

SPECIAL SECTION New Partners

SPECIAL REPORT

New Partners

BIG LAW REFUGEES

Partners and veteran associates of large law firms are increasingly launching their own shops. The lure: More career control, the promise of better pay and a chance to unleash their entrepreneurial spirit.

By Julie Kay

A pool table adds to the stylish vibe of the office of Ari Tenzer and Juan Delgado.



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When Ari Tenzer told colleagues, clients and friends he was leaving one of the premiere — and highest paying — law firms in South Florida to hang his own shingle at the tail end of a recession, the reaction ranged from surprise to disbelief.

“Most people were very surprised,” said Tenzer, 34. “The market wasn’t great. There really wasn’t a clear path to what I was doing. In their defense, I didn’t really know where I was headed. Everyone said I was brave and admirable, but behind closed doors I’m sure they thought I was crazy.”

That was two years ago. Now, Tenzer has a partner, a secretary, a host of clients and some of the fanciest office space in town. His downtown Miami offices,

featuring a pool table, pricey espresso machine, tropical fish tank and sleek furniture, resemble a South Beach club more than a downtown law firm.

For Tenzer, the decision to leave White & Case was not gutsy or angst-filled but a natural move for the son of Canadian entrepreneurs who speaks six languages.

“We started at the right time,” said Tenzer, who was joined in his new firm by fellow White & Case associate Juan Delgado. “We’re young ambitious guys who are hard-working and were not married and had no children. White & Case taught me how to be a good lawyer, but I wanted to be more hands-on and have more flexibility with regard to how much I charge,



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what clients I represent, what technology I use. And, I wanted to work in an office that was a reflection of who I am.”

The Tenzer and Delgado partners are part of a new wave of Big Law attorneys fleeing large law firms to start their own shops.

While litigation boutiques have been popping up for years, transactional lawyers, appellate attorneys, and bankruptcy and reorganization specialists are now going out on their own — a bit of a rarity in past decades.



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