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THE 2011 MIDSIZE HOT LIST

Twenty firms in the 50- to 150-lawyer range have proven they can continue to thrive in this troubled economy.

July 11, 2011

This year we set out to blow up our annual Midsize Hot List — in a good way.

We asked scores of firms of between 50 and 150 attorneys to answer a detailed questionnaire designed to measure what makes a firm great — big cases and deals, but also commitment to diversity and their pro bono responsibilities. We carefully studied their responses to arrive at the list you'll find in these pages.

We settled on 20 firms that demonstrated excellence in the courtroom or boardroom; that spotted a niche that eluded their competitors or that excelled on many fronts; that developed innovative management, billing or training structures; that changed the face of the country's cities; that set the standard for midsize practice — firms that clearly stand apart from your everyday law firm.

THE MIDSIZE HOTLIST

Twenty firms in the 50- to 150-lawyer range have proven they can continue to thrive in this troubled economy.

FEATURED FIRMS



Real estate workouts, antitrust practice buoy Miami firm

Bilzin Sumberg's healthy business in workouts makes it one of the few South Florida firms actively hiring.



Reorganizing, winning big cases, building big things

Since William Coblentz's death on Sept. 13, the San Francisco firm that bears his name — Coblentz, Patch, Duffy & Bass — has remained a powerful fixture in California real estate.



They're from Washington, and they're aggressive

Zuckerman Spaeder is selective about the cases it takes, believes in lean staffing and gets results.



NLJ VIDEO  Staff reporter Karen Sloan talks to Andy Sandler, chairman of BuckleySandler.

CHART: [Inside this year's Midsize Hot List](#)

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The inside story on this year's Midsize Hot List firms

A breakdown of how the firms compare in demographics, revenue, leverage and pro bono.

Firm	Female Partners	Minority Partners	Total Partners	Female Associates	Minority Associates	Total Associates	Female Other	Minority Other	Total Other	Total Attorneys	Change from 2010	Partner: Associate Ratio
Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo	18	16	70	27	12	59	3	0	6	135	2.3%	0.98:1
Bartlit Beck Herman Palenchar & Scott	9	3	53	6	2	16	0	0	0	69	0.98%	3.3:1
Beveridge & Diamond	17	3	51	16	6	33	3	1	8	92		1.55:1
Bilzin Sumberg Baena Price & Axelrod	9	6	45	20	10	46	3	3	6	97	3.8%	1:01:00
Bodman	24	3	92	14	3	35	8	1	17	144	4%	2.6:1
BuckleySandler	8	1	25	20	7	40	29	21	60	125	42%	0.63:1
Carter Ledyard & Milburn	4	2	43	22	7	35	9	0	25	103	9.7%	1.23:1
Coblentz, Patch, Duffy & Bass	17	3	42	13	5	24	0	0	2	68	10.27%	1.75:1
McKool Smith Mitchell	7	0	60	23	5	76	0	0	13	149		1:0.79

* As reported by Texas Lawyer. Source: NLJ Research.

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THE 2010 MIDSIZE HOT LIST

This year's Midsize Hot List shows the agility of law firms with 50 to 150 attorneys in ducking the recession's blows — or at least bouncing back more quickly than many big-firm competitors.

July 12, 2010

This year's Midsize Hot List shows the agility of law firms with 50 to 150 attorneys in ducking the recession's blows — or at least bouncing back more quickly than many big-firm competitors.

Lower hourly rates remain the greatest advantage that midsize firms offer, but it's not all about the money. The firms included on this year's list have demonstrated the ability to snag big clients by offering specialized services and to hold on to smaller clients through bread-and-butter practices including estate planning and employee benefits.

The National Law Journal's Midsize Hot List includes 20 law firms that have thrived amid the downturn. From among the stacks of nominations we received, we selected firms that experienced a string of successes and that showed innovative ways to run their operations despite the economy.

We've highlighted two firms — Minneapolis-based Bowman and Brooke and Shartsis Friese of San Francisco — to illustrate what it takes to get ahead as a midsize law firm in a market increasingly dominated by large-firm competition.

