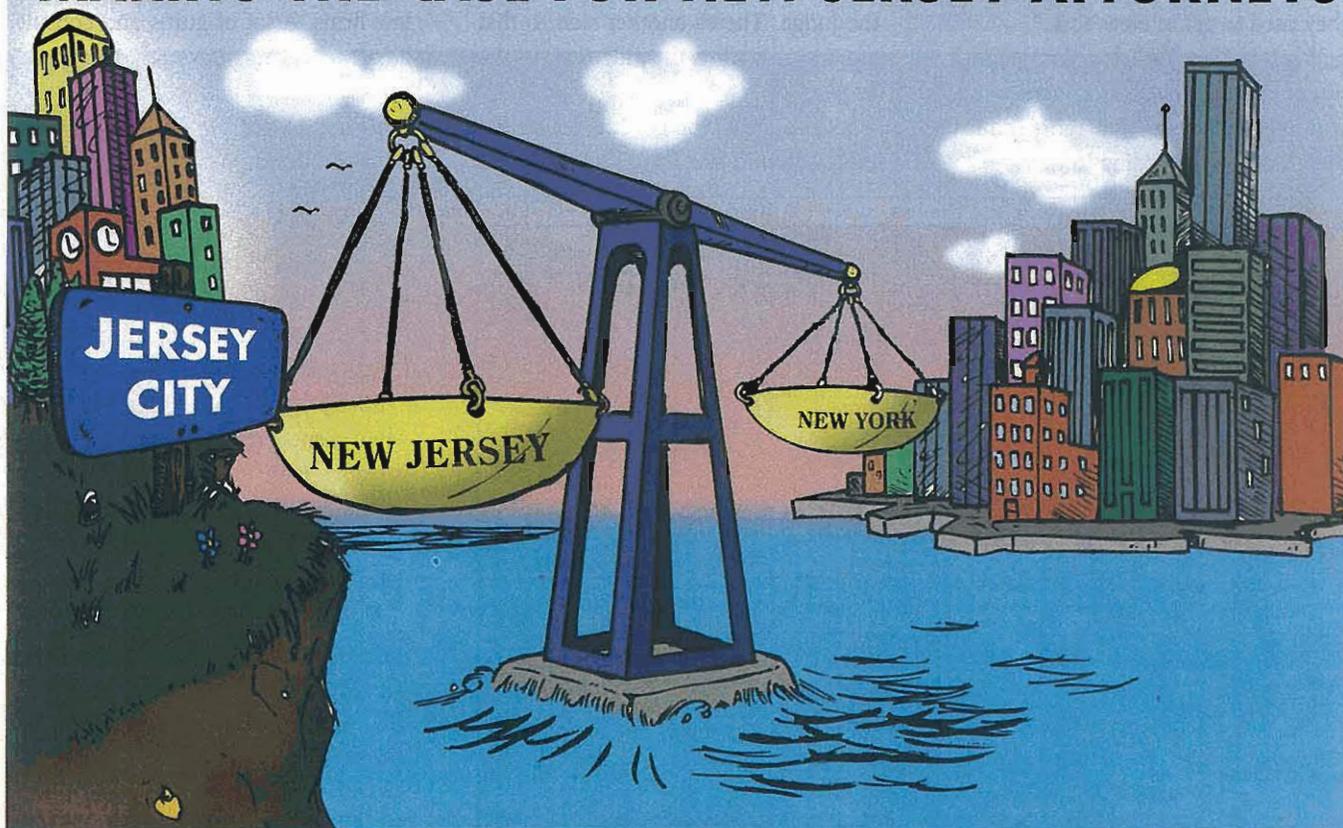


# BORDER WARS:

## MAKING THE CASE FOR NEW JERSEY ATTORNEYS



Businesses are tipping the judicial scale in favor of law firms on this side of the Hudson and Delaware rivers.

By Dan Schlossberg

**N**ew Jersey law firms are no longer the poor man's version of their big brothers from the big city.

According to a phalanx of managing partners surveyed by *New Jersey Business* in June, potential clients can actually get more bang for their buck from law firms based in the Garden State.

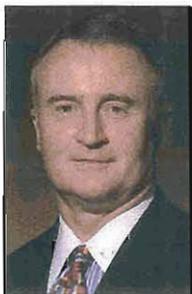
"We offer our clients a better price and better service," says Glenn Clark, a 50-year-old commercial litigator who serves as managing partner of Morristown-based **Riker, Danzig, Scherer, Hyland & Perretti, LLP**. "We're much more personalized.

"By coming to us instead of a New York firm, you're going to get - for the same dollar - a partner like me, with

20-25 years of experience, instead of a second or third-year associate in New York."

A full-service firm that has 165 attorneys, divided among its headquarters, plus satellite offices in Trenton and New York, Riker Danzig is one of the oldest firms in the state. It was established in 1882.

