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(L-R) Boies Schiller Flexner partner Ursula Ungaro, Greenberg Traurig shareholder John D. Owens III and Haber Law partner Steven Davis. Courtesy photos

ANALYSIS

Greenberg Dominance, Latam Demand, and More Lateral Partner Trends in 2021

Find out who gained top talent and who lost rainmakers in our review of South Florida's biggest laterals this year.

January 04, 2022 at 12:45 PM

🕒 5 minute read

Legal Services

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What You Need to Know

- At the partner level, litigators were the most in-demand attorneys in South Florida this year.
- Greenberg Traurig and Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough led the region in partner hiring.
- Attorneys with corporate or white collar experience in Latin America were also sought-after by major firms.

When South Florida law firms hired lateral partners this year, they mostly sprung for litigators and corporate attorneys, particularly those with experience in white-collar crime and Latin American banking and cross-border investigations.

That's according to a recent review of 25 of the year's biggest partner laterals sourced from Daily Business Review reporting and firm announcements throughout 2021. Find out who gained rainmakers and lost out to the competition in 2021 below:

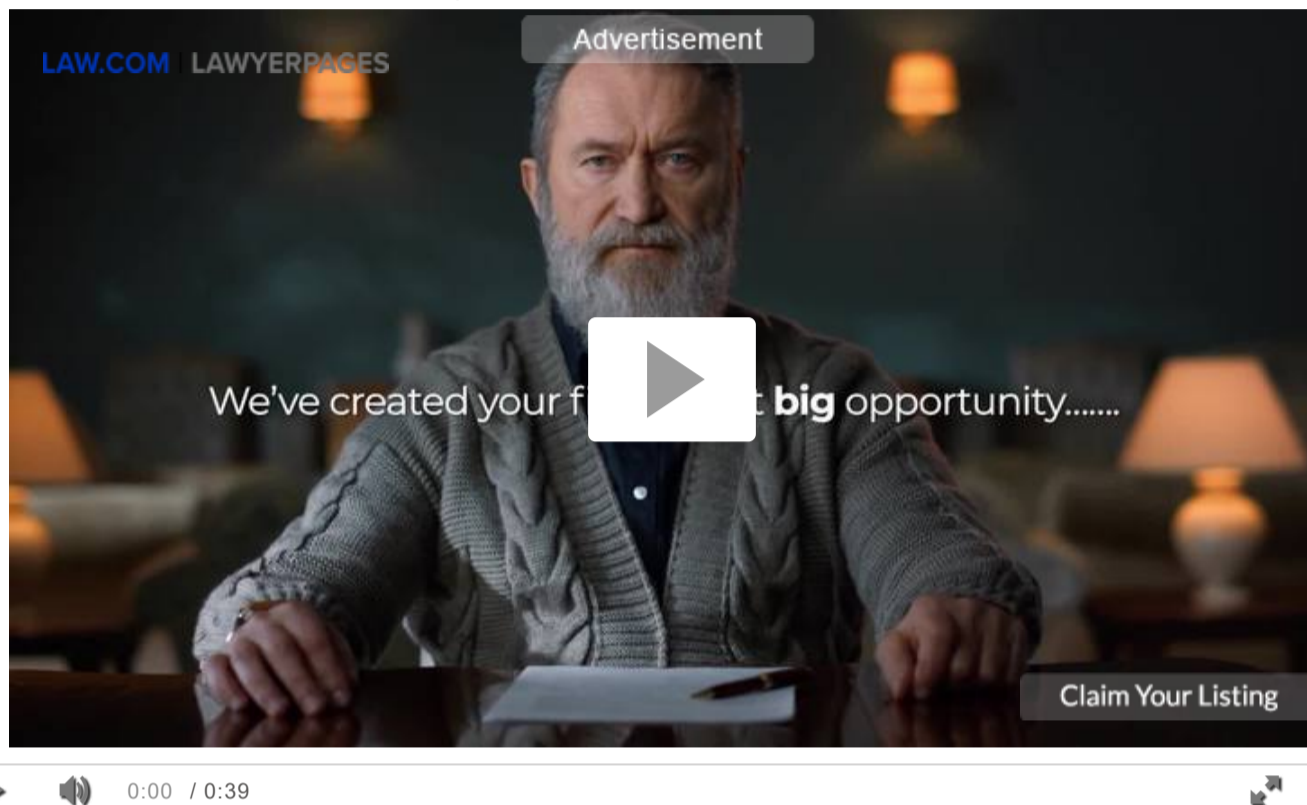
Litigation Laterals

Twelve of the year's 25 top laterals were litigators, far more than any other category of attorney. Granted, the litigators' specialties varied significantly.

