

4 Practice Areas Where NJ Firms Are Hiring

By Jeannie O'Sullivan

Law360, New York (September 12, 2016, 6:56 PM ET) -- Real estate has emerged as one of the busiest practice areas in which New Jersey law firms are hiring as the state continues its climb out of the recession, while intellectual property and corporate compliance have also found themselves in high demand in the wake of regulatory updates and landmark court rulings.

Attorneys fluent in those specialties and others, such as corporate transactional work, are hot commodities in the Garden State even as areas such as business litigation remains slow compared to earlier years, law firm leaders and other experts say.

One thing that's sure to catch a hiring manager's attention is a candidate with ready-made clients, although new talent won't necessarily get overlooked.

"We, like all firms, are looking for partners and even senior associates with transportable books of business," said McCarter & English LLP's Joseph T. Boccassini, a partner in the firm's business litigation group and a member of the firm's executive committee. "We're also looking for more junior attorneys — exceptionally talented first-, second- and third-year associates who figure to be the future leaders of our firm."

Here are some of the sectors that experts view as hotbeds of employment opportunities for attorneys, both new and seasoned, who want to work in New Jersey.

Real Estate

The economic upswing, combined with technology advances, has energized the commercial spaces market, prompting firms to beef up their real estate teams.

That includes Day Pitney LLP, which has added six new real estate attorneys since last fall. The transition from spending days in brick-and-mortar offices to telecommuting and sharing work spaces has left large office parks vacant and rife for reuse, said Heather Weine Brochin, managing partner of the firm's Parsippany office.

"Attorneys in our real estate practice are representing clients in repurposing obsolete corporate campuses for mixed-use development to include office, residential and retail components. They are also assisting clients with acquisition and leasing of industrial space in New Jersey," Brochin said.

Urban redevelopment is likewise a busy sector for Newark-based McCarter & English, according to Boccassini. And office leasing, which cooled off during the recession sparked by the subprime mortgage crisis in 2008, is hot again, he said.

"It's slowly coming back," Boccassini said.

Even the recession's remaining vestiges are still translating to business for firms.

The backlog of distressed properties has kept Day Pitney active in its consumer finance and creditors' rights services, according to Brochin, noting that the Garden State leads the nation in foreclosures.

"We have a very busy New Jersey practice representing lenders and mortgage servicers in claims brought by borrowers," Brochin said.

Intellectual Property

The Garden State has long been a bustling intellectual property litigation region given its stronghold of pharmaceutical companies, but the America Invents Act of 2011 has opened up a new frontier in intellectual property litigation and created more opportunities for patent attorneys.

The law, which went into effect in 2013, switched the right to a U.S. patent from the first to invent to the first to file the patent application to protect the original inventor.

"It's another means of challenging the validity of a patent," said Boccassini, whose firm has 85 intellectual property attorneys, marking its largest practice group.

Scarinci Hollenbeck LLC is another firm that is riding the wave of intellectual property litigation.

The firm expanded that practice group — and is continuing its recruiting effort — with its May acquisition of Bienstock & Michael LLC, a longtime intellectual property and entertainment boutique.

The five new attorneys, led by group chair Ronald S. Bienstock, has rendered the firm's intellectual property group a full-service operation specializing in trademark litigation, copyrights, portfolio management and transactions, among other areas, said partner Kenneth J. Hollenbeck of the firm's Lyndhurst headquarters.

Corporate Compliance

Keeping abreast of legal and regulatory updates is a growing priority among businesses and thus an opportunity for firms like Schwartz Simon Edelstein & Celso LLC in Whippany.

The firm recently added two new associates to launch a human resource compliance practice focused on employment practice and training, policy and document preparation, wage-and-hour compliance, workplace investigations, supervisor training and general employment counseling.

"Everyone seems to have policies in place, but they need to have questions answered," said Schwartz Simon member Stefani C. Schwartz, who counts private schools, child care facilities and salons among her corporate compliance clients.

Such services are particularly crucial right now since new Fair Labor Standards Act rules will go into effect in December, Schwartz said. The update for the federal law extends the right to overtime pay to an estimated 4.2 million workers who are currently exempt and eliminates the application of the "duties test" to determine overtime entitlement of salaried white collar and blue collar workers, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Corporate Transactions

Demand is also high for corporate transactional attorneys in the Garden State's thriving health care, insurance and pharmaceutical industries, according to recruiter David Garber of Princeton Legal Search Group LLC.

Regulatory knowledge and experience counseling companies on advertising, promotional review and government pricing make for particularly sought-after candidates, Garber said.

Law firm management consultant Joel A. Rose of Joel A. Rose & Associates Inc. in Cherry Hill said the nation's emergence from the recession as well as regulatory changes are helping to ramp up this sector of law.

"More businesses are starting up," Rose said.

--Editing by Katherine Rautenberg and Kelly Duncan.