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A Midsize California Firm With Hiring on the Brain

It's another midsize firm in California with growth ambitions. And it's not just one with a plan — Michelman & Robinson opened a new, small office in New York this month.

Dana Kravetz lateraled into Michelman & Robinson in 2004 as a partner to help with employment matters for the firm's existing clients. The business litigation firm had 30 lawyers at the time. Now, Kravetz says, he has a book of business of his own, and as managing partner of the L.A.-area office, he is involved in recruiting. And he's looking to replicate his experience with new hires.

This month, the 60-lawyer firm opened in New York with three partners who focus on corporate and securities work, and the firm is bullish on California, too. Kravetz said that the three-year plan calls for the San Francisco and Orange County offices to become full-service, like the L.A. office. In that time, he'd like San Francisco and Orange County to reach between 20 and 25 lawyers each, and Los Angeles 50.

He expects a good number of those hires will be at the associate level.

In fact, they're trying to fill one of those openings now. What they're looking for, after the jump.

“The amount of talent out there seems to be the best it's ever been,” he told Legal Pad this afternoon. In the four-lawyer San Francisco office, where the firm has an insurance regulatory bent, Kravetz is “deep in negotiations” with three partners with “sizable books of business.” Two are business litigators, he said, one an IP litigator. Kravetz said he could see taking on an additional five associates by the end of the year, depending on the number of partners the firm adds. (**Clarified:** We'd initially written that the firm had recently hired two associates in that office, but turns out they had just been relocated.)

A number of partner candidates are being interviewed in L.A., he added, where the firm has more than 40 lawyers and the focus is business litigation, employment and insurance regulatory work.

Kravetz said that he's been working with recruiters to find partner candidates. No need for recruiter help on the associate front, though.

Kravetz said a “huge” number of resumes flood in each time he posts an ad. The last time he put up one for an associate position in L.A. (at the end of March), he says he got 40 resumes on the first day, and more than 100 over two weeks. As of Friday afternoon, the position hadn’t been filled.

He says his hiring criteria for associates are simple: A good lawyer understands the client’s industry as a whole and the client’s place in that industry. He said new associates don’t have to have a book of business but should have an entrepreneurial nature, because the firm hires young lawyers with an eye toward partnership. Kravetz said that a successful fourth- or fifth-year at the firm would have a book of \$200,000, while a sixth- to eighth-year would be between \$400,000 and \$500,000. “You won’t find [originating] partners at our firm who have less than \$750,000,” he added.

“This firm has never suffered from a lack of work. We market heavily,” Kravetz said. “It’s not magical.” The firm puts a heavy emphasis on speaking engagements, writing and being dialed into a number of trade associations, he added. “Just writing an article and getting it published can really separate you from the crowd.”

— *Petra Pasterank*