

**C&L Partners Find New Home At Wiggin**  
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## **C&L Partners Find New Home At Wiggin**

*Trust-and-estate lawyers welcome greater resources in other practice areas*

**By DOUGLAS S. MALAN**

When it comes to helping Fairfield County's most affluent members manage their wealth, Stamford-based Cummings & Lockwood still stands supreme, with more than 55 lawyers in its individual clients practice group.

It's the firm's lack of depth, however, in other areas of law practice that two now-former principals are citing as the reason for their jump to Wiggin and Dana.

Daniel L. Daniels and David T. Leibell, both 45, spent more than a decade together at Cummings & Lockwood—the last five as principals—representing some of the largest charitable organizations in the world, according to Daniels.

Over that period, the wealth of the clients coming to them grew significantly. With that growth came demands for increasingly complex legal representation across numerous practice groups, many of which were diminished when Cummings & Lockwood went through a reorganization in 2003, the end result of which was the departure of most of its business clients group to the Connecticut offices of McCarter & English and Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge.

"The average size of a client coming through the door is much higher [than before] and it's not uncommon for them to have \$15 million, \$20 million or even \$100 million," said Daniels, who declined comment on the value of his or Leibell's book of business. Both have joined Wiggin and Dana's Stamford office, [Wiggin announced Oct. 29](#).

"Size often translates into complexity," Daniels noted, and for those ultra-wealthy clients, "the need for a more diverse legal team is generally going to be greater."

### **'Deeper Bench'**

Daniels represents business owners, corporate executives and other wealthy individuals and their families. He has been named to Worth magazine's ["Top 100" list](#) of leading lawyers for affluent families in the U.S. Leibell concentrates his practice on business succession planning, wealth-preserving estate plans and charitable planning. Those areas often intersect with tax, real estate, corporate, securities and litigation practices, Daniels said.

As an example, he said, clients often approach him about structuring a limited liability company to hold investments or need counsel regarding securities law when a family entity is formed to invest in hedge funds. In those instances, the various practice groups at Wiggin and Dana offer resources commensurate for a firm that, with approximately 140 lawyers, is roughly double the size of C&L.

Specifically, Daniels noted that Leibell's established client list of charitable organizations will benefit greatly from the resources of Wiggin's tax-exempt organizations practice.

"Here [at Wiggin and Dana] there's a deeper bench" of lawyers to assist clients, Daniels said.

### **The New York Factor**

Another key factor behind their move is Wiggin and Dana's presence in New York City, Daniels said, about which he is "very enthusiastic." Though separated by roughly 40 miles, the distance between Stamford and Manhattan can be perceived as a considerable detriment in some clients' eyes and "occasionally" cost Daniels business while at C&L, he said. Wiggin's office on Lexington Avenue should provide an entrée into a pool of new clients, Daniels predicted.

"I don't want to overplay that, but I have lost clients" who wanted a law firm with a New York presence, he noted.

Location especially came into play when administering New York estates. Daniels said he would have to engage co-counsel for appearances in New York courtrooms and sometimes clients questioned the logic of paying for two law firms' services.

In joining Wiggin's Stamford office, Daniels and Leibell are literally moving down the street and around the corner, less than a half-mile from Cummings' headquarters.

Lunch dates with their former colleagues remain a strong possibility, as both Daniels and Cummings & Lockwood Chairman Jonathan B. Mills said the split was amicable, their relationship still friendly and the respect for each other high.

But "in terms of a financial impact, I don't think it's significant," said Mills. "It's certainly a loss, but fortunately we have a large and deep bench" of more than 55 individual clients' lawyers and an overall staff of 110 dedicated to the work. In 2006, C&L represented executors and trustees, and served as individual executors and trustees, on hundreds of trusts and estates with a combined value exceeding \$10 billion, according to the firm's web site.

Mills said C&L is in the initial stages of opening an additional office on the East Coast but declined to divulge further details.

With the additions, Wiggin's trusts-and-estates practice now has 14 lawyers.

Daniels said he and Leibell actively sought out Wiggin and Dana on their own using personal contacts in a courtship that began several months ago. Though he declined to say how many other firms expressed interest once word hit the streets of their availability, Daniels said that there were "a lot of great firms that we could have chosen" by virtue of their relationships with various firm management teams.

In the end, Wiggin and Dana outmaneuvered the competition.

"We are thrilled to grow the trusts and estates practice group with the addition of lawyers of Dan's and Dave's caliber," said Leonard Leader, chairman of Wiggin's trusts and estates department.