

The 2011 California 50

Survey of The State's Largest Law Firms

by **Rene Ciria-Cruz**

When it comes to headcounts, the largest firms in California are doing better than they were in 2010. The average number of California lawyers in the state's 50 biggest firms crept upward by 1.5 percent last year.

Nationwide, the employment picture in the legal industry is decidedly mixed. Legal services lost 2,600 positions in June, but then added 4,000 jobs in July, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Hiring by law firms and corporate legal departments definitely picked up from 2009," says Matt Feuer, cofounder of legal search firm McClure & Feuer in San Francisco. "But the million-dollar question was, were the gains sustainable?"

Still, some firms are hiring more legal staff this year. As expected during a downturn, that growth is foreseen mainly in the areas of bankruptcy, foreclosure, litigation, and general commercial law. "I've seen more corporate associate openings, and recently a small uptick in real estate positions," he says. Despite the recession, "there were more IPOs this year than in the last couple years, which is a good sign."

With neither dramatic gains nor losses, the three firms at the top of the chart hold the same rankings they did last year: Latham & Watkins as number 1, followed by Morrison & Foerster, and then Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith. With 13 additional attorneys, Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton moved up to fourth place, bumping O'Melveny & Myers down to fifth after it lost 17 attorneys. This year, with firms tied for six of the rankings, the 50th firm is number 44 in size.

Fully half of this year's California 50 hired more attorneys. Sidley Austin made the most new hires (33), followed by DLA Piper (29), Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe (29), and Best Best & Krieger (21). When Howrey (last year's 37th-largest firm) dissolved, many of its lawyers went to California 50 firms such as Jones Day, which recruited 20 ex-Howrey partners and associates. And most of Best Best & Krieger's new hires came from the now-defunct Sacramento firm McDonough Holland & Allen.

But nearly half of the firms on this year's California 50 list shed attorneys. Bingham McCutchen lost the most (22), followed by Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati (20), and Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher and O'Melveny & Myers (both 17). Two firms - Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton and Cox, Castle & Nicholson, 46th and 49th last year-dropped out of the rankings altogether.

For the first time in recent years, our survey broke out data on part-time attorneys at the California 50 (see ["Who's Working Part Time and Where"](#)). Also, we added questions about lateral hires and about nonpartner tracks for associates. Look for analysis of these findings in our ESQ. section in upcoming issues.

2011 Survey of the State's Largest Law Firms

Rank	Last Year	Firm	Attorneys in CA		Attorneys Firmwide		CA Partners, 2011		CA Partners, 2010		CA Minority Partners		CA Women Partners	
			2011	2010	2011	2010	Equity	Nonequity	Equity	Nonequity	2011	2010	2011	2010
1	1	Latham & Watkins	625	624	2000	2000	196	N	195	N	19	18	34	33
2	2	Morrison & Foerster	543	546	1078	1100	186	E	184	E	26	25	41	41
3	3	Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith	501	501	787	765	66	237	65	234	54	41	98	95

4	5	Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton	458	445	565	532	71	121	71	121	15	14	35	34
5	4	O'Melveny & Myers	445	462	808	882		118R		122W	13	R	19	18
6	6	Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher	424	441	1023	1050		134N		138N	11	11	20	23
7	7	Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati	410	430	600	610		127E		132E	26	35	26	26
8	8	Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe	398	369	1129	1100		152E		163E	16	22	30	32
9	11	DLA Piper	355	326	4200	3500		159E		156E	21	22	25	29
10	9	Cooley	346	355	621	650		128E		133R	16	16	34	33
11	12	Jones Day	323	311	2408	2491		140E		123E	13	13	24	23
12	10	Paul Hastings	321	331	962	1018	78	27	80	30	15	14	20	19
13	13	Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman	294	305	680	696	83	68	84	69	15	15	33	33
14	15	Gordon & Rees	286	283	439	393	30	97	27	104	14	12	27	27
15	14	Bingham McCutchen	281	303	1075	1114		107E		113E	10	11	27	28
16	16	Reed Smith	265	258	1632	1612	56	76	53	78	25	26	32	31
17	19	Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan	258	243	472	409	69	20	63	21	7	7	18	14
18	17	Manatt, Phelps & Phillips	251	257	339	331	50	100	54	95	14	11	34	31
19	20	Littler Mendelson	248	235	830	760	101	34	92	37	19	15	43	40
20	18	Morgan, Lewis & Bockius	246	249	1355	1268		83N		90N	13	15	25	27
21	22	Fenwick & West Knobbe	240	231	264	251		91E		85E	8	10	16	13

