

# MANN REPORT

JUNE / JULY 2019

**THE  
SUMMER  
ISSUE**

New York  
Los Angeles  
Miami



## SCHWARTZ SLADKUS REICH GREENBERG ATLAS

**LAW'S COOL KIDS ON THE BLOCK**

STEVEN D. SLADKUS, ELI D. GREENBERG, JEFFREY M. SCHWARTZ, JEFFREY S. REICH, JASON B. ATLAS





Litigation Partners: Ethan A. Kobre, Jared E. Paioff, Debra M. Schoenberg, Steven D. Sladkus, Ingrid C. Manevitz, Alan A.B. McDowell, Maria L. Beltrani, Michael E. Fleiss, Mark C. Silverstein

# MOVING ON UP

## The 4-Year-Old Schwartz Sladkus Reich Greenberg Atlas is Growing and Moving

Trusts and Estates Partners: Jarrett G. Roth, Robert D. Steele, Mindy H. Stern



### COVER FEATURE

Photography Jill Lotenberg



Health Care Partners: Brett D. Nussbaum, Jason B. Atlas, Eli D. Greenberg

Children grow quickly from the ages of two to four, but you do not expect comparable growth for a law firm. Yet the leaders at Schwartz Sladkus Reich Greenberg Atlas LLP (SSRGA) clearly enjoy upending expectations — and taking advantage of the occasional bit of serendipity.

Founded in 2015 with 33 attorneys, the firm has expanded to 50 lawyers, and recently moved to space that is 50% larger than its previous home. The hope is to use space it took for growth purposes to add more people and practices.

“We want to grow in a smart steady manner, not too quickly,” said Jeffrey M. Schwartz, one of the firm’s founding partners. “We have grown both organically, as our workload in existing practice areas has expanded, and by adding attorneys with different practice areas and their own books of business.”

The firm was founded by a core group of attorneys who had

been with their previous firm for more than two decades. Seeking to focus on and expand its real estate, health care and other practice areas, SSRGA spun itself off with 33 attorneys in 2015. After a brief period of awkwardness with the members of the old firm, SSRGA sublet 22,000 square feet at 270 Madison Avenue from its former firm.

“After the initial uneasiness, it developed into a very nice relationship,” said Schwartz. “Our ability to turn what could have been a very uncomfortable situation into a mutually beneficial one speaks well as to how we have developed the culture at SSRGA.”

The firm’s largest practice area is real estate transactional work and litigation throughout New York City, Westchester and Long Island. Clients include developers, operators, family real estate businesses and investors. It also has a substantial cooperative and condominium practice representing some of the most widely known residential buildings throughout New York City. In addition, it had a substantial health care practice from the onset, which



## COVER FEATURE

continues to grow, and it rapidly began to add other specializations: employment, intellectual property (through an association with an Atlanta-based firm) and matrimonial and family practices.

Each practice seems to feed another, Schwartz and Steven D. Sladkus, another founding member explained. Real estate development work

can lead to acquisitions, financing and sales. The firm's ever-growing cooperative and condominium practice can lead to work in various types of litigation. The firm

also hopes to develop more of a national presence working on transactions throughout the country.

In January, SSRGA acquired a five-member firm that worked solely in matrimonial law. It was a natural extension of its existing practices, especially since SSRGA prides itself on its close relationships with its clients.

"We've always envisioned expanding to be multidiscipline, and to grow in a strategic manner. The matrimonial practice generates both real estate work and trusts and estates work for two departments we already had," Sladkus observed. "It was a logical

fit for matrimonial practitioners to join us so we could serve their ancillary legal needs."

A bit of good fortune helped. A headhunter introduced SSRGA to the other firm, which just happened to be located across the street from its previous location.

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"Meeting them was easy, and it turned out their lease was expiring at the same time as ours, which also made it easy," Schwartz

said. "We liked the people, had good chemistry and an excellent rapport that developed quickly. Plus, there were no conflicts. It really just fell into our laps."

The firm now has 23 partners, and more are possible. Relationships and people are the key factor: the firm continues to look for people who are forward-thinking, building practices and originating business so it can maintain that youthful, scrappy image even as it grows in size. The two note they would like to further enhance the real estate practice and expand its corporate work. Opportunities in bankruptcy and compliance also appeal, especially if they find an energetic newcomer who wants to build



Real Estate Partners: Kelly A. Kulak, Michael E. Fleiss, Jeffrey M. Schwartz, Ethan A. Kobre, Mindy H. Stern, Debra M. Schoenberg, Alan A.B. McDowell, Jeffrey S. Reich, Jared E. Paioff, Astrid M. Tudisco, Maria L. Beltrani, Ingrid C. Manevitz, Steven D. Sladkus

business over a decade or more.

"It is critical, however, that we like the people we are working with. All of us are good friends and we really do like each other," Sladkus said. "We socialize together, gather as families, eat and exercise together. The people we are looking for to join us, we want to like them too. They must be even-handed, like-minded."

With its sublet scheduled to end in March of 2019, the firm began searching for a new, larger space, located on a major avenue in Midtown. They found it on the entire sixth floor and approximately two-thirds of the fifth floor at 444 Madison Avenue. An internal staircase connects the two levels, there are extra offices for immediate growth and the firm has rights to expand even more if space becomes available. The lease is for 12 years.

"It's a great space," Sladkus said. "We overlook St. Patrick's Cathedral, which is beautiful. One thing is for certain — no one is going to build something and block our view!"

True to its philosophy, the firm did not want its new offices to reflect old-school law firm expectations.

"We wanted to shape a space into our own," Schwartz contin-

ued. "We wanted raw space so that we could turn it into our own vision — to create an environment where people wanted to show up each and every day."

The design is a more contemporary and industrial than one might expect of a law firm — and that's how SSRGA likes it. Though the current trend toward open workspaces isn't practical for an industry that requires privacy and confidentiality, the firm and designer Tamara Eaton created a space that boasts a cool, modern, industrial feel (including exposed ductwork) that is open while accommodating enclosed offices. Light is key: the space boasts gray porcelain tile and carpets, and light wood mid-century furnishings accented by sudden bursts of color. Internal amenities include a kitchenette, that allowed them to bring in the champagne for a welcome celebration when they moved in February.

The firm used MDKA, the landlord's architect, and contractor Structure Tone to complete its "labor of love," Sladkus said. "In addition to having quality work, we hope that his space will help us attract talent. People are very proud to walk into this office."

And attracting still more talent is part of the plan for what Schwartz and Sladkus call "a young, up-and-coming firm, with great talent in a great space" that just so happens to have decades of experience behind it.



Matrimonial Partners: Alton L. Abramowitz, Alexis L. Cirel, Barry Abbott, Matthew C. Kesten, Leigh Baseheart Kahn