"Corporations who do business in New Jersey or have a legal matter in New Jersey look to us because of our reputation. We have a cost/price structure that makes us extremely com-



Clark

petitive when compared with a New York or Philadelphia firm."

The big-city firms might not admit they're getting competition from New Jersey, he says, but doubt no longer remains.

"We've done deals with these guys, and toe-to-toe litigation," Clark notes. "They may try to distinguish themselves and say they're better, but the fact is we recruit from the same law schools and we get the same people. Attorneys basically make a location or lifestyle choice to be in New Jersey."

Competition comes more in the litigation area than the transactional one, he suggests.

Riker Danzig has a New York office for two reasons. One is to serve a par-

ticular client group, while the other is to serve foreign-based clients.

"We do a lot of banking work and a lot of banks have a significant New York presence," he says. "We're looking to take advantage of that. We can do things more cost-effectively and give these clients the same caliber of work they used to get in New York."

While a New York location helps, it is not necessarily better. Experience and reputation are far more critical than location, according to Clark.

"If there was a major litigation or some sort of political/governmental affairs issue in New Jersey, a major corporation might come to us," he says. "When we go to court, we know the judges."

"There's an old saying: a good lawyer knows the law, a great lawyer knows the judge. There's another side to that too: it's great when the judge knows the lawyer."

It's also great when clients realize the value of a mid-size firm, says the Notre

Dame Law School graduate.

"There's definitely a niche for the mid-size firm, which has a cost structure and synergy that gives it definite competitive advantages," he says. "About seven years ago, there was tremendous momentum toward regionalization and nationalization of law firms. A lot of gurus and consultants were going around saying 'the mid-size firm is a dinosaur' and warning firms to get big or cease to exist. Now that pendulum is going the other way."

"If I had 10 offices nationally, I'd have so much overhead that my hourly rates would be significantly higher. I'd be at a different rate structure for compensation for associates and even for partners."

Price is hardly the only consideration when clients pick a firm, however. Trust is often a more important decision.

"It's that personal trust and relationship that really decides where work goes," says Clark.

A full-service firm, Riker Danzig handles everything from state planning, real estate and corporate law to lobbying, governmental affairs and even high-end matrimonial matters.

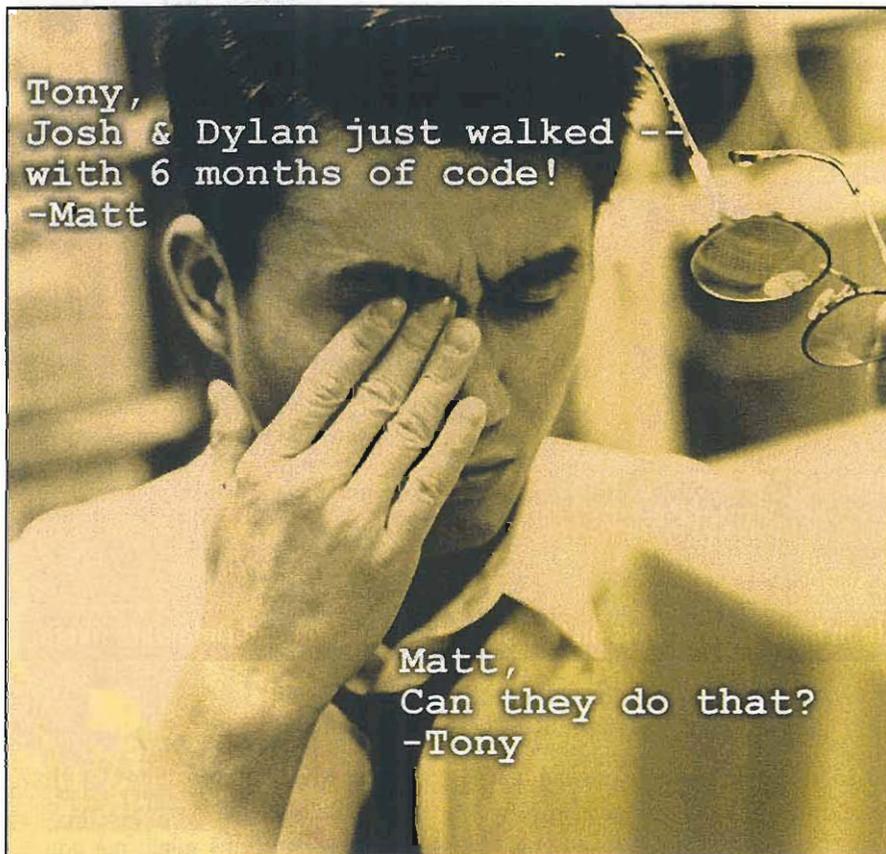
"Anything you can get in New York, we can do here," Clark insists. "As long as I've been practicing, since 1980, this firm has been representing major Fortune 500 institutional-type clients. And that existed before I got here."