Reed Smith and Boies Schiller Flexner availed themselves of former government lawyers. In September, Reed Smith hired former Eastern District of New York assistant U.S. attorney Mark Bini to split his time between New York and Miami.

“I do think you’re going to see a lot of the same types of cases that we’ve seen in New York—securities fraud, complex cases—in Miami,” Bini said in a September interview after joining Reed Smith’s white-collar criminal defense practice.

In May, Boies Schiller Flexner hired former U.S. District Judge Ursula Ungaro of the Southern District of Florida. The 29-year judge will work on “whatever she wants to work on,” including class actions, anti-trust, and products liability cases, said Miami administrative partner Stephen Zack.



Am Law 100 and Second Hundred firms including Greenberg Traurig, Jones Day, Nelson Mullins, and others also hired litigation partners from area firms, and so did a few boutiques. The largest such move arrived in October when Wynwood-based Haber Law added longtime Boies Schiller partner Steven Davis.

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The next-most-hired attorneys were corporate lawyers (four), blockchain lawyers (three), and real estate partners (two).

Greenberg Traurig and Nelson Mullins Led the Way

No other law firm hired more high-profile laterals than Greenberg Traurig, which added five shareholders to work in South Florida. Greenberg added litigator Joe Mamounas from Holland & Knight, litigator William Michael Jr. from Mayer Brown, and former Shook, Hardy & Bacon products liability litigator Alexandra Bach Lagos.

Greenberg Traurig also hired corporate shareholder John D. Owens III from K&L Gates and tax shareholder Seth Entin from Holland & Knight.

Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough followed with four lateral partners in 2021. In December, the South Carolina-based firm hired former GrayRobinson litigator Rebecca Rodriguez in Fort Lauderdale, and it added former McDonald Hopkins member and board-certified health care lawyer Courtney Tito in Boca Raton.

Earlier in the year, Nelson Mullins hired Miami commercial litigator Justin Kaplan, who joined as partner from Brickell's DiFalco & Fernandez.

Latin American Experience Required

Whether they came from banks or represented wealthy individuals, partners with experience in Latin America were in high demand this year.

In February, Jones Day hired former Greenberg Traurig Miami litigation chairman Eliot Pedrosa, who most recently executive director of the Inter-American Development Bank. The 48-country organization offers development financing in the Caribbean and Latin America through a \$100 billion loan portfolio.

Holland & Knight brought on former SoftBank deputy GC Enrique Conde in May, drawing on Conde's connections in Latin America and at SoftBank. While at the bank, Conde looked after a \$5 billion Latin American technology company investment fund, developing contacts who may become clients at his new firm.

And in April, Greenberg Traurig hired former Holland & Knight litigation partner Mamounas, whose clients include Latin American telecommunications companies, labor services, aviation, chemical companies, and medical device manufacturers.

Other firms hired partners to service wealthy Latin Americans who are looking to invest in the U.S.

In July, commercial litigation boutique Mark Migdal & Hayden hired former Bilzin Sumberg Baena Price & Axelrod international litigator José Ferrer to handle a projected "business revival out of Latin America," said founding partner Don Hayden.

Pittsburgh Firms Expanded in South Florida

Three Am Law firms based in Pittsburgh broadened their South Florida ranks in 2021.

In addition to Bini, Reed Smith added former Cozen O'Connor entertainment lawyer Danielle Garno in June.

In May, Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney hired George Karavetsos from DLA Piper's Miami office. And K&L Gates hired blockchain lawyers Andrew Hinkes and Justin Wales, who left Carlton Fields as of counsels and started at K&L Gates as partners in June.

Big Law Shared With Midsize Firms and Boutiques

Law firms founded in the Sunshine State lost talent to national firms with Florida offices at about the same rate as they gained lawyers from those firms, with 14 partners arriving at Florida-founded law firms and 11 going to out-of-state firms with South Florida offices.

The movement in and out of Big Law was a relative equilibrium, too, with four partners joining ranked Am Law firms from unranked firms and five exiting Big Law. Haber Law, Spiritus Law, Gunster, Bilzin Sumberg and Berger Singerman all made hires from Big Law this year.

By comparison, only 10 of the year's biggest moves were between two Big Law firms.

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