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John C. Ryan, Senior VP, ARAMARK Corporation

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Chambers Commentary "Immigration"

Band 1: Immigration

1 Duane Morris LLP [Firm profile](#)

The Firm: With eight immigration partners and a practice on both the east and west coasts, Duane Morris offers a "fully rounded and focused service," clients report. The lawyers are widely considered to be "experts in the field, understanding and meeting their clients' needs at all times. They are bang on the money." The team covers the whole range of immigration work, counseling diverse clients, from Fortune 500 companies to smaller business, in a realm of sectors including IT, biotech, banking and shipping. It also counts a number of universities and embassies among its clients.

The Lawyers: **Denyse Sabagh** "doesn't shy away from the complicated cases but instead thrives on them." Her approach has won her a reputation for "innovative, cutting-edge" work in the field. She is said to be "solid on all aspects of the law" and clients also attest that "her compassionate client care is second to none." **Roberta Freedman** is "a walking talking regulatory encyclopedia" who "knows the law inside-out." She is noted most for her "tremendous work" in the J-1 visa area.

Clients/Work Highlights: The firm advises foreign and domestic companies from a number of sectors, including the healthcare, technology and hospitality industries.

1 Greenberg Traurig, LLP [Firm profile](#)

The Firm: This firm "clearly belongs at the top, no question." Its immigration practice is strong both in terms of numbers and the caliber of its lawyers, competitors confirm. The group covers all aspects of business immigration, from basic visa work to major compliance work such as I-9 audits. Described as "a young at heart firm with a real drive for excellence," clients agree that "responsiveness is its big strength. Its lawyers never leave you dangling, they all run around with their BlackBerry in their hands." The team also benefits from being heavily involved in legislation, keeping abreast of current laws and of any potential legislation in the pipeline. "The lawyers are really plugged into the workings of the agencies and the lawmakers," market sources say.

The Lawyers: **Laura Reiff's** "exceptional knowledge of the law and her legislative capabilities set her apart." She is held in particularly high esteem for her extensive lobbying work.

Clients/Work Highlights: Agere Systems; Ingersoll Rand; CVS and the Government of El Salvador.

1 Hogan & Hartson LLP [Firm profile](#)

The Firm: The "top-notch team" at Hogan & Hartson comprises 11 immigration lawyers who handle both inbound and outbound immigration work. Clients benefit from the firm's impressive global footprint and its broad remit, describing it as a "one-stop shop" that meets their needs "at the highest possible level" and whose lawyers "can handle any matter put before them." The group assisted long-term client EADS in staffing NATO projects with key personnel from the company's European facilities. Other work highlights include representing Montclair State University in a DOL investigation into employer's compliance with wage obligations for H-1B visa holders.

The Lawyers: With "a last name that personifies him," **Paul Virtue** is a "delightful person to deal with." Heralded as "Mr Immigration," his knowledge and experience have "gone a long way to push the firm's practice forward." **Both Peters** provides a "comprehensive client-oriented service" and is a "good, straight-up business immigration lawyer."

Clients/Work Highlights: The team continues to represent long-standing clients Cadbury Schweppes and National Geographic. The firm also has a number of clients in the sports sector including Kroenke Sports Enterprises; Octagon; Minnesota Wild NHL hockey team and the United States Olympic Committee, for which it drew up legislation allowing 'aliens of extraordinary ability' to acquire citizenship status after three years' residency.

1 Maggio & Kattar PC [Firm profile](#)

The Firm: This immigration boutique's 11-strong practice is made up of three business immigration teams, two general practice teams that handle smaller business and individual immigration cases, and one litigation team. Differing from many of its competitors, the firm not only represents corporate clients but also individual immigrants. It has an outstanding reputation for complex court cases and for "having the talent to handle the complicated stuff." The firm's depth of experience is said to be one of its major strengths, with clients reporting: "It isn't just a one-man band. It has more than one star."

The Lawyers: Heading the group, the "superb" **Michael Maggio** has "built up a tremendous practice" and is "one of the fixtures of the immigration Bar." Described by his counterparts as "substantially one of the smartest and most creative lawyers in his field," his "remarkable diligence" has earned him a reputation as an "indefatigable fighter." **Andres Benach** heads up the litigation team and is one of the rising stars of the litigation Bar. He is particularly well known for deportation work: "He has plowed a lot of ground in the area."

