Small and Medium Firms

Career Development Office
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What is a small/medium firm?

- “Small” is a relative term
- NOT satellite offices of big firms
Types of firms

- High-end boutiques
- Small general-services
- Specialty practices:
  - immigration
  - estates & trusts
  - family law
  - criminal defense
- Plaintiffs’ firms
- Special (impact, civil rights, etc.)
Why small/medium firms?

• UPSIDES
  Quality of life
  Opportunity to specialize
  Responsibility early on
  Collegiality, sense of belonging
  Less bureaucratic
  Client contact (?)

• DOWNSIDES
  Lower compensation (?)
  Some types of work aren’t done at small firms
  Can be isolated or even claustrophobic
  Fewer resources
  Less formal training
  Don’t assume it’s less work or less pressure
Finding & evaluating the firms

• **Personal Contacts**
• **Listings**
  - b-Line
  - Legal job sites
  - General jobs sites such as Craigslist
• **Research**
  - Martindale .com
  - Bar organization publications
  - Law.com Boutique awards
  - b-Line for previous listers
  - Try being a client (e.g. trusts & estates, criminal defense)
  - State Bar website & http://californiabar.globl.org
  - CDO may be able to find contacts for you
Approaching the firms

• Small firms don’t have a Recruiting Department or Hiring Partner
• Don’t say you want a “summer associate” job
Timing

• Small firms hire based on actual need (current or anticipated); not usually calibrated to the academic year
• Never too late and rarely too soon
Compensation & Related Matters

- Ask
- Negotiate
  - NALP publication on salaries
  - Probably won’t pay for Bar, etc.
- May not be a standard partnership track
More general comments

• Why don’t small firms come to OCI?
• As with all job searches, energy and persistence are key
• Be able to articulate why you want to work for a small firm, and for this firm
• Be prepared to say how you might bring in business
Resources

- Choosing Small, Choosing Smart: Job Search Strategies for Lawyers in the Small Firm Market, by Donna Gerson
- Guerrilla Tactics for Getting the Legal Job of Your Dreams, by Kimm Alayne Walton (aka the Job Goddess), 2nd ed. Chapter 18
  - Especially the checklist of negotiating terms
- Law.com: “Small Firm”
Questions?

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