We recognize that many firms could have made the list. That said, those included here show not only that bigger is not necessarily better, but that midsize is often the right size. — *Leigh Jones*

THE MIDSIZE HOT LIST

Bigger isn't necessarily better. These firms stand out by proving to be right-sized for the clients they represent.

Playing to the audience gives Bowman its edge



Bowman and Brooke's ability to attract big clients and land big cases is largely due to its tech-savvy attorneys, said Vincent Galvin Jr. All of the firm's lawyers, he stressed, make it a point to understand the engineering and the science behind the products they defend. But the real talent lies in their knack for communicating that knowledge to the jurors.

For Shartsis Friese, strong momentum



For Shartsis Friese, business hasn't slowed down in the two years since the firm secured a \$90 million settlement against Princeton University. In fact, 2009 was a "gargantuan" year for the San Francisco firm, said managing partner Art Shartsis.

NLJ VIDEO: SPOTLIGHT ON MIDSIZE FIRM LEADERS



Richard Cohen of Goldberg Segalla

Goldberg Segalla managing partner Richard Cohen speaks about how his firm sets itself apart from other litigation boutiques.



Judith Lockhart of Carter Ledyard & Milburn

Carter Ledyard & Milburn managing partner Judith Lockhart discusses how to succeed in a market dominated by large firm competitors.

FURTHER READING:

THE 2009 MIDSIZE HOT LIST

The 20 law firms featured in last year's special report on midsize firms.

THE 2010 APPELLATE HOT LIST

The law firms on this list contributed in meaningful ways to the most important appeals of the year.

THE 2009 PLAINTIFFS' HOT LIST

The firms that represent the best qualities of the plaintiffs' bar and demonstrate unusual dedication and creativity.

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THE 2011 MIDSIZE HOT LIST

July 11, 2011

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ATKINSON, ANDELSON, LOYA, RUUD & ROMO

Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo remained profitable during the economic downturn by maintaining a diversified practice representing both private- and public-sector clients, including more than 400 California school districts, according to James Romo, managing partner of the Cerritos, Calif., firm.

"The combination has allowed us to weather the storm rather effectively, even during the dark days," Romo said. "When one sector is having problems, the other helps to carry us through."

Established in 1979, Atkinson Andelson now has 140 attorneys working in seven California offices and a small outpost in Nevada. The full-service firm offers in-house training and conferences for attorneys and human resources staff on a variety of hot-button issues, including sexual harassment, discrimination, and promotion-related lawsuits.

"Our goal is to build long-lasting relationships by becoming trusted advisers to all our clients," Romo said. Additionally, "we charge less per hour than many larger firms do for the same type of work. We represent many statewide institutions, and since we have offices in various cities, we are an attractive option."

The firm prides itself on litigating precedent-setting cases. In 2010, Atkinson Andelson won summary judgment in a sex bias action filed by three laid-off workers against Los Angeles, Calif., Superior Court. "Had they lost, it would have paved the way for similar suits at a time when the courts are facing significant budget cuts," Romo said. — *Sherry Karabin*

BARTLIT BECK HERMAN PALENCHAR & SCOTT

Bartlit Beck Herman Palenchar & Scott hardly flies under the radar. Since its founding in 1993, the 69-attorney Chicago-based litigation firm has won high-profile victories on behalf of major corporations including Merck & Co., Ernst & Young LLP and E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Co. Even with that track record, the past year stands out as a strong one.

In May, for example, Bartlit Beck successfully defended engine maker United Technologies Corp. in a \$3.4 billion patent infringement suit brought by Rolls Royce PLC. Two months earlier, the U.S. Supreme Court denied certiorari in a case that pit its client, Bayer Corp., against an antitrust class action arising from a patent settlement involving the

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drug maker's antibiotic Cipro — ending an 11-year legal fight in favor of Bayer.

"They are very seasoned," said Du Pont General Counsel Thomas Sager. "They know how to connect with jurors. I don't know if it's their Midwest charm, but they read the courtroom very well."