Though much of its business stems from word-of-mouth, Riker Danzig also does considerable advertising. It also depends heavily upon e-mail, which it considers a mixed blessing.

E-mail has reduced the focus on location. "If you're sitting in Europe sending an e-mail, it doesn't matter whether the attorney is in New York or New Jersey," Connolly says. "That's where our cost structure vis-a-vis New York is an advantage."

At Newark-based **Sills Cummins Epstein & Gross, P.C.**, managing partner Steven E. Gross shares those feelings.

"E-mail works better than anything else when you're dealing with people in different time-zones," he says. "With e-mail, blackberries and things like that, it



Tony,  
Josh & Dylan just walked  
with 6 months of code!  
-Matt

Matt,  
Can they do that?  
-Tony

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doesn't matter where you sit. You could sit in New Jersey, you could sit in New York, you could sit in California, or you could sit in Europe and still do your deals. It's a wonderful equalizer of time-zones."

Founded by five attorneys in 1971, Sills Cummis now employs 160 lawyers, some of them based in a New York office it has operated for more than 10 years.

"Initially, we opened it because corporate clients that came into the U.S. would stay in New York, at the Waldorf or Plaza," he recalls. "We needed a place to meet and have conferences. In New York litigation, you need deposition rooms and you want to have it where your other attorneys are.

"Over the last five years, we've been expanding our New York office, adding attorneys, because we're doing more direct New York work. New York is still

the center of transactional work in the U.S. and probably the world."

Expansion has also been occurring at the firm's Essex County headquarters.

"Twenty years ago marked the start of a demographic shift of corporate headquarters out of New York and into new headquarters in New Jersey, plus Connecticut and Westchester to some degree," Gross says. As that happened, New Jersey law firms, which were then pretty small, started to get a little larger and have more firepower.

"Very bright lawyers who went to very good schools and originally would only work in New York started to live in New Jersey because of the strong



Gross

corporate base. Raising their families in New Jersey, they saw a chance to practice the way they had in Manhattan — only without crossing through the tunnels or over the bridges. As a result, firms like ours started to build a corporate practice."

Gross, a 1962 Harvard Law School graduate who practiced in Manhattan for 15 years, was one of those expatriate New Yorkers who moved across the Hudson, arriving in New Jersey 24 years ago.

"I learned I could do just as well in New Jersey without the horrendous commute," he says. Both he and the firm prospered.

Sills Cummis' strength is business and industry, with heavy involvement in pharmaceuticals, medical devices and health care, running the gamut from litigating in a product liability defense to working an intellectual property deal that involves a licensed product.

"New Jersey gives us one major benefit other jurisdictions do not have," he says. "We are known as the Medicine Chest of the World. That gives those of us who practice here a greater in-depth knowledge of the health care industry, pharmaceutical industry and medical devices. That's also why a firm like ours, working for the industry, spans so many different areas of practice."

Sills Cummis has no need to solicit business through advertising.

"The key for us is reputation, reputation, reputation," Gross says, "unlike real estate, which is location, location, location.

"Your reputation comes from corporations you've represented, what deals you've done, what transactions you're noted for. In corporate law, transactional experience counts. Most of our transactions are based anywhere in the country. The other law firms, more often than not, are in New York, Chicago or California."

According to Gross, Sills Cummis is a better bet for a corporate transaction than a New York firm because of the experience factor.

"The worst thing you can do in a

## GIBBONS DEL DEO SAYS LAW FIRMS MUST DEVELOP A REPUTATION

**G**ibbons, Del Deo, Dolan, Griffinger & Vecchione, Newark, says that most of its clients are looking for the same things: quality legal work, competitive pricing, efficiency and excellent service. "Gibbons believes that law firms must establish reputations for themselves by constantly delivering these components," says Patrick C. Dunican, Jr., managing director.

Being located so close to New York City, the firm often deals with competition. One way it has held its own against Manhattan competitors is by hiring top quality lawyers. As an example, Gibbons recently added a director from a well-known New York law firm to its corporate department.

Clients are also willing to give the firm opportunities because of the personal service it provides, which can not be found in many large, city firms. "Gibbons stands out because its lawyers are always available for our client's phone calls, and they do not have any unnecessary levels of review," says Dunican.

The company has a large intellectual property department that has helped to distinguish the firm. "Clients will come to receive service from this department and will end up seeing all that Gibbons has to offer as a full service firm. This business strategy has been very successful for the practice," he says.

Until the mid-1990s, the law firm had been strictly a local counsel in New Jersey for many bigger New York firms. Then, when many large, Manhattan-based law firms started opening up their own offices in New Jersey, Gibbons knew it was time to open a New York office. "We knew it was time for us to have a presence in New York and we believed we had the advantage of being able to offer our clients services at the highest level of quality, but with more competitive pricing than New York firms," says Dunican. The company also felt that a New York office would help them to obtain national clients. Since the founding of the New York office in 1997, it has grown to nearly 40 lawyers, making it the largest New Jersey-based firm in New York. Gibbons also has a third office in Trenton and is considering opening up two more offices in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.

