

Editor's note

This year's Midsize Hot List shows the agility of law firms with 50 to 150 attorneys in ducking the recession's blows—or at least bouncing back more quickly than many big-firm competitors.

Lower hourly rates remain the greatest advantage that midsize firms offer, but it's not all about the money. The firms included on this year's list have demonstrated the ability to snag big clients by offering specialized services and to hold on to smaller clients through bread-and-butter practices including estate planning and employee benefits.

The National Law Journal's Midsize Hot List includes 20 law firms that have thrived amid the downturn. From among the stacks of nominations we received, we selected firms that experienced a string of successes and that showed innovative ways to run their operations despite the economy.

We've highlighted two firms—Minneapolis-based Bowman and Brooke and Shartsis Friese of San Francisco—to illustrate what it takes to get ahead as a midsize law firm in a market increasingly dominated by large-firm competition.

We recognize that many firms could have made the list. That said, those included here show not only that bigger is not necessarily better, but that midsize is often the right size. —Leigh Jones



MIDSIZE HOT LIST

ZUCKERMAN SPAEDER LLP

Zuckerman Spaeder's strategy is simple: "staying focused on what you do well," said firm Chairman Graeme Bush. For the Washington-based litigation boutique, that means achieving big wins for clients. Bush himself represents creditors seeking to collect on debts owed under the Tribune Co.'s bankruptcy. He negotiated a settlement, awaiting court approval, of about \$451 million. "When we started the negotiations, the recovery was about six or seven cents on the dollar. We were able to increase that to about 35 cents on the dollar," he said.

Last month, it scored a \$72.5 million settlement for a class of plaintiffs alleging that The Hartford Financial Services Group Inc. violated fraud and RICO laws by keeping millions in fees that should have gone to accident victims. As busy as it is, the firm, which also has offices in Baltimore; New York; Tampa, Fla.; and Wilmington, Del., in May was named the Pro Bono Law Firm of the Year Award for large law firms by the District of Columbia Bar. While many firms have tried to change their models in recent years to meet client needs, Bush said Zuckerman has stayed the course. "We were able to stay strong by continuing to do what we've always done." —Jeff Jeffrey

PRACTICES

In addition to our core litigation practice, Zuckerman Spaeder LLP has developed a number of practice areas in response to our clients' needs. With experience from the Department of Justice, federal and state agencies, and Congress, our attorneys have significant insight into the intricacies of the specific areas in which we practice law. Attorneys from across the firm's practice areas work together, and with their combined experience are able to develop novel legal theories in complex, multidisciplinary cases.

- ▲ Appellate
- ▲ Bankruptcy
- ▲ Business Law
- ▲ Civil Litigation
- ▲ Class Action
- ▲ Food & Drug
- ▲ Government Ethics & Political Law
- ▲ Health Care Fraud
- ▲ Insurance
- ▲ Legal Profession & Ethics
- ▲ Native American
- ▲ Plaintiffs' Litigation
- ▲ Pro Bono
- ▲ Public Client
- ▲ Real Estate
- ▲ Securities Litigation
- ▲ Tax Litigation
- ▲ White Collar & Government Investigations

About Zuckerman Spaeder LLP

"A haven for clients in trouble."

That is how *The American Lawyer* described Zuckerman Spaeder LLP when it named the law firm a finalist for "Litigation Boutique of the Year" in 2009—one of only two firms to receive this recognition both times the competition has been held.

When the stakes are high, clients turn to Zuckerman Spaeder to resolve their most challenging legal issues. They do so for two very important reasons—the firm's dedicated people and deep experience. Zuckerman Spaeder counts among its ranks many of the nation's leading lawyers, who include former federal prosecutors and public defenders, as well as attorneys who have served in congressional offices and federal agencies. Their substantive knowledge runs from criminal defense to FDA law to complex commercial litigation to issues confronting lawyers and law firms.

Through the combined experience of a seasoned team of lawyers, Zuckerman Spaeder offers expert counsel in the most complex legal cases and investigations. And when those cases do enter the courtroom, the firm's trial lawyers guide clients through the course of litigation.

Zuckerman Spaeder's strengths lie not only in litigation wins, but also in the quiet victories that take place outside of the public eye, as achieving the best possible results for clients often means avoiding litigation altogether. The firm's attorneys resolve legal problems outside of the courtroom, sparing clients the stress and expense of trial, while also protecting the core business of their companies.

Founded in Washington, DC in 1975, Zuckerman Spaeder maintains a national practice with attorneys in five offices, including Washington, New York, Tampa, Baltimore, and Wilmington, DE.



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