Outside the courtroom, the firm abandoned the billable hour in 2002 in favor of flat fees and contingency arrangements long before they came into vogue. The firm doesn't hire laterals, preferring instead to train its young attorneys, said managing partner Skip Herman.

"We don't hire people to meet demand, like most firms," he said. "We only hire people if the supply is there — that is, if we find great people. These past few years, with other firms hiring fewer people, the supply has been there." — *Karen Sloan*

BEVERIDGE & DIAMOND

Not many law firms have their roots in Watergate, but Washington-based environmental law firm Beveridge & Diamond can thank President Nixon for its existence.

Deputy U.S. Attorney General William Ruckelshaus found himself out of a job after he refused Nixon's order to fire Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox. So in 1974, Ruckelshaus helped form the firm of Ruckelshaus, Beveridge, Fairbanks and Diamond with a focus on environmental law. The 92-attorney firm remains "the oldest and largest environmental boutique in the country, doing all matter of environmental regulatory work on a national and international basis," managing partner Benjamin Wilson said.

During the past year, the firm defended major oil firms including Sunoco Inc. from environmental challenges. Sunoco settled a suit in Pennsylvania charging it had contaminated a nearby U.S. government facility without incurring any future responsibility for cleanup. Beveridge & Diamond also represents Sunoco on pending legal matters including groundwater claims in New Hampshire.

Nearly 40% of the attorneys on staff are women and 11% are minorities. "We try to have geographic and gender diversity, and the culture of the firm is to build consensus around major decisions," Wilson said. For almost 15 years, the firm has provided significant pro bono legal assistance to clients of the Whitman-Walker Clinic, which serves persons with HIV/AIDS throughout the Washington area. — *Lisa Holton*

BLIZIN SUMBERG

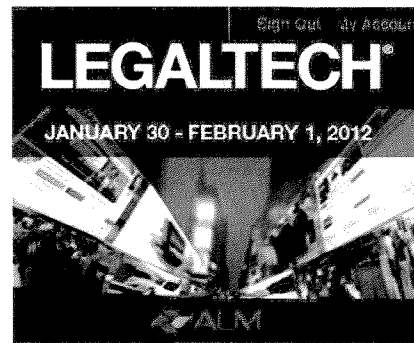
See feature, "Real estate workouts, antitrust practice buoy Miami firm"

BODMAN

At Bodman, it's all about the ties that bind. The Detroit firm has represented members of the Ford family since 1929, when Henry Ford cut his company's in-house legal staff but remained close with his attorneys, who would go on to form Bodman. "One of our goals is to establish and maintain long-standing client relationships so we are not just doing one-off projects. We are looked to as their lawyers, their counselors, their advisers," said Ralph McDowell, chairman of Bodman's executive committee.

The firm's decadeslong relationship with one of its biggest clients, Comerica Bank, was an offshoot of the Ford connection. Bodman helped Ford's son, Edsel Ford, create Manufacturers National Bank of Detroit, which eventually merged with Comerica. "We would like to have that same relationship with every client," McDowell said.

Bodman has expanded its client list by making its services available to medium and small financial institutions. A Bodman attorney came up with the idea for a financial-institutions compliance cooperative during the early 1980s, and it has grown to 90 banks, McDowell said. Members pay a pro rata share of legal fees for help with banking compliance and regulations, and receive one hour of free consultation each month. The program allows



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"smaller state banking institutions to have access to very high-level advice, especially with respect to complex federal and state regulations, but at a reasonable price that they could afford," McDowell said. — *Zoe Tillman*

[Sign Out](#) | [My Account](#)**BUCKLEYSANDLER**

Note: This item has been corrected to reflect the actual status of the United Western Bancorp Inc. litigation.

Few firms have experienced a hiring boom quite like BuckleySandler has during the past year. The firm attorney staff grew by 42%, bolstered in part by the financial crisis. Since it formed 2 1/2 years ago, BuckleySandler has tripled in size, from 40 lawyers to 125.

The addition of three new partners from Mayer Brown — David Krakoff, Christopher Regan and James Parkinson — and four partners promoted internally was driven by the needs of the white-collar defense and financial services industry regulatory and enforcement practices. "It is so busy right now that we're trying to keep up with client demands and needs," said Andrew Sandler, the Washington firm's chairman.