"New Jersey law firms face substantial challenges when competing for business against firms in New York City and Philadelphia. We do not intend to become a thousand-lawyer law firm, but we want to grow and strive," states Dunican. The firm has a sophisticated business and commercial litigation practice as well as a drug and medical device defense litigation practice. It also continues to expand its already solid intellectual property and corporate departments. Gibbons has proven that it can handle cases in New Jersey, New York and the entire nation.

transaction is put a lot of young attorneys on it," he says. "They research things that are irrelevant, take up time, and lead you down the wrong path. It's not like litigation, where there are a lot of things to research.

New York firms may put their best manpower on billion-dollar deals, but only younger attorneys on million-dollar deals, Gross suggests. "We put very experienced lawyers on deals worth a couple of hundred million," he says. "The client gets more sophisticated, experienced talent on that size of deal than he would if he went to one of the biggest and best firms in Manhattan."

Only in the last 10 years have New Jersey law firms started winning recognition as equal to their better-known colleagues in the Big Apple, Gross says.

"Each year, it's increasing. There's a different business model here. The New York business model is to hire 100 entry-level lawyers and start employing them. That is not our business model at Sills Cummis and I don't think it's the business model of any of the other New Jersey firms that do corporate transactional work."

The Sills Cummis' business model obviously works: the firm has the highest revenues-per-lawyer of any in New Jersey, upwards of \$500,000 in 2002 (the last year for which such figures are

available). Under guidelines issued by The American Lawyer, a firm at that level would rank among the Top 75 in the United States.

The competition is also keen for **Lowenstein Sandler P.C.**, another firm with headquarters in Essex County.

According to managing director Michael L. Rodburg, "Our primary focus is on providing quality and responsive legal services to our existing clients. That will earn us the best possible reputation and lead our clients and others who know our work to recommend us. All we really need to do secure corporate business is to be given a chance to show what we can do with a specific engagement."

Toward that end, the firm does considerable marketing, including speaking and writing engagements, conducting and attending seminars and even some advertising.

"Those efforts," says Rodburg, "are aimed primarily at bringing ourselves to the attention of the greatest number of prospective clients and referral sources. It's what you do with those

opportunities that spells success or failure."

The 43-year-old, Roseland-based firm employs 220 attorneys and has offices in Somerville, Princeton and New York. Named New Jersey's premier law firm by the *Chambers Guide to America's Leading Business Lawyers*, it provides a full range of legal services to business and industry. In addition, its lobbying and governmental relations subsidiary, Issues Management LLC, is the top-ranked lawyer-lobbying firm in the state.

"Mid-sized businesses and closely-held businesses learn that they too can get high-quality legal services on a par with New York City firms, with the convenience and attention they might not otherwise get from such firms," says Rodburg.

"In our corporate practice, we find that only rarely are other New Jersey-based firms on the other side of the transaction. We are more likely to encounter New York or national law firms, but we believe we are somewhat unique in New Jersey for that reason."

For Rodburg, opening a New York office was a no-brainer.

"We located in New York (beginning in February 2000) because we are a metropolitan regional firm and New York is the financial capital of the



Rodburg

## LERNER DAVID SERVICES NATIONAL CLIENTS FROM ONE LOCATION

The law firm of Lerner, David, Littenberg, Krumholz and Mentlik, LLP, Westfield, says its main competitors are New York and California. Being an established, large practice, with 52 attorneys in the state, Lerner seems to hold its own against these considerable firms. "I believe that we compete successfully with the New York firms because we measure our success in terms of our clients' success, and this approach has resulted in continued high-quality client referrals for the last 30 years," says Joseph S. Littenberg, Esq., a partner at the firm.



Littenberg

Littenberg says that Lerner distinguishes itself from New York firms by the relationships it forms with its clients. "We do not distinguish ourselves from a New York firm on the basis of cost, but rather on the basis of achieving our clients' goals, and the ability to convince prospective clients that we will do the same for them. We always strive to do so at minimum cost, as that is the way to maintain long-term relationships, which are essential to a viable practice," he says.

Westfield is the firm's only location and it does not have any plans of opening a practice in New York. "I practiced in New York City for about five years, and love the City. However, we found that we did not need to have an office in New York or elsewhere," says Littenberg. "Our biggest asset is our knowledge and experience, and this is maximized for the benefit of our clients by having all of the best people in the same location," he says.

Lerner competes for clients on a national level. It has clients from California, Washington, Florida and New York to Tokyo, Finland, Sweden, Germany and England. "I consider the competition to be national rather than international because we represent our foreign clients with respect to U.S. matters. The one qualifier to this statement is that we often negotiate worldwide settlements when resolving U.S. matters," comments Littenberg.

