

# *Should an Attorney Choose a Small or Large Law Firm to Work in?*

*By Harrison Barnes from Los Angeles Office Managing Director*

The recent Madoff ponzi scheme, the similar ponzi scheme of the Dreier law firm and the complete meltdown of Blagojevich, the Governor of Illinois, have all got me thinking.

All over our country there are countless people who are trying to be something they are not. They want more money because they feel this will somehow do something more for their lives.

## *What does this mean for your legal career?*

In my years of recruiting I have seen so many attorneys through good careers away by only being concerned with the money. Most often the highest paying firms often offer attorneys the least chance for partnership. Time and time again, however, most attorneys go with the short term prospect of more money over the possibility of [making partner](#) and winding up in a stable law firm.

The way most attorneys think is very confusing to me. The instability that many expose themselves to is very confusing to me. I think that the most intelligent thing attorneys can do in the present day economy is to find a law firm where they are going to be secure.

Several years ago I was [interviewing with a law firm](#) in Los Angeles that paid below market rate. I liked the people in the firm and it seemed like a very nice place to work. [The partner in the law firm who was the name partner told me while he was interviewing me that I would never make as much money in the law firm as at large law firms](#), but that I would always have a job. He told me about the stability of the firm and its partners and that this was a very smart place for me to be [practicing law](#).

I chose not to work at this firm and instead chose recruiting. That was almost a decade ago.

Since that decade has passed the law firm I was working at when I interviewed with the small firm in Los Angeles has gained and lost so many partners I do not think I know anyone there anymore. Many of the partners from this firm are no longer practicing law. In addition, I have watched people that I know early in my career work at a succession of 7-8 jobs in different law firms during this same period of time.

This small firm that I interviewed is still there. With one exception, each of the seven partners who interviewed me when I interviewed with the firm are still there. The firm is still chugging along and the people who work there seem secure and happy. When I got married several years ago I even hired this firm to do my will and some other formalities. The people there are all happy.

The attorneys in this firm still make a bit less money. Who care, though? They are happy and have security and are not playing crazy games with their careers. I really respect this firm and its attorneys. Had I chosen to work in that firm instead of recruiting, I would respect myself for choosing that firm.

You need to be careful with your career and the choices you make.