During the past year, the firm invested tens of thousands of lawyer hours compiling a database of consumer lending and retail banking laws in all 50 states. The 30,000-page survey includes more than 10,000 laws covering everything from mortgage and credit card lending to retail banking and consumer loans.

The firm represented the Navajo Nation in a dispute over a coal mine, is suing to remove the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. as a receiver of United Western Bancorp Inc. (and recently defeated the FDIC's motion to dismiss) and represents Wesley Snipes in his tax conviction appeal.

"We all decided that rather than being in the big-firm environment, we wanted to build an organization that was the absolute top of the game of what we do," Sandler said. "We certainly did not anticipate the breadth and depth of the practice that we would have 2 1/2 years into this experiment." — *Matthew Huisman*

CARTER LEDYARD & MILBURN

Carter Ledyard & Milburn is one of just a handful of midsize New York firms that still offers a full menu of corporate legal services, from real estate to securities to intellectual property. To avoid becoming a boutique specialist or the outpost of a megafirm, the 157-year-old firm has trimmed costs by remaining in the same Wall Street offices it has occupied for more than 75 years and subletting excess space to another firm. It grants discounts to transactional clients if a deal doesn't close and also for high-volume clients.

"The recession made it more apparent that midsize firms do have a place in this market," said managing partner Judith Lockhart. "The pyramidal, highly leveraged models of the big firms are difficult to sustain. Clients do not want to pay for a lot of work that is done by junior associates."

Carter Ledyard's headcount grew by nearly 10%, to 103 lawyers, last year. It hopes to grow to about 150 lawyers.

Among the firm's achievements last year was helping environmental investment firm Natsource LLC defeat a \$200 million claim by RNK Capital LLC in a dispute over Natsource's attempt to acquire carbon credits under the Kyoto Protocol from a project in China. It advised two state-based carbon-trading programs, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and the Western Climate Initiative, in their efforts to establish emissions auctions. And it advised Israel's Eurocom Group in its \$1.8 billion acquisition of Bezeq Israel Telecommunication Corp. — *Jason McLure*

COBLENTZ, PATCH, DUFFY & BASS

See feature, "Reorganizing, winning big cases, building big things"

The Great Recession has proved no hindrance to McKool Smith. The Dallas-based litigation shop grew by one-third during the past two years, to 136 lawyers, as it has expanded a client base that includes Koch Industries Inc., Halliburton Co. and American Airlines Inc. The rise in the number of failed companies has led to a growing bankruptcy practice, and the slow economy has increased the number of business deals gone bad, leading to a rise in commercial litigation.

The crisis in the housing market and the spectacular collapse of the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp., better known as Freddie Mac, provided a steady stream of work representing the failed mortgage lender. That included helping Freddie in the bankruptcy proceedings of Taylor Bean & Whitaker Mortgage Corp., the largest independent mortgage lender in the country.

Also in 2010, the firm beat out Jones Day to represent Lennox Hearth Products Inc. in a bet-the-company class action brought by fireplace owners who sought \$1.2 billion in compensation for the risk of burn injuries — a matter that reached a proposed settlement in May.

The booming technology sector is spurring plans to open new offices in San Francisco and Los Angeles, said managing partner Michael McKool. Despite the growth, McKool said that litigation remains the cornerstone. "The key is to limit your focus and become an expert in an area," he said. "Victories result in the kind of notoriety that wins clients." — *Jason McLure*

MITCHELL SILBERBERG & KNUPP

During the 1970s, lawyers from Los Angeles-based Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp litigated cases involving the piracy of eight-track tapes on behalf of their music industry clients. In the 1980s, cassette-tape piracy kept them busy. Now, the firm's 133 attorneys are steeped in the digital age, litigating a wide array of matters involving the Internet and new technology. "In many ways, the advent of the Internet has been a boon to lawyers, it's sad to say," said managing partner Thomas Lambert.