Lerner's practice is limited to intellectual property, which includes; patents, trademarks, copyrights and trade secrets. It also covers all areas of technology. "New Jersey corporations that have knowledgeable intellectual property personnel look at firms that can fulfill their needs," says Littenberg.

region, if not the world. From our New York office, we can conveniently expand our offerings in the metropolitan area. In addition, some practices, like New York real estate, really need to be in the city on a day-to-day basis."

There are no plans for other out-of-state locations, he adds, because they don't fit the firm's strategic goals.

"We offer sophisticated legal services on a national basis that do not require any specific geography," he says. "We model ourselves after the best upper-tier firms in New York who have no need for branch offices. We also seek to provide a full-service option to the middle market in the metropolitan region. We can do so from New Jersey and New York."

Rodburg concedes that some corporations still favor big-city firms because of their location. But there are other factors, too.

"Some Jersey-based corporations lean that way out of ignorance of the New Jersey legal market or because their general counsel or corporate officers expect them to be represented by New York or Philadelphia firms. But it's

## DRINKER BIDDLE EXPANDS IN NY

The law firm of Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP, as part of Shanley & Fisher, has maintained a firm location in New York since the early 1980s. Formerly in the World Trade Center until September 11, 2001, the firm located its new premises at 30 Broad Street, where it continues very busy securities litigation, insurance law and personal and fiduciary law practices.

Drinker, with New Jersey offices in Florham Park, is now in the process of growing in New York, by adding lawyers in the practice areas of bankruptcy, labor and employment and corporate securities. The firm is planning to increase its New York presence by 50 percent in the next year.

According to Daniel F. O'Connell, the partner-in-charge of Drinker's Florham Park office, the law firm is committed to growth and expansion. The firm believes that a viable New York office is important to its clients and to Drinker's overall development.

not about location. It's more about the size and institutional strength of the law firm and whether it represents national and international interests of significance.

"Until corporate practice firms like ours developed in New Jersey, Jersey-based corporations rightly viewed Garden State law firms as best-suited to local interests, primarily litigation, real estate and local employment issues, and not suited to their more national corporate needs. It will take many more years of New Jersey firms providing in-depth and sophisticated corporate legal services before the preference for New York or Philadelphia changes," he says.

"It will be some time — and maybe never — before New Jersey law firms are viewed as equal to those in New York or Philadelphia," he admits, "but general propositions are riddled with exceptions," he says.

Rodburg notes that his firm does not compete for business with the upper-tier firms of Manhattan.

"We are not likely to attract those transactions that must, by their nature and size, go only to those very upper-tier firms," he concedes. "In that sense, we are not fully and directly in competition with all of the firms in New York."

Rodburg strongly suggested that New York firms recognize the Lowenstein Sandler name.

"A few New Jersey firms, and I would count ours among them, have given New York law firms reason to take notice," he says. "They see us frequently on the other side of major transactions or competing with them, often successfully, for clients in the same sophisticated fields of endeavor."

He adds that location matters only occasionally when corporations pick a law firm.

"The market for legal services is quite large and complex," he says. "At the highest levels of corporate practice, and among the world's largest corporations, competition is certainly national and international.

Location is a whole different ballgame

in South Jersey, where the primary competition comes from Philadelphia, on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River.

**Flaster/Greenberg P.C.**, based in Cherry Hill, has three other New Jersey offices, one in Philadelphia and another in Wilmington, Delaware. With 21 practice areas, it's a multi-disciplinary firm serving primarily small- to mid-size businesses.

"Although we occasionally compete on a national level, our niche is regional," Managing Shareholder Peter R. Spigel tells *New Jersey Business*. "Many times, the size of the law firm and the various office locations of that firm have a bearing on obtaining corporate business.



Spigel

"We do not consider New York our market niche. Our focus is in the Southern New Jersey area. We are anchored in Camden County but our base stretches from Cumberland and Atlantic counties to Philadelphia and Wilmington."

Although the firm is relatively small, employing 50 attorneys, much larger Philadelphia firms are starting to feel the heat.

"We compete with Philadelphia firms and believe they are starting to perceive Flaster/Greenberg as competition," Spigel says. "Being sandwiched between New York, Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Washington is a plus. Mid-sized law firms like Flaster/Greenberg are a magnet for top attorneys looking for opportunities to shine."

Like a winning baseball team, Flaster/Greenberg tries to field an All-Star at every position.

"The best law firms hire the most competent attorneys and provide them with the support staff and marketing tools to compete for corporate business," Spigel says. "Flaster/Greenberg's business and geographic niche sets us apart for other firms in South Jersey and Philadelphia."

Business is growing, especially in the wake of the Camden waterfront revival.

According to Spigel, "The redevelopment of the Camden and Pennsauken waterfront bodes well for future economic growth with the need for legal services increasing in real estate, land use, construction and environmental law."

