

Quartet downsizes from Big Law

Lawyers leave Offit Kurman for Wright Constable



MAXIMILIAN FRANZ

From left: Donald J. Walsh, Laura Rubenstein, Douglas H. Seitz and Max S. Stadfeld.

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In search of a smaller firm that would offer more opportunities to grow their practices, four established Baltimore attorneys recently moved together from one of the largest firms in Maryland to a smaller practice in a move that is unusual in the legal industry.

Laura Rubenstein, Douglas H. Seitz, Max S. Stadfeld and Donald J. Walsh joined Wright, Constable & Skeen LLP on Monday as partners. All four came from Offit Kurman, where they were all principals and practiced for more than a decade.

"We've been friends throughout the time we worked there," said Walsh, who specializes in business and government contracting, labor and employment and commercial litigation. "We all talked and had similar views on what we wanted for our clients."

"It was the culture that drew us here," added Rubenstein, who practices labor and employment law and was chair of that department at Offit Kurman. "When the opportunity is right, you make the move."

For Walsh and Seitz, joining Wright Constable is more of a homecoming, as both attorneys started their careers at the firm.

"It was a firm we were very familiar

with," Walsh said.

It's also a firm that is significantly smaller than their previous employer. Offit Kurman has 81 lawyers in Maryland, making it the eighth-largest firm in the state, according to The Daily Record's recent survey of the state's largest law firms. Wright Constable ranked 30th.

"We feel like we have the capacity to handle significant cases and serve the needs of clients as if we were a large firm," said Frederick L. Kobb, the firm's managing partner. The four newest partners said they liked that the firm was small enough for lots of interaction among lawyers and client referrals to lawyers within the firm.

"It gives us a lot of breadth," he said. "Clients feel comfortable at a firm of this size."

Clients also generally are more fee- and relationship-sensitive, added Stadfeld, who practices construction law, and want to know how their hours are being billed. They also are more likely to value relationships with attorneys over firm brand names, and technology has made it easier to maintain those relationships, the attorneys said.

"It's not unusual to be texting a client at 10 o'clock at night," said Seitz, who specializes in bankruptcy and creditors' rights, construction, commercial law and litigation.

As partners, the four attorneys will participate in management decisions. Having four new attorneys take on such a role is not



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new for the firm, having successfully done a similar transition almost a decade ago, Kobb said.

"We're very careful about bringing folks in," he said. "We're always looking for talented and successful lawyers to come in when the opportunity is right."

For Rubenstein, having a bigger impact on the practice's decisions appealed to her.

"It's nice to have a stronger say in the direction of the firm," she said.

All four attorneys intend to bring at least

some of their Offit Kurman clients to the firm, which is usually difficult to predict.

"You never know how that's going to work out," Kobb said. "That's totally up to the client."

Many clients are following the four attorneys as of now, but Kobb is not worried about the attorneys generating business.

"We feel strongly that all four lawyers joining us have the ability to develop new clients," he said.