The emergence of the Internet and all the sticky legal questions that came with it has certainly been a positive business development. The firm represents the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers in rate negotiations for Internet music streaming by YouTube, and Capitol Records in litigation against file-sharing site Vimeo, to name a few.

The firm was founded in 1908 and immediately established close ties to the movie studios, maintaining offices on the film lots. Today, Mitchell Silberberg is widely recognized as a leader in litigation and labor and employment matters within the entertainment industry.

Its attorneys negotiated an age-discrimination settlement last year between the television and movie companies and 165 writers. The firm hopes to grow by parlaying its expertise to serve software, game and phone companies. Mitchell Silberberg is already in growth mode, having added four attorneys during the past year. — *Karen Sloan*

MUCH SHELIST

Note: This item has been corrected to clarify that the firm abandoned the use of outside recruiters for staff positions only—not attorney hires.

Fresh practices in environmental law, policyholders' insurance coverage and additional niche areas have kept Chicago's Much Shelist Denenberg Ament & Rubenstein nimble. The 82-attorney firm opened in 1970 with a focus on corporate and real estate matters, but by staffing new practice areas that it used to farm out, Much Shelist found it could offer the full-service representation they might find at bigger firms, managing committee chairman David Brown said.

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"For our clients who are...buying companies, having the in-house practice down the hall has made the world of difference," he said.

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The expansion is broadening the firm's national exposure; most recently, environmental practice chief Anne Viner represented ALP Lighting & Ceiling Products Inc., one of three corporate defendants named in a groundwater contamination suit in Tennessee.

Filling practice areas with associates is a top priority, Brown said. The firm stopped using an outside recruiting agency for staff hires five years ago. It also ended its summer-associate program, relying instead on word-of-mouth from Much Shelist attorneys and on headhunters. Since May 2010, the firm has hired seven new attorneys, including four partners, and promoted two associates and special counsel to partner.

Much Shelist has embraced social and professional networking sites, but doesn't rest there. "Being in touch with somebody through social media is not the end game," Brown said. — *Zoe Tillman*

NOSSAMAN

When Nossaman acquired Washington boutique O'Connor & Hannan three years ago, the Los Angeles-based firm embarked on a major expansion of its public policy work.

The 133-attorney firm already had six attorneys in Washington focused primarily on its infrastructure practice. The office now has 18 attorneys, including new hires Shelby Hagenauer, former legislative director to Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.), and Katherine Belinski, former senior counsel at the Federal Election Commission.

The group lobbies for companies and associations in the financial services, pharmaceutical and device manufacturing industries, said Timothy Jenkins, Nossaman's public policy practice leader. The firm advises companies on political contributions and is preparing for an onslaught of work leading up to the 2012 election season, particularly in light of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2010 decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*. "There will be a lot more associations that want to dabble in doing independent expenditures," Jenkins said.

The firm got another boost when the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. retained Nossaman in its investigations and lawsuits stemming from failed banks, including IndyMac Bancorp Inc. and Washington Mutual Inc. And the firm is handling environmental and infrastructure projects, including a \$1 billion seismic retrofit of a major Golden Gate Bridge approach. — *Amanda Bronstad*

NOVAK DRUCE + QUIGG

Novak Druce + Quigg is defying F. Scott Fitzgerald's adage that "there are no second acts in American lives." In its first iteration, the firm was a scrappy intellectual property startup formed in 1988 by recent law school grads Gregory Novak and Tracy Druce. In 2000, Novak and Druce merged their firm with the now-defunct Howrey. Four years later, Novak and Druce bolted the Washington litigation giant to set up shop on their own again with three other lawyers.

Seven years later, the firm has 72 lawyers and professional staff and has carved out a place as one of the nation's top specialists in challenging existing patents. This year, it opened a new office at the University of Miami's Life Science and Technology Park to service startup ventures in South Florida, and plans another in Cupertino, Calif., home of client Apple Inc.

Apple provided some of the firm's most important work during the past year. Novak Druce is defending challenges to Apple's patents in a suite of cases brought by rivals Nokia Corp., HTC Corp. and Motorola Inc. in what's become known as the "smart phone wars."