The suburban location of the Flaster/Greenberg headquarters also helps.

"Suburban firms usually work with lower overhead and therefore can offer

more competitive rates," Spigel notes. "Large corporations also spread their work around much more than they used to. They seek out firms or attorneys with the particular expertise or contacts best-suited to their immediate need."

"Competition depends upon the legal need. If the need included securities, entertainment or international work, there would be a lot of competition from New York City. But corporations are beginning to realize that tal-

ented and capable law firms exist in the corridor between New York and Washington."

He adds that corporate prejudice toward big-city firms has evaporated, especially with the advent of e-mail and other 21st century technology.

"Corporations choose a law firm because of expertise," he says. "Perhaps 20 years ago, there was a large prejudice toward New York or Philadelphia-based firms. But with the technological revolution, that school of thought had less of an impact. New Jersey firms, including ours, gained more recognition as technology improved (e-mail, internet, common applications)."

He says the firm's future could include an office in Mercer County.

A Monmouth County firm of similar size, **Giordano, Halleran & Ciesla, P.C.**, employs 45 attorneys and practices in 14 different legal areas: corporate and securities; business and banking; intellectual property; land use; real estate and development; planned real estate development; environment; commercial litigation; health and hospital; labor and employment; trusts and estates; government affairs; government contracts; government investigations; white-collar crime; and tax law.

"Ten years ago, a majority of our firm's clients were businesses based in Monmouth, Ocean and Middlesex counties," says **Phil Forlenza**, a 19-year veteran of the firm who is currently a partner in the corporate and securities department. "Now our client base is truly statewide. There's no doubt in my mind that technology has had a role in increasing the firm's footprint to include clients all over New Jersey."



Forlenza

For middle-market clients, which are the types of clients we typically serve, competition is generally more regional. Some clients prefer to have counsel located nearby in order to facilitate face-to-face meetings."

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Knowledge of the local legal landscape also helps, according to the 45-year-old attorney.

"A builder who seeks to obtain approvals for a local development may want to consider whether or not his attorney has experience working with the municipality in which he wishes to develop," he suggests.

Based in Middletown, Giordano, Halleran & Ciesla has a Trenton office but none in New York. Yet the firm remains highly competitive in acquiring new corporate clients, according to Forlenza.

"In some cases," he says, "the ability of a firm to provide one-stop shopping is important to a prospective client. Cultivating referral sources, such as accounting firms, venture capital firms, investment banks and other financial intermediaries, is also an important component in attracting corporate work."

Competition comes not only from New York but from larger national firms.

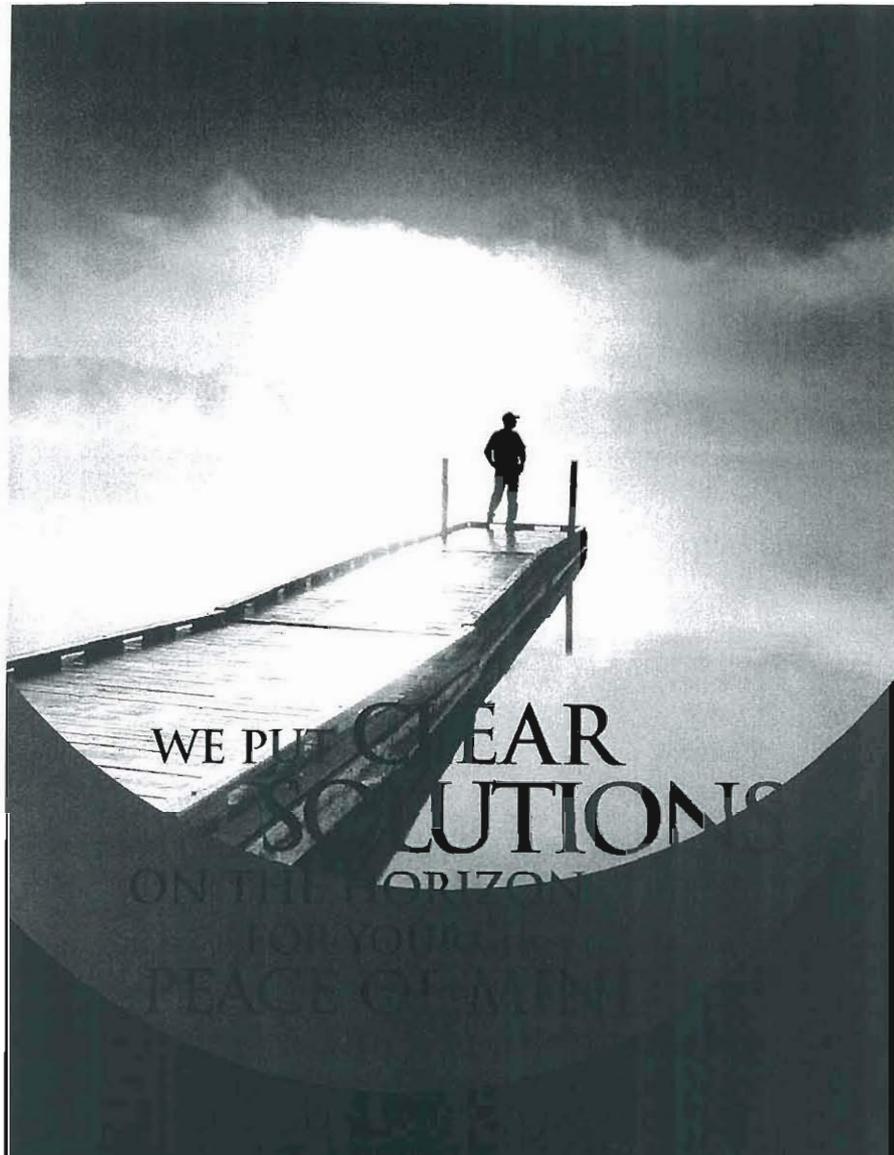
"New York firms represent an increasing source of competition for New Jersey law firms," he notes. "And it's no secret that many New York and national firms have opened offices in the state.

