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What Keeps Mid-Law Leaders Up At Night Midway Into 2022

By [Emma Cueto](#) | Jul 6, 2022, 3:34 PM EDT · [Listen to article](#)

As the first half of 2022 closed, Mid-Law managing partners had a variety of things on their minds, including a possible economic downturn, the ongoing war for legal talent, and questions about how to maintain and enhance their firms' cultures.

Law360 Pulse spoke to the heads of a range of Mid-Law firms about what the year has been like, and what is keeping them up as they look toward the future. Most said the year has been successful so far, but many have already turned their minds to preparing for a potential change in economic conditions — and with it, client demand.

Heading into the second half of 2022, firms are also working hard at recruitment and retention amid the so-called legal talent wars that have been raging since late 2020, and at maintaining firm culture. Issues such as the return to office, diversity and technology needs are also on the minds of many.

DANA ROSENFELD

Managing Partner of Kelley Drye

Kelley Drye & Warren LLP has been focused on retaining and recruiting talent so far in 2022, according to managing partner Dana Rosenfeld. This has included programs to improve work experiences, enhance mentoring, better integrate laterals, and provide specialized training to attorneys at all levels.



What She Says Is Keeping Her Up at Night: "What I think about every day (and night) is continuing our upward trajectory of profitability and preserving our special culture as it evolves over time. We are intently focused on delivering results for our clients, and we work in a manner that is highly collegial and respectful of each other and our differences. As we grow, it is my hope that clients always view Kelley Drye as a powerhouse firm, and our attorneys and staff enjoy a

fulfilling and rewarding professional home."

LEIGHTON LORD

Chairman of Nexsen Pruet

Leighton Lord said South Carolina firm Nexsen Pruet had its best first and second quarters in the firm's history in 2022, but that he is keeping an eye on both the talent market and any potential economic slowdown. Several of the firm's partners have left for government or in-house positions, willing to take lower pay for less stress, he said, which is something he does find concerning.



What He Says Is Keeping Him Up at Night: "We are seeing signs that some of our clients are slowing down; interest rates and general uncertainty are the cause. ... But talent remains a worry, especially with some of our senior lawyers stepping away earlier than planned."

LEANDER DOLPHIN

Managing Partner of Shipman & Goodwin

Managing partner Leander Dolphin at Shipman & Goodwin LLP said the firm had a strong first half of 2022, with no drop-off in demand so far. However, she is still on the lookout for potential market volatility or other economic changes that might affect demand.



What She Says Is Keeping Her Up at Night: "Like many firms, the sustained talent crunch remains a concern. The key there is to stay focused on our flexible and strong firm culture, which will always be attractive to many lawyers and legal professionals."

GREGG EISENBERG

Managing Partner of Benesch

Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff LLP started 2022 with a workforce that was strained and burning out from the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic and high workloads, according to managing

partner Gregg Eisenberg, which prompted the firm to make retention its top priority for the year. As a result, the firm revamped its mentoring program, improved benefits and increased compensation.

While there's still work to do, Eisenberg said, the firm is on track to achieve its retention goals.



What He Says Is Keeping Him Up at Night: "Ensuring that we capitalize on our growth before and during the pandemic that has deepened our bench and strengthened our practice areas to take advantage of our value proposition and continue to increase our market share among clients with sophisticated legal needs."

STEVEN TAYLOR

Managing Partner of Keker Van Nest

For San Francisco litigation boutique Keker Van Nest & Peters LLP, the first half of 2022 was extremely busy as courts reopened and trials resumed, according to managing partner Steven Taylor. Although the firm has done a good job of retaining talent, he said, everyone has still been extremely busy, and the firm is planning on having a large fall associate class to help keep up with demand.



Culture is also on his mind, he said, noting that remote work has been an especially big change for a one-office firm where people were used to seeing all colleagues in person.

What He Says Is Keeping Him Up at Night: "Engagement has been a challenge following two years of sheltering in place, holding team meetings and events via Zoom, and having trials on indefinite holds. We're focused on ways to ensure that associates have equitable access to significant work assignments, that they feel mentored and supported, and that all our lawyers and staff can maintain flexibility, work-life balance and positive mental well-being."

