

Milbank Partner Goes It Alone to Escape the 'Big Firm Profit Model'

At new firm, Evans to consider billing alternatives other than the traditional billable hour model

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July 9, 2010

Gregory Evans, a litigation partner in the Los Angeles office of Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy, has left to form his own firm, Integer Law Corp., citing the “unbearable tension” between big law firm profit structures and the needs of clients who face increasing economic pressures.

Evans said he has been considering branching out on his own since the economy took a nosedive.

“When companies have been cutting so many employees and budgets, which include legal budgets, I have seen -- not just Milbank, but across the industry -- reluctance to adapt to what should be a new model of representing the legal interests of businesses,” Evans said. “I want to, in this model, connect more closely with my clients and avoid the unbearable tension at times between a big firm profit model and the needs of businesses that are suffering through difficult economic times, whose legal affairs must be managed effectively and efficiently.”

At his new Integer Law Corp., located in downtown Los Angeles, Evans will focus on high-stakes litigation. He is willing to get paid in ways other than ordinary billable hours, including on contingency or partial contingency, reduced billing rates or performance-based bonuses, he said.

Evans planned to hire a few associates but also anticipated referring work to his former colleagues at New York-based Milbank.

A Milbank spokeswoman, Megan Braverman, declined to comment.

Evans' clients have included The Sherwin-Williams Co., Nike Inc., Vodafone Group PLC, Steinway Musical Instruments Inc., 3M Co., Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp. and Asarco, a recently reorganized copper mining company.



Integer Law Corporation's Gregory Evans

“Greg can pretty much go anywhere to practice law and we will follow him,” Don McConnell, chief environmental attorney at Sherwin-Williams, said in a prepared statement. “It’s all about Greg and his abilities, not the fancy firm and its high prices. In our environmental cases, we need people like Greg who put us first and get us the best results. Often, big firms just seem to get in the way of this kind of extremely valuable relationship.”

Evans hoped that most of his clients would follow him to his new firm.

“I’m not sure right now that there are a lot of people in the legal marketplace who share my view of putting clients first, or putting clients above profit,” Evans said. “I feel like I am on a frontier, but I feel this is the right time and the right place to do this.”

Many of Evans’ cases have involved environmental issues. Recently, for example, Evans convinced the Department of Justice not to bring criminal charges under environmental law against Asarco. He also has handled cases involving trade secrets, contract disputes and consumer class actions.

Evans, 49, worked at Milbank for four years, before which he served as head of the litigation department at Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe’s San Francisco office. Before that, he was at the former Preston Gates & Ellis, now K&L Gates, and Los Angeles-based Hill, Farrer & Burrill.

Evans began his career during the late 1980s on a fellowship with the U.S. Department of Justice and later served as deputy counsel to the National Coalition for the Homeless in Washington, D.C. He serves on the national board of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund.