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Q&A

'Successful, Powerful and Satisfied': Raines Feldman's New York Office Leader Talks Training Next-Generation Talent

"In our profession, people feeling satisfied is not always seen as a priority. But that is what we should all be shooting for," said Simon Miller, the New York office leader of Los Angeles-born Raines Feldman.

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Law Firm Management

Jessie Yount

Los Angeles-born law firm Raines Feldman has taken the leap and [inked a lease](#) in New York City, as midsize firms continue to [expand their geographic footprints](#) at a rapid clip.

Last month, the 56-attorney firm amplified its expansion, hiring Eisner's New York office managing partner Simon Miller to lead the new office and recruit corporate, real estate and litigation talent in the region.

Below, Miller spoke with Law.com reporter Jessie Yount about the firm's latest expansion and unique value proposition for prospective laterals. Plus, how Miller's non-legal, executive coach training influences his approach to leadership.

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity and length.

What prompted you to join Raines Feldman?

In the last few years, we've seen the legal industry go through an evolution. Law firms everywhere are looking at 'What is the new normal going to be?' For me, I'm at the stage where I felt ready to take on the challenge of leading and growing an office and driving a particular kind of culture that is truly supportive and collaborative. And when I met the team at Raines Feldman, I saw that their values and what they've built in Los Angeles aligned with the type of firm I'd want to grow in New York.

How is the firm plotting growth in New York?

Raines Feldman has built a great brand in Los Angeles with solid national real estate and corporate business practices as well as a heavy-duty litigation practice. The next pillar is creating a national presence by growing and investing in the New York legal market. As the saying goes, if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere.

From a substantive perspective, we're trying to create what Raines Feldman created in Los Angeles here in New York. We'll build out a real estate practice, a corporate transactional practice as well as a multi-faceted bankruptcy practice. And I'm a litigator, and I know how to train and grow litigation groups. In Los Angeles, the litigation group is well-known in the entertainment industry. Miles Feldman, one of the founders of the firm, is a renowned business and entertainment litigator. And I've worked with a lot of entertainment business units over the years. That said, we'll grow a broad-based business litigation group handling commercial disputes of any nature and stripe to the extent they come across our desk. Once we have a replication of [those practices] in New York, we will look to expand with synergistic practices complementing those core practices.

In addition to your legal training, you're a certified executive coach. How does that fit into your practice and leadership style?

I became a certified executive coach in 2018. It grew out of the way I practice law. The business divorces I handle are by nature emotional matters for the clients that are involved. It doesn't matter whether the client is a public company in a failing joint venture or a two-person law firm splitting up; they are matters the clients take very personally. When the business confronts these transitions, their

decisions are influenced by potential impacts on the business, their respective legal rights and the emotional component. In fact, in my experience, the emotional piece is often the most influential force driving the client's decision-making. These decisions don't just impact the financial bottom line; they impact my clients' personal bottom line. So to be an effective counselor, I knew I needed to understand each of these forces.

So I said to myself, there is a piece of this that we didn't learn in law school. Some executive coach friends of mine said coaching training and techniques would supplement what I do for my clients. And it has in the last three to four years. I do have private coaching clients, but more than anything, it has enhanced the way I practice law. And the way I mentor associates and help them develop, grow and form values that are important to being a successful, powerful and satisfied attorney. In our profession, people feeling satisfied is not always seen as a priority. But that is what we should all be shooting for.

What opportunities do you see for recruiting and retaining talent in the midst of the Great Resignation?

People are reevaluating their professional lives everywhere. I see that as an opportunity to offer potential laterals something different: the marrying of a blend of attention to legal excellence and the opportunity for them to develop and become the best individual lawyer that they can be. The term we use is "self-actualization." For the mid-level associate who doesn't feel they are getting enough experience, this can be an opportunity to be truly hands-on, challenging themselves to excel and grow. Or for the junior or more seasoned partner who knows how to play the game but is looking for a truly collaborative environment where they can leverage their experience and connections to grow their business.

For our firm, we don't view people as being siloed. Instead, we're creating an environment that incentivizes people to grow and develop their own practices by selling the firm as one team. Philosophically and financially, that is the way we intend to grow and that is what we will look for in the people we bring in. From our perspective, we all succeed when the firm invests in its best assets – its people. The converse is also true – a company's people are like our teeth. If we ignore them, they go away.

How does Raines Feldman give associates opportunities to participate in business development?

As part of its culture of promoting self-actualization for all its team members, the firm is supportive of younger attorneys seeking to develop business. In fact, it is not uncommon for senior partners to assist junior attorneys on business pitches even if the matters are small. The firm supports junior attorneys attending conferences, joining local bar associations and participating in events that are designed to expand their professional networks. In addition, the firm offers a lower billable hour requirement than most similar size firms and gives credit for certain non-billable hours spent on business development. Overall, the firm is looking to support each member of the team to reach their highest potential.

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