

5 NYC Managing Partners On Their Priorities For 2022

By **Kevin Penton**

Law360 (January 4, 2022, 12:02 PM EST) -- Law firms in New York continue to have COVID-19 on their minds as they look ahead to 2022, seeking to mine the best benefits of both working in the office and from home, several managing partners told Law360 Pulse.

The law firm leaders said some of their biggest concerns heading into the new year revolve around maintaining a competitive edge for both clients and prospective hires while still dealing with the fast-changing variables wrought by the pandemic.

Here is what the New York leaders of Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP, Foley & Lardner LLP, Alston & Bird LLP, Fried Frank Harris Shriver & Jacobson LLP and Crowell & Moring LLP have to say.

Alan Klinger of Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP

One of the challenges for 2022 will be to strike the right balance between working remotely and in the office, said Alan Klinger, Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP's co-managing partner and chair of its government affairs and regulatory support practice.

"We are going to embrace this hybrid approach that people will be in part of the week but also be able to work from home or if they're traveling other parts of the week," Klinger said.

Stroock's practice groups are designed to perform largely autonomously, Klinger said, so group leaders are empowered to decide how to instruct attorneys to structure their in-office work days, such as by potentially having all practice members in on the same day once a week, he said.

"For firms to say, 'We're going right back. It's going to be five days a week for everyone no matter what,' I think those firms may be at a competitive disadvantage for talent," Klinger said.

Anne B. Sekel of Foley & Lardner LLP

Many of Foley & Lardner LLP's clients are keeping a close eye on how the economy will evolve in 2022, particularly as concern grows over the new Omicron variant of COVID-19, said Anne B. Sekel, managing partner of the firm's New York office.

Foley & Lardner has remained busy throughout the pandemic, said Sekel, who believes the quality of its services and the broad range of its practice groups will allow the firm to continue to perform well

financially and for its clients.

"I think Foley, and New York in particular, are being very mindful of how we can best serve our clients if things are not going in a direction that our clients want financially," Sekel said. "We hope that our clients, even if they are in a financially distressed situation, see Foley as that strategic partner that if they're going to make an investment either in litigation, strategic transactions or, God forbid, restructuring or bankruptcy, that we're there for them."

Revenue at New York-based law firms grew more than 16% compared to the national average of 14%, according to results from the Wells Fargo Private Bank Legal Specialty Group's nine-month check-in for 2021. Expenses at New York law firms grew 9%, a tick ahead of the 8% increase overall, the survey found.

While Foley & Lardner has had to adjust to the pandemic, Sekel believes that the firm remains focused on meaningfully connecting with clients, being creative and efficient in delivering client services, and being seen by clients as a strategic business solution partner.

"The issues that managing partners or law firms are confronting generally are the same now that they've always been confronting," Sekel said.

James H. Sullivan Jr. of Alston & Bird LLP

Alston & Bird LLP's New York office continued to grow amid the pandemic, adding more than 40 attorneys and staff, said James H. Sullivan Jr., the partner in charge of the office.

But as with many work locations, that has not necessarily translated into an office full of people. Only about 40% of lawyers were coming into Alston & Bird's New York office a couple of days each week in late 2020, he said.

The firm is not mandating returns but rather is encouraging attorneys to attend between Tuesdays and Thursdays. Various practices are also aiming to be together in person on the same day as much as possible.

The in-person interactions are particularly important for younger attorneys looking to develop the right skills as they begin their careers and for those working together on important projects, he said.

"We're looking to create an environment post-pandemic that allows people to be purposeful in their interactions in the office," Sullivan said.

David J. Greenwald of Fried Frank Harris Shriver & Jacobson LLP

With many of its recent hires largely having begun work remotely, Fried Frank Harris Shriver & Jacobson LLP will look to 2022 as the year when its recent additions are smoothly integrated into its New York office, said David J. Greenwald, the firm's chairman.

Fried Frank will look to create opportunities for attorneys to reconnect with each other as the firm moves to a hybrid model of working remotely and in the office, all while ensuring that its practices continue to grow, he said.

"Our priorities for the new year are ensuring our clients continue to get the best advice possible and that our people are healthy, comfortable with their working arrangements and feel appreciated," Greenwald said.

Glen McGorty of Crowell & Moring LLP

In recent years, Crowell & Moring LLP has expanded from its traditional regulatory work in Washington, D.C., to offering more robust commercial practices, particularly in financial services in New York, said Glen McGorty, the New York office's managing partner.

McGorty said he is looking forward to seeing the firm's financial services offerings blossom in 2022.

"I'm anxious to see how in a reopened world we are able to further develop these business development opportunities and further develop our growth efforts in the space," McGorty said.

While the firm will remain flexible toward attorneys who wish to continue working remotely, McGorty said there is real value in reestablishing the in-person congenial work culture that he believes is a hallmark of the Crowell & Moring.

"I do think that being back in person more than we have been during the course of the pandemic is a critical ingredient in what will make 2022 successful," McGorty said.

--Editing by Jill Coffey.