Clients/Work Highlights: This firm's client base stretches across a wide range of industries. Notable clients include Emerson, NCR and Four Seasons.

Band 2: Immigration

2 Baker & McKenzie LLP [Firm profile](#)

The Firm: Drawing on the firm's strong global network, this immigration group has "expertise at its fingertips." Clients praise its lawyers for "seeing the bigger picture, addressing all aspects and implications of a problem." The six-strong group counsels a number of large multinationals, covering the whole spectrum of their immigration needs. The team advised RSM International on the immigration aspects of its takeover of American Express' tax and business service divisions. Other recent work includes assisting Countrywide Financial with the international mobility issues of its expansion in the Asia-Pacific region. The team is also well known for its niche private banking practice, helping high net worth individuals with their immigration needs.

The Lawyers: A prominent name in immigration, **Elizabeth Stern** "knows how to build exceptional relationships with clients and always finds ways to add value to and support the client's business."

Clients/Work Highlights: Airbus North America; Ameriprise Financial; Countrywide Home Loans and RSM McGladrey.

2 Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen & Loewy, LLP [Firm profile](#)

The Firm: Part of "an immigration leviathan," the Washington, DC office of Fragomen Del Rey is able to take full advantage of the firm's national reputation. With eight attorneys, the DC team may not be as large as some of Fragomen's other offices, but it is "definitely a prominent and strong player which can never be disregarded."

The Lawyers: Managing partner **Andrew Greenfield** has been credited with "bringing the DC office to a new level" and "markedly increasing its visibility." A "smart, young and delightful guy," he is "all set to go far."

Clients/Work Highlights: The firm's client base includes a number of Fortune 500 companies, as well as smaller businesses.

2 Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP [Firm profile](#)

The Firm: Although this three-lawyer team may be smaller than some of its competitors, it still provides a *"level of overall excellence."* As part of an interdisciplinary firm, the immigration practice can *"call in a multidisciplinary group of lawyers to attack a client's problem at the drop of a hat."* The team, which is part of the firm's labor and employment group, is **adept at handling compliance matters**, helping clients internally audit their immigration and employment eligibility paperwork. Another area of work that wins market praise is the practice's *"mastery of the PERM process."*

The Lawyers: **Eleanor Pelta** is described as *"the backbone"* of this group and is credited with *"really driving the practice forward."*

Clients/Work Highlights: This firm's broad-based client roster comprises logistics, healthcare and hospitality companies, among others. Clients include DHL, Choice Hotels International and Corporation Service Company (CSC).

2 Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker LLP Immigration

The Firm: The immigration team is part of the firm's **strong employment law division**. Although smaller than its Atlanta counterpart, the Washington, DC group is expanding and has recently made a new hire, demonstrating the firm's commitment to building its practice in the area. Many of the lawyers have government backgrounds, giving the team *"substantial depth in its insight into the inner workings of the whole process."* The group also has significant expertise in immigration compliance; over the past year, its services in the area have been in strong demand from its corporate clients.

The Lawyers: Practice head **Bo Cooper**'s government background ensures that he *"understands how the immigration service works from the inside."* He is also valued for his diplomacy: *"If you have a delicate matter, he's the guy you want to handle it."*

Other Notable Practitioners

The *"feisty"* **Jan Pederson** of Pederson Immigration Law Group PC is reported to be *"full of vim and vigor."* She is particularly noted for the work that she does for foreign healthcare professionals. *"Like a dog with a bone,"* Pederson is a *"tenacious and tireless fighter,"* and peers are full of praise for her strong advocacy skills, commenting: *"She is someone you would want on your side."* Head of the immigration department at Hunton & Williams LLP, **Ian Band** enjoys a good reputation in the field. His *"personable approach and human touch"* ensure that he is well liked by clients; he is also *"a favorite with the DOL."* He does a lot of immigration-related work for foreign actors. A *"terrific ally smart and able lawyer,"* **Amy Nice** at Dickstein Shapiro LLP is **renowned for her expertise in J visas** and she is heralded as the *"first port of call"* for issues in this area. Clients appreciate her thorough approach: *"She is very meticulous. She doesn't file a petition unless all the i's are dotted and the t's crossed."*