In 2009, the firm became the sponsor of the Novak Druce Centre for Professional Service

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Welcome to the New Law.com. [Click here](#) to register and get started. Firms at the University of Oxford's Said Business School. The center, previously sponsored by Clifford Chance, researches management of professional services firms. "It went from one of the top five law firms in the world to us," said Novak, the firm's managing partner. "It mirrors shifts in the legal market." — *Jason McLure*

[Sign Out](#) | [My Account](#)**OSBORN MALEDON**

From street crime and white-collar defense to mergers and acquisitions and malpractice litigation, Osborn Maledon of Phoenix has the appearance of a firm twice its size.

Fifty lawyers, including 35 partners, represent publicly traded companies, entrepreneurial startups, real estate developers and everyday criminal defendants. Name partner William Maledon recently represented AstraZeneca PLC, coordinating the defense in a multidefendant class action over drug pricing. He handles a wide range of litigation in state and federal courts, but the firm's caseload can get gritty indeed.

"We are very committed to the mix of street-crime and white-collar work that we have," Osborn partner Jean-Jacques Cabou said. "Candidly, you are a better white-collar lawyer if you know how to try a street-crime case."

Criminal appellate and post-trial work, Cabou said, continues to be a growth area. In a ruling of statewide importance this year, the Arizona Court of Appeals issued a favorable decision for Osborn over the scope of the information prosecutors must present to a grand jury.

The firm is a go-to for law firms and lawyers looking for outside ethics counseling. Osborn in 2008 won a judgment in favor of Quarles & Brady in a \$100 million legal malpractice case.

"Nothing against big law firms," said partner Mark Harrison. "We like our practice model." — *Mike Scarcella*

PIERCE ATWOOD

Courtroom prowess and a mix of specialty practices like energy, intellectual property and banking compliance have propelled Portland, Maine's Pierce Atwood to regional and growing national renown.

The 133-lawyer firm has opened offices in Boston; Providence, R.I.; and Washington since 2006. The Boston office is a special priority, said managing partner Gloria Pinza. "We felt that we are, and are growing into, a very, very strong regional firm, and Boston is a hub of that region," Pinza said.

Among its recent matters, Pierce helped supermarket chain Hannaford Bros. Co. win dismissal of all claims in a multidistrict litigation stemming from a data breach. An appeal is pending, but the case put the firm on the map for privacy and data-breach work.

The firm helped Central Maine Power Co. negotiate technology and services agreements to install a smart-meter project that's now in the installation phase. "It's one of the first ones in the country," Pinza said. "It involved a combination of IP and energy lawyers." It helped the same client win approval of a \$1.4 billion transmission upgrade. The firm negotiated the agreements behind Maine's HealthInfoNet, one of the first statewide health information exchanges.

One of Pierce's signature pro bono relationships is with Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders. The firm reviewed every Maine law for its disparate benefit to straight partners in a failed push for same-sex marriage. "We will be there for them again," partner Cathy Connors said of the issue. — *Sheri Qualters*

PRYOR CASHMAN

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From classic movie star Rock Hudson to reigning pop queen Lady Gaga, Pryor Cashman has counted plenty of big-name entertainers among its clients since the firm was founded in 1963.

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Although still deeply rooted in the entertainment industry, Pryor Cashman's 129 attorneys have branched out into practice areas including bankruptcy and family law — helping make the firm a formidable player and attractive lateral destination in the midsize market. During the past year alone, the New York firm has added lateral attorneys from larger competitors including Day Pitney and Katten Muchin Rosenman.

"The people leading the firm are right here and you can talk with them, which is a huge plus for a partner," said Jacqueline Charlesworth, who came over from Morrison & Foerster this year. "It's been a refreshing change, coming from a larger firm."

The firm's culture is more entrepreneurial than its competitors, said managing partner Ronald Shechtman. No single client represents more than 4% of the firm's business and every attorney is expected to pitch in and develop business. Pryor Cashman's latest move is into China; the firm handled more than six financings of Chinese companies during the past year.

