



The Partners of Coughlin Duffy LLP. Front Row, from left: Timothy Smith, Jason Meisner, Suzanne Midlige, James Wyse, Adam Smith and Lorraine Armenti. Second Row, from left: Kelly Waters, Kevin Coughlin, John Deitch, Justin Kinney, Paul Lisovicz and Robert Muilenburg. Third Row, from left: Robert Kelly, Michael Sullivan, George Kelman, James Garland, Kevin Wolff and Thomas Cohn. Not pictured: Timothy Duffy, Lorna Dotro, James Lisovicz, Heidi Minuskin and Vincent Reilly.

## Law Firm Broadens Role as Business Adviser

### Coughlin Duffy LLP

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**No. of Employees:** 102

**Top Executive:**  
Suzanne Midlige, *Managing Partner*

**Products/Services:**  
Full-Service Law Firm

**Year Founded:** 2004



Like doctors treating the whole person, the attorneys at Coughlin Duffy LLP are taking a more holistic view of their clients. They focus not just on the legal challenges at hand, but on the business as a whole.

The goal is a long-term partnership with clients, one that allows attorneys to serve as true business advisers. The unique approach reflects the entrepreneurial culture the firm has adopted since its founding a decade ago, as well as a legal economy in which clients are seeking the most value from outside professionals.

“You can’t continue to do the same things in the same old way,” says Suzanne Midlige, Managing Partner at Coughlin Duffy. “You have to adapt to meet your clients’ needs, and one way we do that is to focus on our clients’ businesses and the industries they serve, not just their legal issues. It makes us a more complete service provider.”

The approach is taking root firmwide, with even junior attorneys being encouraged to think more broadly about their roles, Midlige says. “We want them to start thinking as businesspeople. We also encourage them to pick up the phone and get to know our clients. It provides an opportunity for our attorneys to develop professionally, and gives clients a deeper bench of people whom they can call on for advice.”

Founded in 2004, Coughlin Duffy is best known for its practices in insurance and the pharmaceutical/medical device field. The firm’s insurance coverage group was named by the New Jersey Law Journal as Insurance Litigation Department of the Year in 2013. “We delivered excellent results in a number of jurisdictions

on some very sophisticated work,” Midlige says.

The firm offers a range of services in addition to its core practices. Encouraged by the firm’s entrepreneurial culture, partners often carve out their own special areas of expertise, Midlige says. With the growth of the firm, Coughlin Duffy partners have developed a sophisticated trusts and estates practice, a complex commercial litigation practice, a commercial real estate practice, and a nationally recognized practice in land use and conservation easements.

The firm was founded by attorneys who left a larger law firm ahead of a merger, Midlige says. Clients, who did not want to lose their attorneys, followed. But the path wasn’t easy, Midlige says. “It was probably some of the scariest, yet most exciting times in our lives. We didn’t have a lease. We didn’t have furniture. We didn’t have office phones. We just had to commit every resource to do what it took to get the job done, and we did that.”

The same can-do spirit carried the firm through the 2008 recession, Midlige says. Today, Coughlin Duffy has grown to include 60 lawyers, 23 of whom are partners. And its practices are continuing to expand.

In addition to becoming more of a business adviser, the firm introduced alternative payment arrangements and other solutions to satisfy budget-conscious clients.

“We are always looking for ways to be more efficient, and to provide the client with the best work product at the best value,” Midlige says. “That is something that is very much on the minds of law firms and clients alike these days.”