22T	21	Martens Olson & Bear	235	234	253	249	116	1	107	X	19	X	21	18
22T	25	Sidley Austin	235	202	1647	1617		100E		95E	13	11	32	29
24	23	Allen Matkins Leck Gamble Mallory & Natsis	223	223	223	223	111	25	114	19	10	10	19	17
25	24	Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom	216	212	1886	1890		50E		49E	5	4	5	5
26	26	Seyfarth Shaw	200	200	794	748	45	40	42	44	8	7	22	22
27	32	Best Best & Krieger	196	175	196	175	60	34	67	14	14	10	29	20
28	28	Greenberg Traurig	195	191	1721	1785		100N		81N	11	11	16	15
29	27	Sedgwick	188	197	364	367		69N		68N	8	8	16	17
30	31	Kirkland & Ellis	181	178	1371	1373		76R		75N	14	17	18	19
31T	29	Irell & Manella	173	189	173	189		61E	67	E	8	10	8	9
31T	30	Munger, Tolles & Olson	173	182	173	182		91E		94N	16	15	17	16
33	35	Hanson Bridgett	157	150	157	150	63	22	57	21	13	10	24	23
34	34	McDermott Will & Emery	152	151	992	972	37	45	36	57	15	18	12	14
35	39	Rutan & Tucker	151	145	151	145		91N	70	20	5	5	10	10
36	33	Luce, Forward, Hamilton & Scripps	144	158	144	158	59	30	63	33	2	3	15	14
37	S	Perkins Coie	142	S	792	S	20	40	S	S	8	S	12	S
38T	41	Atkinson, Andelson, Loya,	140	133	140	133	23	47	20	41	16	14	18	14

		Ruud & Romo												
38T	43	Winston & Strawn	140	130	1020	920	31	22	30	25	10	10	15	15
40	36	Buchalter Nemer	138	149	152	164		73E		75E	6	7	15	16
41	44T	Loeb & Loeb	135	129	314	305	16	58	18	50	3	3	13	13
42T	47	Downey Brand	133	126	139	130		59E		53E	1	1	11	11
42T	49T	K&L Gates	133	119	1825	1863		78R	R	68	5	7	15	11
44	42	Farella Braun + Martel	131	132	131	132		71N		71N	6	5	16	16
45T	37	Foley & Lardner	130	146	892	918		61E	65	5	9	10	16	18
45T	40	Jeffer Mangels Butler & Mitchell	130	136	130	136		70N		78N	4	3	7	6
47T	S	Manning & Kass, Ellrod, Ramirez, Trester	129	S	137	S	20	26	S	S	7	S	9	S
47T	44T	Nixon Peabody	129	129	700	800		65E		67E	9	5	11	9
49	48	Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp	128	122	138	127		65E		66E	7	6	14	14
50	49T	Laughlin, Falbo, Levy & Moresi	122	119	122	119	21	7	20	7	5	4	9	8

Data as of June 30, 2011. Figures reflect the number of employed attorneys, both full and part time. R=Declined to report; S=Not surveyed in 2010; E=Equity track only; N=Does not distinguish between equity and nonequity partners; X=Data not available; T=Tied, listed alphabetically; W=From firm?s website

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