Back in the United States, Pryor Cashman's entertainment clients have been keeping the firm busy. Its attorneys are defending rocker Courtney Love in the high-profile libel suit arising from Love's Twitter musings and guided Lady Gaga through her investment in Internet startup The Backplane Inc. — *Karen Sloan*

SHARTSIS FRIESE

Although normally a trial and litigation firm, Shartsis Friese made a big splash in its real estate practice during the past year. The San Francisco firm has carved a niche for itself, serving the real estate needs of technology firms like Google Inc., Oracle Corp. and Twitter Inc. According to founding partner Art Shartsis, the firm handled 6 million square feet of real estate.

The key in light of the declining real estate market was to shift more of the work directly to partners; Shartsis called it an "efficient and desirable" model that has allowed the firm to stand out. Founded in 1975, the firm has always valued a small-firm environment. Shartsis Friese has 54 attorneys, split between its litigation and transactional practices. The firm boasts a robust investment management and one of the largest hedge fund practices on the West Coast.

On the litigation front, the firm defended Karl Bakhtiari, a former client of California lawyer Thomas Fair. The two invested in real estate together, but when the deal went sour, Fair sued for money he thought Bakhtiari owed him. "This was a lawyer who went into business with his client without the proper ethical disclosures," Shartsis said.

The case clarified that unless the terms of business are presented in writing and the attorney advises his or her client to seek outside counsel, there is no agreement. "The sanction of the court was not only to void the agreements but to deprive the lawyer from any of the earnings," Shartsis said. "The economic consequences were huge." — *Matthew Huisman*

SUSMAN GODFREY

Long one of the nation's top litigation boutiques, Susman Godfrey is overhauling its management and compensation systems to make the 90-lawyer firm less reliant on co-managing partners Stephen Susman, 70, and H. Lee Godfrey, 72.

The firm will elect a third managing partner in August to serve a two-year term alongside Susman and Godfrey and has tweaked its eat-what-you-kill compensation system to smooth things among partners, Susman said. Partners will continue to keep 60% of their fees for their own cases and get 50% of their normal rate to work on another partner's

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case. "It means this firm is going to continue for a long time," Susman said.

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The hope is that the changes will help the firm continue winning top-tier work, such as representing Los Angeles Dodgers owner Frank McCourt in the year's most sensational divorce trial.

Susman Godfrey is one of the few firms to do roughly equal amounts of plaintiffs' and defense work. For example, the firm helped Texas power generator Luminant Generation Co. LLC defeat a \$500 million suit brought by Alcoa Inc. in a jury trial last year.

Net income rose by 20% in 2010, according to Susman (who did not provide a dollar figure) as litigation rebounded. The firm's associate class will rise to eight this year from six in 2010. "We've had a real uptick in business," Susman said. "We clearly have to hire more folks than we have in the past." — *Jason McLure*

UNGARETTI & HARRIS

Chicago-based Ungaretti & Harris prides itself on playing in the big leagues; its 100 lawyers have worked for clients including JPMorgan Chase & Co., Nissan North America Inc. and Wells Fargo & Co.

Managing partner Thomas Fahey said the firm takes a cross-discipline team approach "that allows us to magnify our numbers to play at the significant level we play at."

Business and litigation account for the bulk of the firm's workload, not including the 15 partners who work on health care, public finance and government matters. Ungaretti has been seeing increased demand related to health care services, Fahey said. "It's a very complex and energized area of the law," he said.

The firm's health care team, representing lenders and physician groups, among others, has doubled in size during the past three years. Ungaretti has staked out a niche advising family offices on complex business matters.

On the litigation front, Ungaretti scored a big win in an intermediate state appellate court in January in a taxpayer action brought on behalf of Chicago Blackhawks owner Rockwell Wirtz and liquor distributor Wirtz Beverage Group LLC. The suit alleged that the state's \$31 billion capital construction plan, which allowed video gambling and increased state liquor taxes, violated the Illinois Constitution. Ungaretti partner Sam Vinson of the firm's government department argued for Wirtz before the Illinois Supreme Court in May. — *Mike Scarcella*

ZUCKERMAN SPAEDER

See feature, "They're from Washington, and they're aggressive"

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