

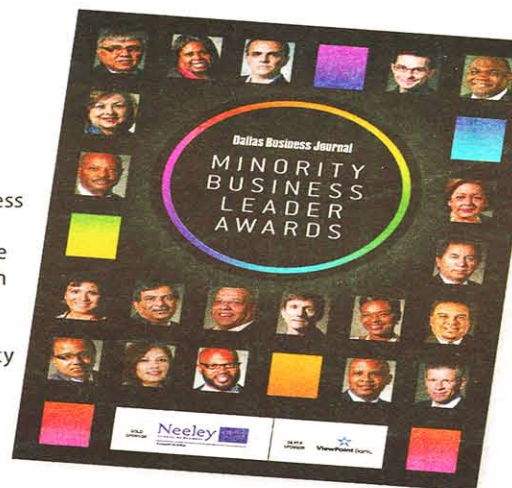
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Dallas Business Journal

Minority Business Leaders

Get to know these 20 minority business owners and executives who are leading their North Texas companies to success and positive community interaction.

SECTION B



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MAY 20-26, 2011 | \$5.50

Local law firms plan growth post-recession

BY BILL HETHCOCK | STAFF WRITER

After years of cutbacks through the recession, North Texas law firms are reporting increased hiring plans for partners, associates, summer interns and support staff.

"The market is coming around now where people are getting out of the bunker mentality," said Curtis Carlson, administrative partner for the Dallas office of Hunton & Williams LLP.

Richmond, Va.-based Hunton & Williams plans to add 20 to 30 lawyers to its Dallas office of 103 over the next two years, Carlson said. Firm records show it employed 148 in Dallas in April 2008, 130 in April 2009, 114 in April 2010 and 103 last month.

Statewide, 800 legal services workers were hired in the first three months of the year, according to the most recent data available from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Breakdowns for North Texas were not available.

Nationwide, the U.S. legal industry added 1,500 jobs in April.

The increase in legal positions comes from rising workload after firms cut staff during the recession. There's also a push by firms to add or build certain practice areas, said Howard Bloom of Dallas-based legal

recruiting firm The Howard C. Bloom Co.

"I see a sea change going on," Bloom said. "Large firms are broadening the scope of people that they will talk to in the partner ranks."

Some of the practice areas beginning to grow include real estate and labor and employment law. Demand for commercial litigation and intellectual property lawyers continues to be high, he said.

Dallas-based Godwin Ronquillo PC has hired 25 employees, including 14 lawyers, between the firm's Dallas and Houston offices since the beginning of the year, said Marcos G. Ronquillo, managing shareholder and chief operating officer for the firm. The hires take the firm's attorney count to 44 in Dallas and six in Houston.

The firm plans to add 10 to 14 lawyers between the Dallas and Houston offices in addition to paralegals and support staff in the next two months, Ronquillo said.

Donald E. Godwin, founding partner of the firm, is lead national counsel representing Halliburton Energy Services Inc. in lawsuits alleging economic and environmental damages from the Gulf of Mexico oil rig explosion.

The firm's new hires will help prepare Halliburton's defense against allegations that it caused the accident by failing to

properly cement the well on the Deepwater Horizon rig and handle other litigation related to the spill, Ronquillo said.

"As the economy is slowly creeping back, the need for a variety of legal services increases as well, but what is driving hiring at our law firm is the Halliburton/Deepwater Horizon matter," Ronquillo said.

Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP plans to add about 10 lawyers to its Dallas office of 50 by the end of the year, said Karl Nelson, co-partner-in-charge of the office.

Earlier this year, Gibson Dunn lured seven lawyers from Vinson & Elkins LLP's Dallas office. The Los Angeles-based firm is growing its Dallas office because its leadership realizes much of the nation's growth is likely to be in Texas, Nelson said.

Geographic growth is driving hiring at Dallas-based Wick Phillips Gould Martin, which added a Fort Worth office six months ago, said Bryan Wick, founding partner. The firm has hired four attorneys in Fort Worth and plans to add three to five more over the next three years, he said. The firm is also looking to hire three to five lawyers for its corporate and finance team, he said.

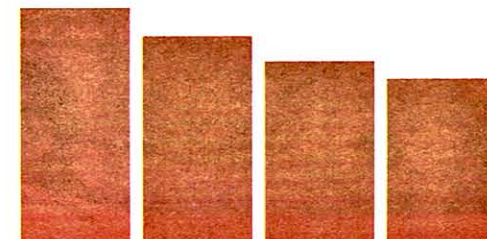
Wick Phillips has 19 lawyers now and will have about 25 within a year, Wick said. It's important to grow strategically, he said.

"We've tried to learn from some of the other firms' mistakes," Wick said. "We don't want to grow too fast and then be in a position where we have to lay people off."

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HIRING A LAWYER

Hunton & Williams plans to add up to 30 to its Dallas office. It has trimmed employment in the past few years:



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