RONALD SHECHTMAN

Managing Partner of Pryor Cashman

For Pryor Cashman LLP, which has a presence on both coasts and is based in New York City, early 2022 was dominated by return to office questions, according to managing partner Ronald Shechtman. The firm has been working to entice attorneys back into the office and making it a place that is worth the commute.

What He Says Is Keeping Him Up at Night: "The uncertainty of the economy and its impact on the demand for legal services."



KRISTINA LAWSON

Managing Partner of Hanson Bridgett

Kristina Lawson of California firm Hanson Bridgett LLP said the firm hit the ground running with its 2022 strategic goals, but that it has also found itself trying to balance day-to-day tasks and the need to react to broader issues, such as the continuing pandemic, inflation, and the recent [U.S. Supreme Court](#) decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*.



Looking ahead, she added that she also expects to see an economic slowdown and a corresponding drop in demand for legal work sometime in the next six to 18 months.

What She Says Is Keeping Her Up at Night: "We remain in the midst of an intense talent war occurring across the legal industry — particularly feeding into BigLaw — where not only did record numbers of legal professionals move firms, but they were also offered record-setting salaries and bonuses. While I have hope that any forthcoming recession will not be as devastating as the Great Recession, I do worry that many BigLaw firms will look to downsize as they did back in 2007-2009. ...

"I am also concerned for the future of our profession if we cannot find a way to make high-level, competitive professions workable for women, people with families, and other attorneys and professionals from marginalized groups."

LINDA PEREZ CLARK

Managing Partner at Kean Miller

Linda Perez Clark, managing partner of Texas and Louisiana firm Kean Miller LLP, said the firm had a strong first half of 2022, with expenses returning to pre-pandemic levels and several new partners joining the firm. While a potential economic downturn is on her mind, she added, the firm's clients in the energy and petrochemical fields are showing no signs of slowing down, and the firm is also seeing exciting developments in new areas such as carbon capture and sequestration.



What She Says Is Keeping Her Up at Night: "I think supply chain issues and the effect on technology enhancements, and cyber issues are at the forefront. We are well prepared, but like all firms, we can always do more."

TIMOTHY LYNCH

President of Offit Kurman

Unlike many other heads of firms, Timothy Lynch of Offit Kurman said he isn't worried about an economic slowdown — instead of seeing evidence for a slowdown, he said, he's only seeing client demand increase. The continued demand for talent has also driven increased interest from smaller firms looking to potentially join with Offit Kurman, he added.



What He Says Is Keeping Him Up at Night: "We are seeing more competition, a lower supply of talent/employees, and higher costs for roles at every level of the firm — from support staff to highly qualified lawyers."

RHONDA TOBIN

Managing Partner of Robinson & Cole

So far in 2022, Robinson & Cole LLP, which is based mostly in the Northeast but also has offices in California and Florida, has been transitioning to a hybrid schedule, with managing partner Rhonda Tobin saying she was "pleasantly surprised" that the change has not impacted implementation of the firm's strategic goals.



In addition to other efforts, the firm has been working to recruit laterals, make technological improvements, and improve diversity, equity and inclusion policies, such as through a new policy of providing billable-hour credits for DEI activities.

What She Says Is Keeping Her Up at Night: "I am most concerned about continuing the progress we have made adjusting to our hybrid schedule, to ensure that there are no long-term effects on our culture, and especially on the new people who joined R+C during the pandemic. We have an incredibly collaborative, supportive and inclusive culture, and have benefited from our personal interactions in maintaining that sense of community for 177 years."

MARK REAGAN

Managing Shareholder of Hooper Lundy

Managing shareholder of health care boutique Hooper Lundy & Bookman PC, Mark Reagan said he is impressed by how the firm has continued to operate smoothly despite still working mostly remotely in 2022. He said the firm has been working hard to help its attorneys and staff stay connected through new affinity groups, voluntary sharing sessions and other "touch points."



What He Says Is Keeping Him Up at Night: "While I believe that we are finding ways to stay connected to move our firm forward, I still worry about the isolating aspects of mostly virtual work. There have been recent important studies on attorney mental health that are beginning to shed far more light around attorney well-being and the importance of building a culture that demonstrates respect and caring along with excellence and productivity."

--Editing by Robert Rudinger.

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