

## BUSINESS OF LAW: HOME FOR THE SUMMER

By Daniel Ostrovsky

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Miami native Edward Martos, a second-year law student at Northwestern University in Chicago, targeted Greenberg Traurig in Miami for a summer associate job in 2007.

In his first year of law school, Martos went through an informational interview in Chicago but got no further. This year, Greenberg lawyers interviewed him in August at the firm's Miami offices and made him an offer. He accepted on the spot.

"Greenberg was the place I wanted to be," said the aspiring land-use and real estate lawyer.

South Florida law firms are just finishing up their recruiting of associates for next summer, and Martos is the type of out-of-state student they increasingly are reaching out to. The firms are expanding their search beyond Florida law schools with the hope of landing students with South Florida ties from the nation's top law schools.

Local firms report that the number of summer associate positions they will fill for 2007 is about the same as they filled for this year, and is within the range of summer associates the firms have hired in past years.

Recruiters say that while law students still find New York City associate jobs particularly enticing, they are looking much more favorably on the South Florida market than they did in previous summers.

"Interest in coming to Miami has grown tremendously over the last five to seven years," said Alvin Lodish, the hiring partner at Bilzin Sumberg Baena Price & Axelrod. "Now the best and the brightest clearly are coming back here."

To land more students from top law schools, Bilzin Sumberg has targeted first-year law students, who generally have fewer opportunities for summer associate jobs.

Another trend is that with law school classes now evenly divided between men and women, South Florida firms are placing greater emphasis on addressing questions candidates are asking about diversity and the work-life balance.

"It's a completely different demographic," said Gregory E. Young, the Florida managing partner at Edwards Angell



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Palmer & Dodge in West Palm Beach. "There is more accounting and accommodating for work balance issues by law firms than there was 10 years ago." His firm will have two summer associates at its South Florida offices next summer.

### Future first-year associates

For most law firms, summer associate recruiting begins the summer before — even before the current class of summer associates is out the door.

Summer associate jobs are critically important both for students and law firms. Most law students eventually land first-year associate jobs at firms where they worked as summer associates. And every law firm interviewed for this article said it expected to offer first-year associate positions to all of its summer associates.

The National Association for Law Placement says 90 percent of summer associates are later offered first-year associate jobs at the same firm.

Summer associates get paid on a weekly basis and earn about the same salaries as first-year associates. According to Hunton & Williams' Web site, the firm's 2006 Miami summer associates earned \$2,400 a week, which would work out to nearly \$125,000 a year. In New York City, the firm's summer associates earned \$2,800 a week and in Atlanta \$2,211 a week.

To find the most qualified candidates, law firm representatives travel to campuses around the country to conduct interviews, since many law students choose to work through the recruiting process conducted by the school's career services office.

Most major law firms are members of the National Association for Law Placement, which maintains a set of voluntary guidelines for law firms and law school students to follow in the recruiting process.

The guidelines instruct students to gradually reduce the number of offers that they hold open between September and December, and set a Dec.1 deadline for second-year law students to decide which firm they will join. The guidelines prohibit law firms from considering the resumes of first-year law students until after the Dec. 1 date.

### Wide-ranging search

Recruiters at South Florida firms are traveling far and wide. Akerman Senterfitt in Miami sends its lawyers to about eight law schools, according to Miami shareholder Mark S. Shapiro.

For 2007, he said, the firm will have seven associates in its Miami office. Two are coming from Florida schools and the rest from such out-of-state law schools as Georgetown University, the University of Virginia and New York University.

Akerman's seven associates are consistent with the range of five to seven associates that the firm has maintained in the last several years, Shapiro said.

Greenberg Traurig, which recruits at nearly 40 schools, will have a class of eight summer associates in Miami. The class will consist of students from the University of Miami and the University of Florida, plus Northwestern, Duke University and other top out-of-state schools, said Janet McKeegan, the director of recruitment for Greenberg's Southeastern region.

Greenberg has had a range of between six and 10 summer associates in Miami and its eight summer associates for 2007 fall within that range, McKeegan said.

Bilzin Sumberg representatives traveled to nine campuses to interview summer candidates. Its 2007 class of 12 summer associates will include students from several prestigious out-of-state law schools, including Harvard and George Washington universities.

Hunton & Williams will have six summer associates in Miami in 2007, with representation from law schools such as Vanderbilt University and the University of Iowa, according to Jeffrey Bast, a partner at Hunton & Williams in Miami.

Still, recruiters say most of the students from top out-of-state schools who choose to come to South Florida have local ties. South Florida, they say, is still not looked on by students as having the same cachet as New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, or Boston.

"Mostly, people with ties to the area are the ones who want to come home," McKeegan said. "This is basically home for them."

That's fine with the recruiters, who say that they like candidates to have Florida ties so there's a better chance the summer associate will stay with the firm after graduation.

"The firm puts a lot of emphasis on relationships and geographical ties to the area," said Brad A. Sprayberry, the director of attorney recruitment for Gunster Yoakley & Stewart in West Palm Beach. "We try to find out why you are interested in us."

Gunster, which only conducts on-campus interviews at Florida law schools, receives resumes from students around the country and will have four summer associates in 2007.

Some students with Florida ties who want to spend their careers here seek a summer associate position in New York City.

"This year in particular, we've noticed a big draw from New York from the national schools," Shapiro said. "There is a perception that it's much easier to start in New York and come back to South Florida, if that's what they choose to do."

### Addressing women's issues

This year, the number of applicants to law school declined significantly. But major South Florida law firms say that they haven't been affected because there are plenty of good candidates still available to fill summer associate slots.

"If the number of students goes down, the number of top students still remains the same," Bast said.

While most major South Florida law firms say their recruiting efforts are focused on second-year law students, with perhaps one student in any particular class being a first-year, Bilzin Sumberg has taken a different approach. Out of its class of 12 summer associates, five will be first-year law students, Lodish said.

Because summer associate opportunities for first-year law students are so limited, Lodish said his firm's approach to recruiting first-year students helps Bilzin Sumberg attract top students who otherwise might not have considered working there.

Another development, Lodish said, is that South Florida firms are interviewing and hiring more female candidates. He said that law firms have to address "issues that young women lawyers have that young male lawyers may not have."

Those issues, he said, include career and family balance as well as the subpar rate for women lawyers at many national firms.