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How Miami Boutique Keeps Pace In Booming Fla. Legal Market

By **Madison Arnold**

Law360 (September 21, 2022, 3:58 PM EDT) -- As a string of national firms have recently planted flags in South Florida, the region's booming legal market has also boosted outfits like the Miami-based boutique Haber Law, which has increased its headcount by 25% over the last six months with a focus on practices tied to the city's development.

The firm has brought its total headcount to 25 lawyers after bringing on four practitioners in its latest round of additions. Haber Law's 25% growth was spread across its four core practice areas of complex business litigation, real estate law, condominium and homeowners association law, and construction law.

"By focusing on the four practice areas ... and Miami being really, in my opinion, the hottest market in the United States, if not the world, where people are coming to, we are really well-positioned to continue to grow," managing and founding shareholder David B. Haber told Law360 Pulse in an interview Monday.

As Miami's economy has grown, it's drawn interest from the legal community as well, with BigLaw mainstays including Sidley Austin LLP and Winston & Strawn LLP, both of which are based in Chicago, launching offices there in the last year. Other recent out-of-town newcomers have included Kirkland & Ellis LLP and King & Spalding LLP.

And as Haber Law adds to its own roster, Haber told Law360 that he was working to ensure the firm was providing the resources for its new attorneys to thrive.

"We've been working on our infrastructure to make sure that our technology and back office is capable of handling the growth. Our management team has done a great job in absorbing the growth and I expect we'll continue to grow because of our focus in these core areas."

Haber Law announced its most recent four additions last week — of counsel attorney Alexander Leon, senior associates Jeremy Apisdorf and Daniel Jovanov and associate Ashley Ginsburg.

Other notable additions within the last six months include transactional attorney and partner Harold "Hal" Lewis from Pathman Lewis LLP and commercial litigation attorney and partner Jessica L. Kopas from Conrad & Scherer LLP. They brought on board with them an associate and other staff members to help accommodate an increase of business at the firm.

Haber Law's growth in the last half-year isn't an anomaly. The firm, which first opened in 1997, has seen its headcount double over the past four years, and has added nine new attorneys in the last 12 months alone.

Ariella Gutman, who joined the firm in May 2021 and was recently promoted to partner, credits much of the firm's success to the focus on its four core practice areas. She said that, as a Miami native, she believes the firm's work dovetails perfectly with industries at the core of the city's growth spurt.

"[Our clients are] businesses that I care about because if these industries flourish, which means our work is plentiful, then it also means that Miami as a city is doing well. And that's what was important to me," Gutman said. "These core areas, I think, are some of the most crucial to business in Miami."

One of the newest additions, Ginsburg, an associate in the litigation department, has experience working for both a national firm as well as a smaller litigation firm before joining Haber Law. She said that, in the early years of her legal career, she realized it was important to work at a place where employees feel respected and where they can grow.

"Whether you work at a large firm or small firm, the work itself can be the same. But working for a firm of this size really helps prioritize and foster a sense of camaraderie and support," she said. "And it's easier to make sure that everyone has the tools that they really need to excel day-to-day."

She previously worked for the boutique Groves & Verona PA as well as national firm Litchfield Cavo LLP, according to her LinkedIn profile.

While the scope of the firm's work is what has helped create the demand for its legal services, Haber credited a culture of camaraderie for the firm's ability to attract new talent.

When Haber Law moved into a new office space in 2018, Haber said he attempted to build a space in the mold of Google and other Silicon Valley companies with a design that emphasized openness and allowed plenty of room for collaboration among attorneys. The office also includes amenities like a gym, a weekly visit from a massage therapist, and art all over the walls.

Even as he touts the firm's space, Haber said he understands that some attorneys need the flexibility to work from home to better help their families. While he calls it a bit of a "high wire act" to balance remote work with a strong office culture, he said Haber Law tries to bridge the gap by holding social events like attorney dinners, staff activities, and in-office meetings for each of the four departments.

"Our firm is set up to understand the necessity [of] that hybrid work situation because people's families are, quite frankly, more important than their work, and we respect that," Haber said. "We understand that, and we want to be able to work together while still respecting people's home lives and their need to be with family, which really got accentuated during COVID."

--Editing by Marygrace Anderson.