

Law

Lawyers wanted: Firms that are hiring

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Legal news headlines recently have been dominated by news of lawyer layoffs, but some employers are bucking the trend.

We found eight places that are looking to hire at least two lawyers in the near future.

This is not an exhaustive list of employers that are actively trying to recruit multiple lawyers. It is, instead, a sampling.

Some of the people we spoke to want to hire attorneys in the early stages of their careers; others are looking for partners or senior associates. The jobs they offer run the gamut in practice areas; there are opportunities out there for those practicing criminal, health care, business, litigation, estates, labor and employment, education, domestic, government contracts, real estate and bankruptcy law.

Lerch, Early & Brewer Chtd.

This 47-lawyer Bethesda firm is looking for mid-level or senior associates in its business and taxation, commercial real estate, employment and labor, government contracts and litigation practices. The firm will also consider taking on lateral partners.

Lerch, Early & Brewer is hoping to attract lawyers from the large downtown Washington, D.C., law firms, which, like most big firms, have been hit by the downturn in legal work. Chief Operating Officer David H. Anderson said an attorney at one of those firms might feel that moving to a suburban firm with lower rates would benefit his or her practice.

"Maybe they're looking for an alternative," he said.

Lerch, Early & Brewer is looking for lawyers who already have a book of business, though Anderson acknowledged that lawyers looking for work now might be on the market precisely because they do not have a strong client base.

"I've had many conversations with many attorneys who are very experienced, highly qualified, but just have no workflow," he said.

Hodes, Pessin & Katz P.A.

Towson-based Hodes, Pessin & Katz wants to hire as many as three lateral partners in the coming months, most likely one each in business, labor and education, and estate planning.

The firm, which has 44 attorneys, added five litigators in April and May and has hired three lawyers who do business, tax and bankruptcy work to come on board in the next two months.

"Because the economy is forcing lawyers out of other firms, that's creating an opportunity for us, so that's why



we're doing it," Hodes Managing Partner Drake Zaharris said.

"We've had enormous numbers of inquiries from people that are at firms that are looking to leave or have left quietly and are looking to transition," he said.

Big firms and small firms are stagnating, but many mid-sized firms are doing well and some, like Hodes, are seeking to expand, Zaharris said.

U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland

U.S. Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein is looking for five assistant U.S. attorneys to replace people who have gone on to other jobs or have been temporarily transferred to another office.

Applicants must have at least three years' experience.

Rosenstein said that his office gets a high volume of applications for all jobs — the jobs are posted on the Department of Justice's Web site, so they attract candidates from all over — but that the stack of resumes for these positions is uncommonly tall.

"In addition to the normal applications, we're receiving applications from lawyers who've been laid off and also some from lawyers who either anticipate or are concerned with potential layoffs," he said.

Legal Aid Bureau

The Maryland Legal Aid Bureau is looking for four staff attorneys, two for the domestic section and two for the child advocacy section. Executive Director Wilhelm H. Joseph Jr. said the bureau wants entry-level attorneys, since it cannot afford to pay more experienced lawyers.

The bureau is also seeking a chief counsel, who should have at least 10 years' experience as a lawyer, at least five of those in public-interest law.

Joseph said the new lawyers are needed to replace ones who have left. Though some legal employers are freezing hiring, Legal Aid can't do that, he said.

"We absolutely cannot afford to have the clients and the applicants we see without services, so we are doing everything we can to avoid a diminution in services," Joseph said.

He said that, in this down economy, he senses a return to the attitude that public-interest law is a desirable career choice, something he last saw in the 1960s and 1970s.

"The sense is, we are getting a larger percentage of what I call top-notch graduates seeking work here," Joseph said.

Duane Morris LLP

Philadelphia-based Duane Morris LLP, which has had a Baltimore office since late 2006, is seeking partners in any practice area that will complement the office's existing practices and help them grow.

The Baltimore office, which started with four lawyers, now has 18 and has "no cap on growth," Managing Partner George G. Nemphos said.

"The office itself has been able to sustain its own growth and therefore, the firm is of the opinion that the Baltimore-to-D.C. area is an area where the firm wants to invest heavily," he said. "I would not be shocked if we added another three to five people, easily, before the end of the year."

The firm is in talks with groups of lawyers from other firms but will also consider single partners. They must have clients they can bring along.

The Baltimore office is also looking to hire corporate and litigation associates. The partners there have been staffing their cases with associates from other offices but would like more associates of their own, Nemphos said.

Rosenberg Martin Greenberg LLP

This 42-lawyer Baltimore firm is looking to hire a creditors' rights associate, a tax controversy associate and a tax partner. The creditors' rights associate must be admitted to practice in Delaware.

The new lawyers would not be replacing people who have left; Rosenberg Martin is expanding in those areas. Tax and bankruptcy work is plentiful these days, Managing Partner Benjamin Rosenberg said.

The firm's tax controversy lawyers have been "working literally 24-7," he said.

"I think it's probably safe to assume that the government at both levels, state and federal, has stepped up its tax enforcement just as a revenue measure, and no one wants to pay more taxes than they have to," Rosenberg said.

Also hiring

* Ober, Kaler, Grimes & Shriver P.C. is seeking an estates and trusts associate and a health care associate in Maryland and a litigation associate in Washington, D.C. The firm would prefer to hire lawyers with three to five years' experience but would consider newer lawyers as well.

"We have a bunch of practice areas that are really very busy right now and are in need," Director of Recruitment Laura Friedman said.

* Bowie & Jensen LLC is looking to hire at least two litigation or transactional attorneys, ideally those who have been out of law school a couple of years and are looking to leave their large firms.

Founder Robert R. Bowie Jr. said the firm never brings in lateral partners who will come with a book of business. The firm treats all clients as clients of the firm, not of an individual attorney.

Bowie & Jensen looks for young associates it can groom for eventual partnership, Bowie said.