

2019

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# TRAILBLAZERS

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## JOSEPH B. CONAHAN

WILMER CUTLER PICKERING HALE AND DORR LLP



**PIONEER SPIRIT** Despite expectations to the contrary, Joseph Conahan's physics degree has had almost nothing to do with his success as a lawyer. When he started law school, people told Conahan that his science background was perfect for patent law — but then he took a patent class, and realized it wasn't for him. But when he graduated and started work in WilmerHale's Wash-

ington office, Conahan found his niche in mergers and acquisitions. He loved the "pace and the cadence and the adrenaline high" of high-stakes deals, and "here I am 15 years later." His practice focuses on companies in life sciences, high technology, financial technology and industrial sectors. The deals he helps make are often highly complex, requiring nimble responses to complicated issues.

**TRAILS BLAZED** Conahan has guided dozens of companies through complex transactions, some of them worth in excess of \$1 billion. These deals include the acquisition of Electro Scientific Industries by MKS Instruments, the sale of Perosphere Pharmaceuticals to AMAG Pharmaceuticals and the acquisition of a WilmerHale client, Exonics Therapeutics, by Vertex Pharmaceuticals. "I'm a firm believer that for virtually all problems that present themselves, there's a solution out there. People just have to be thoughtful and really listen to each other and figure out how to achieve that solution."

**FUTURE EXPLORATIONS** As Conahan continues to build a reputation as a dealmaker, he is looking at transactions "where this firm can add a lot of value by thinking creatively and working very hard and diligently to accomplish our clients' objectives." He compares his approach to the advice he would give first-year associates: "It boils down to listening, and listening very closely, to what your client's objectives are and what the other side's objectives and needs are and working with everyone in the room to help figure out the solution."