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# Cross-Border, Tech Practices Top List for South Florida Lateral Partner Movement



ADOBE STOCK

South Florida's gateway to Latin America and its growing status as a tech hub offered opportunities for some local and out-of-town law firms to keep expanding.

by Alexander Lugo

South Florida laterals crossed into a varied field of practice areas in 2022, but Latin America and technology practices saw the most movement.

With Miami's prominent connection to Latin America being long-established, the chance to capitalize on the connection seems to have captured the attention of some big firms in the area who made hires to capture work there. Meanwhile, tech work continues growing in the region as Greenberg Traurig, among others, continued its expansion into the space.

## A WORLDWIDE SCOPE

Back in February, Greenspoon Marder formed a Latin America arm with Ruben Gotlieb, who left GrayRobinson after seven years, set to head it.

The move came as Greenspoon was looking to capitalize on leftward swings

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in governments across Latin America, prompting some investors there to move assets to the U.S.

But Greenspoon wasn't the only firm looking to make a move into the lucrative stream of capital.

In May, global firms Reed Smith and Dentons scooped up five partners collectively to help fill their Miami offices on the same day.

Reed Smith hired international arbitration and litigation partners Francisco Rodriguez and Sandra Millor along with foreign legal consultant Gilberto Guerrero-Rocca. The three hires all came from Akerman to head Reed Smith's global commercial disputes practice.

"Right now, we're dealing with cases that have nothing to do with Miami other than the fact that Miami is functioning as a gateway. I think you're going to see more and more of that," Rodriguez said in an interview conducted earlier this year.

Meanwhile, Dentons added Jonathan Kaskel and Angel Cortiñas from Gunster to its Miami office, which consisted of one partner before their arrival. The month following their arrival, Leandra Lopez joined the office as an associate, also from Gunster, according to her LinkedIn profile.

The same month Gunster lost Kaskel and Cortiñas to Dentons, it gained Peter Quinter from GrayRobinson.

Quinter became a shareholder at Gunster and now leads the firm's U.S. Customs and international trade team.

### TECH MOVES

In April, GreenbergTraurig continued adding to its tech bench with the addition of Michael Dixon and Roy Zachariah, originally from Akerman. The pair are now shareholders at Greenberg's West Palm Beach office with a focus on intellectual property and technology.

The additions are a response to the growing presence of tech companies in South Florida.

"It's bringing heavy amounts of software, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and definitely blockchain and cryptocurrency as well," Zachariah said in an April interview. "That's especially hot in South Florida as well, but generally it's software and electronics with a lean toward artificial intelligence and fintech."

About a month later, Chicago-based Actuate Law added former Miami Mayor Xavier Suarez to its Miami office, which opened later in the summer.

The former mayor joined the tech-oriented firm precisely for its ability to put Suarez in a position to represent clients in big data, cybersecurity and digital assets.

Suarez came from Greenspoon Marder, and he's not the first in the family to leave the Florida firm. He originally

joined Greenspoon shortly after his son, current Miami Mayor Francis Suarez, left the firm in 2021 to join Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan.

Like his father, Francis Suarez also has connections to the tech world as he's increasingly made headlines for encouraging tech companies to move down to Miami.

### HIRES IN OTHER CLASSI FLORIDA PRACTICE AREAS

Meanwhile, two heavyweights hired significant lawyers in two practice areas familiar to the Sunshine State.

In March, Holland & Knight hired Miami fashion partner Danielle Garno from Reed Smith.

Garno, who has represented brands such as Cartier, Burberry and Gucci, said most of her clients would follow her to Holland.

Recently, Garno advised Florida fashion tech company FIT:MATCH on two separate deals with Rihanna-owned Savage X Fenty and Macy's.

In May, Sidley Austin doubled its Miami office head count with the addition of some entertainment, sports and media industry group hires.

Charles Baker was hired in Sidley's New York office while Irwin Rajj relocated to Miami, both as co-chairs of Sidley's sports industry group. Previously, they worked together at O'Melveny & Myers, where they also served as sports industry group co-chairs.

To support some of the new hires, Sidley also hired three Miami-based associates.

### ANOTHER YEAR OF MOVE-INS AND EXPANSIONS

A year filled with new arrivals to South Florida kicked in early, when King & Spalding announced it would be opening a Miami office in February.

The firm brought in partners from across the country to head the office, citing a desire to keep the culture of the firm intact in a January interview with Miami managing partner Randy Bassett.

When it announced its opening in January, the firm said it would bring in 37 total attorneys. But that head count has since dropped to 34, according to its website. Most of the remaining attorneys split time between Florida and other offices across the country, according to the website.

It was also a big year for mergers and expansions in South Florida. One of the most notable mergers came when Schwartz Sladkus Reich Greenberg Atlas from New York merged with two Boca Raton firms.

The Manhattan firm merged with boutiques Bresky Law and Johnson Ritchey & Feldman because it was looking to gain a presence in Florida as many clients have moved down here, said founding partner Jeffrey Schwartz in an April interview.

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