.

**PETS?** We're down to one dog, a wire-haired fox terrier.

**WHEN FACED WITH TWO EQUALLY QUALIFIED CANDIDATES, HOW DO YOU DETERMINE WHOM TO HIRE?** I am always looking for a cultural fit.

**MOST PRIZED POSSESSION?** Personally, photos of my family. Professionally, a sculpture given to me by the team with whom I worked when I served as managing partner of Boulton Cummings.

**BIGGEST PROFESSIONAL MISTAKE AND HOW YOU OVERCAME IT?** When I was managing partner of Boulton Cummings, I failed to rebut the assumption that I was a full-time managing partner to the exclusion of practicing law. While I enjoy leadership roles and particularly "change management," my first priority each day is client service.

**YOU'VE JUST BEEN GIVEN \$100,000 TO DONATE TO CHARITY. WHERE WOULD YOU GIVE IT, AND WHY?** Vanderbilt Children's Hospital. They do incredible work for our most innocent citizens.

### Bob Patterson

**Age:** 59

**Title:** Managing partner, Nashville office

**Company:** Bradley Arant Boulton Cummings LLP

**Address:** 1600 Division St., Nashville 37203

**Web:** babc.com

**Employees:** Nashville office, 102 lawyers and 81 staff; firm-wide, 432 lawyers and 356 staff.

**Most recently read book:** "The Zookeeper's Wife," by Diane Ackerman  
**Favorite music artist:** Jimmy Buffet (He can't sing, but I love his music and his attitude.)

**Education:** Rice University, B.A., physics, 1975; Vanderbilt School of Law, 1978.

**Community involvement:** Immediate past chairman, board member, Nashville Convention and Visitors Bureau; board member, past chairman, Vanderbilt Children's Hospital; Arts in the Airport; SuccessPAC; Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce

**WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO CROSS OFF YOUR "BUCKET LIST" NEXT?** I don't have a bucket list. Most everything interests me at some level, and I've never really felt the need to prioritize.

**PERSON OUTSIDE OF YOUR FAMILY YOU WOULD MOST LIKE TO SPEND TIME WITH ON AN ISLAND?** Now, this is a question that could get you in big trouble with your spouse. All kidding aside, I think people like Peggy Noonan who are astute observers of life at a macro level would be fascinating.

**WHAT LINE OF WORK WOULD YOU PURSUE IF YOU COULDN'T WORK IN YOUR PRESENT ONE?** Landscape architect.

**ORGANIZATION OR COMPANY OTHER THAN YOUR OWN THAT YOU MOST ADMIRE?** Procter & Gamble, because it is an incredibly well run company that has somehow managed to remain a prominent player in an industry of consumer staples that logically should compete solely on the basis of price.

**WHAT IS THERE ABOUT YOU THAT PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO LEARN?** There is nothing in my profile that commends me to the practice of law. There are no other lawyers in my family. I was a physics major as an undergraduate and seriously considered graduate school in astrophysics. According to my career assessments, I should be involved in a business. Yet, even after 35 years, I am energized daily by the challenging issues entrusted to me by my partners and my clients.

**IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE ONE, WHAT IS (OR WOULD BE) YOUR GO-TO KARAOKE SONG?** Not happening; I have a one-note repertoire, and tend to sing it off beat.