



McDermott, Will & Emery

[Adam Feder]

McDermott, Will & Emery, founded in 1934 in Chicago as a tax practice, has evolved into a broad-based firm as it celebrates its 70th birthday in 2004. With 15 offices spanning the globe (including four in California) and employing more than 1,000 attorneys, the firm has experienced steady growth throughout the decades.

The Chicago office is the flagship of McDermott, Will & Emery (McDermott). It is a solid, conservative firm which embodies the Midwestern values of the surrounding community. Outstanding client service is what built and continues to grow the firm. Situated between the Chicago River and Lake Michigan in Chicago's Financial District, McDermott is a powerhouse in the region. *Vault* has rated McDermott fifth overall in the Chicago area and seventh in tax as of 2003

Even though the firm handles all manners of legal services, the top three practice areas are trial, corporate/real estate, and tax, as evidenced by the number of attorneys appropriated to these departments. Recently, however, there has been an expansion in the intellectual property group. This has been marked by the acquisition of many highly regarded IP attorneys.

Two years ago, the firm implemented its Kids First Project, in which attorneys concentrate on matters involving education, such as registration and eligibility for immigrant/undocumented children. Additionally, attorneys are expected to devote 60 hours per year to pro bono representation. The Pro Bono Committee mandates this requirement and also guarantees that the work will be the same quality as that which is afforded to all other clients.

The Summer Associate Program offers law students the chance to participate in a realistic work environment (not filing and grunt work) and in turn receive constructive feedback. It also provides cross-training in many

different practice areas, which assists future attorneys in choosing a specialty. An added bonus is the weekly night on the town. These law firm outings, which in Chicago have included White Sox games and Lake Michigan cruises, serve an important socialization function. They are also used to wine and dine the summer associates and show what that particular city has to offer.

Once the firm has decided to extend an offer, the fun and games are over; and odds are that the firm will aim to employ a high number of its summer associates. Of the 12 summer associates considered for employment in Chicago in 2003, all 12 were offered positions. The firm adheres to a minimum output of 2,000 billable hours for all attorneys, but there has been some dispute as to how many of these hours can be applied toward bonuses. This figure is reasonable and allows some semblance of an outside life, but one should expect to work hard and long.

In terms of base compensation, McDermott ranks among other top-tier firms. The bonus structure, though not available to the public, allows each individual associate's pay to be elevated to market level.