

Ex-Olshan Employment Leader Launches Women-Owned Boutique

BY MEGHAN TRIBE

OLSHAN Frome Wolosky's longtime employment practice head Aliza Herzberg is setting up her own boutique in the Big Apple.

On Tuesday, the Herzberg Law Group officially opened for business in New York's Times Square neighborhood, helmed by Herzberg and former Olshan Frome counsel Lori Barnea.

"I think that it's the right time," Herzberg said of her decision to open her own employment law shop. Herzberg was one the lead lawyers in Olshan Frome's employment practice, which she joined in early 2007 from New York's Morea Schwartz Bradham Friedman & Brown.

Seeing smaller firms handle important matters for clients with a nimbleness and efficiency

akin to that of a large firm helped propel Herzberg to explore opening her own practice, she said.

"[They] can really give big firm service but get to know clients more intimately," Herzberg said. "[Smaller firms] can really know the business of the clients so they can tailor their advice to that business."

Herzberg Law Group will provide human resources solutions, as well as crisis management and internal investigations counsel to Herzberg's longtime clients, a group that includes banks, biotechnology companies and event planning businesses. In addition, Herzberg plans on sup-



Lori Barnea and Aliza Herzberg

porting larger law firms in their employment law matters.

But what differentiates Herzberg's boutique from her time at larger firms, which included stints at Proskauer Rose and Dentons predecessor Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal, is

that her new shop plans on approaching matters with the explicit goal of avoiding litigation as much as possible, Herzberg said.

“As a smaller firm we look at litigation obviously as a money-maker, but we can fill our time and we can fill our business objectives by giving advice that avoids it [and] we can be more measured about that,” she said.

Herzberg has been handling client matters on her own as part of a “soft launch” for her shop that began in early August. The Herzberg Law Group officially started went live Tuesday after adding Barnea, who has worked with Herzberg for the past decade at Olshan Frome.

“We really wanted to go out on our own and serve our clients in a very specialized way and we thought we could do this best in a small firm starting out fresh,” Barnea said of her decision to join Herzberg at her new firm. “In a smaller setting and smaller environment there are more opportunities to give attention

to our clients in a different way than in a larger firm.”

The new outfit probably won’t expand again before year’s end, said Herzberg, although she has her eye on potential growth opportunities in 2018. She and Barnea leave Olshan Frome a week after the latter saw litigation partner Ellen Holloman decamp for Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft in New York. (Earlier this year, Olshan Frome hired securities litigation partner Adrienne Ward from New York’s Ellenoff Grossman & Schole and Jackson Lewis employment partner Michael Passarella.)

Herzberg is also the latest in a series of female partners to leave larger law firms to set up their own shops.

In July, Nancy Mertz, chair of the intellectual property practice at Herrick, Feinstein, formed her own New York-based shop called Mertz Law. That same month noted female litigator Roberta Kaplan left Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison to start her own boutique called Kaplan

& Co., a move that came a little more than a year after two of her former female colleagues at Paul Weiss formed Wilkinson Walsh + Eskovitz. In June, Washington, D.C.-based government contracts boutique Larkin Ferrell was founded by partners from Bradley Arant Boult Cummings and Steptoe & Johnson.

“I think it’s an exciting trend and I think it’s one that will be welcomed by many large corporations that are looking [for] diversity in their vendors,” said Herzberg, when asked about the sudden spate of new, women-owned firms. “I think it’s also an exciting time for powerful women to cast out on their own.”

@MeghanTribe at mtribe@alm.com. Twitter: @TribeMeghan