"New York investment banks often steer clients to New York firms with whom they have a relationship, particularly in connection with securities and sophisticated mergers and acquisition work."

What makes Giordano, Halleran & Ciesla competitive is the experience and price available to prospective clients.

According to Forlenza, "We emphasize the quality of our services and our experience in sophisticated corporate matters. We give the client a good idea of who will be working with them on a particular project and, where appropriate, stress that a partner will stay significantly involved in the matter.

"Although we don't make our rates a point of emphasis, they are generally lower than the rates of our New York counterparts. We believe that is an important factor in the client's decision-making process.



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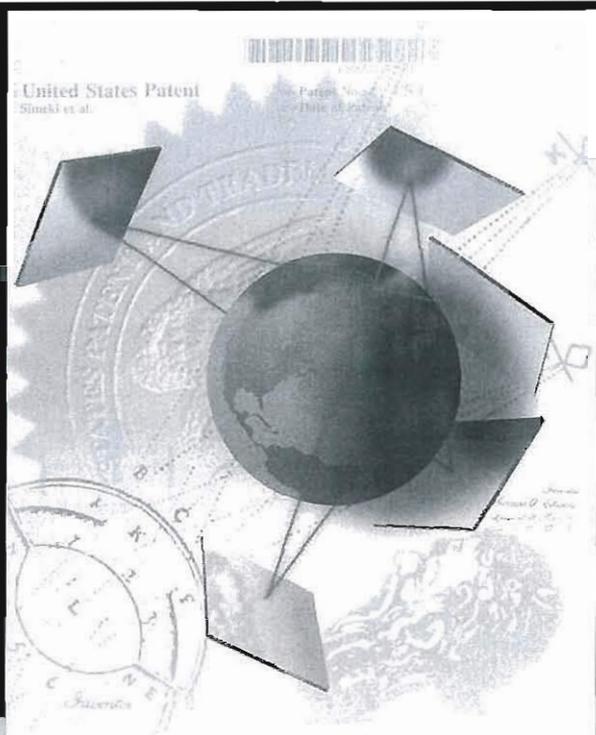
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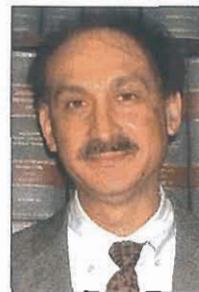
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"I'm sure there are some Jersey-based corporations that lean toward New York or Philadelphia law firms because they feel there may be a higher level of sophistication in larger cities," he says. "In some specialized areas, that may be true. But in other practice areas, a very high caliber of legal counsel can be found within the state, with New Jersey attorneys usually more cost-effective for clients."

**McCarter & English** (M&E) may have the greatest reach of any Jersey-based firm, employing more than 320 attorneys in seven offices along the nation's Northeast corridor. Beyond its Newark headquarters, M&E opened branches in New York (1980), Wilmington (early '80s), Philadelphia (1999), Baltimore and Hartford (both 2001) and Stamford (2003). The rationale for the expansion is to enhance the firm's delivery of legal services to clients confronting issues and circumstances in more than one jurisdiction.

Competition for business comes from both Manhattan and national firms.

According to partner Howard Kailes, "McCarter & English's corporate practice distinguishes itself from other metropolitan-based practices in its concentration



Kailes

on mid-cap and small-cap transactions. The team of attorneys assembled by the firm will rival or surpass in focus the attention by metropolitan-based firms to much larger transactions."

The firm has a solid corporate finance practice in mergers and acquisitions, securities law, venture capital and fund formation, and banking transactions, he says. In addition, the corporate practice is complemented by support from the firm's tax, intellectual property, employee benefits, real estate, environmental, product liability, bankruptcy and litigation work.

An October 2002 merger brought

the firm of Krugman & Kailes under the M&E umbrella, with Kailes as a partner. The merger has helped the firm grow.

"M&E has interacted successfully, as both colleagues and adversaries, with firms throughout the country," Kailes says. "Our particular growth in six metropolitan centers outside New Jersey

## Morgan Lewis Adds to Ranks

**T**he Princeton-based law firm of Morgan Lewis adds seven premier lawyers from Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP, who will join the business and finance practice in the firm's Princeton office. The group includes four partners, one of counsel and two associates.

"We are very pleased that David Sorin, Andy Gilbert, Karen Leisten and Rich Mattessich and their colleagues have chosen to join Morgan Lewis in Princeton," says Francis M. Milone, chair of Morgan Lewis. "They are exceptional corporate finance and technology transaction lawyers with industry experience in the growing areas of information technology and life sciences. Their IPO practice adds significantly to Morgan Lewis' capabilities nationally and internationally."

Among the partners is David J. Sorin, an attorney who has played a vital role in building the infrastructure to support the New Jersey/New York technology corridor. He was the leader of a team of lawyers who, in the last three years, represented clients in more than 400 transactions with an aggregate value of \$18 billion. He is also the co-founder, and serves on the board of directors, of the New Jersey Technology Council.

Other Morgan Lewis attorneys are: Andrew P. Gilbert, who focuses his practice in the areas of corporate finance, venture capital and securities law; Karen F. Leisten, who focuses her practice on representing information technology, biotechnology and other clients in the commercialization of technology assets; and Richard S. Mattessich, who practices in the areas of corporate finance, venture capital and securities law.

The expansion of the Morgan Lewis Princeton office to 34 lawyers enhances the firm's emerging growth, technology and life sciences practices in the Mid-Atlantic region. It also boosts the firm's global life sciences and technology practices, supporting its strategic expansions on the West Coast, Europe and Asia.

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speaks for itself. And our headquarters at Newark's Gateway Center (adjacent to Newark Penn Station) has proven to be an extraordinarily auspicious base of operations."

M&E is involved in corporate transactions and litigation throughout the country and has substantial activity with respect to U.S. businesses entering overseas marketing, as well as foreign businesses doing business in the U.S. In April, one of its corporate partners went to Paris to address the French-American Chamber of Commerce seminar organized in conjunction with the American embassy.

The prestige and publicity of such an appearance helps in the never-ending competition for corporate business.

Kailes concentrates in corporate matters, including mergers and acquisitions, financing of public and private entities, securities law and creation of investment vehicles. He has managed numerous international acquisitions, divestitures and investments involving sophisticated financial arrangements. He is admitted to practice law in both New Jersey and New York.

A century-old Philadelphia firm with growing New Jersey roots, **Pepper Hamilton** has 400 lawyers in nine different offices, spread across five states and Washington, D.C. Twenty-seven of those attorneys operate out of Princeton, where Dennis R. Casale is co-managing partner of that location as well as vice chairman of the firm's Financial Services Practice Group. A one-time Deputy Attorney General of the State of New Jersey, he joined Jamieson Moore Peskin & Spicer in 1983, then formed Pepper Hamilton's Princeton office with 18 Jamieson Moore attorneys in January 2001.

Pepper Hamilton first opened an office in Southern New Jersey in November 1990 to serve clients with litigation in New Jersey. Its first Garden State location was Westmount, though it later moved to Cherry Hill. Late last year, two years after the founding of the Princeton office, the two New Jersey locations were consolidated.

"The Princeton region offered more

opportunities to support and grow the type of practice we are building," Casale explains. "We came to realize that it made good business sense to consolidate the New Jersey side of our practice into the larger, more diverse office in Princeton."

Having a major presence in the Garden State helped Pepper Hamilton prosper.

"The rules of New Jersey practice are quite specific about how litigation is handled and who may practice before the courts," Casale says. "But with communication technology being what it is today, clients want to hire the best lawyers for their needs, regardless of where their offices might be.

"Location matters less than the ability to serve clients effectively and efficiently. We have many clients with offices in Europe and we handle their legal work as we would if we were practicing in any city in the United States."

The multi-practice firm, founded in 1890, provides corporate, litigation, and regulatory legal services to businesses, government entities, non-profit organizations, and individuals throughout the nation and the world. Beyond its Philadelphia headquarters and Princeton location, it has offices in Detroit, New York, Washington, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, and Berwyn, Pennsylvania.

Despite its size, Pepper Hamilton prides itself on providing personalized service. It even has a vision statement that starts, "We counsel each client as if it were our only client."

According to Casale, "That's more than a slogan — we live by it. We believe our client service distinguishes us from many of our competitors, in New York, Philadelphia and elsewhere."

One thing is obvious: corporations, clients and individuals in search of a top-flight firm no longer have to cross a river to find one. ❧



Casale