



Heller Ehrman Dissolves

By Stony Olsen

The storied law firm of Heller Ehrman has announced that it is dissolving. As of Monday, September 29th, 2008, the firm will cease to exist. The firm's associates and staff were only informed of the decision today.



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The associates have been given 60 days' notice, with pay. This is not a severance, however, as they are still expected to work during that time to participate in the firm's "orderly dissolution."

According to reports, the next 60 days at Heller will consist of collections, trying to funnel the employees to other jobs, transitioning client matters to other firms, and other such niceties. After those 60 days, all that will be left to deal with are core financial matters and the like.

Heller Ehrman is a large firm out of San Francisco and is over 118 years old. The firm has offices in most of the major financial centers of the world, including London, New York, and Washington. Heller also has over seven hundred attorneys right now, having experienced incredible growth in recent years.

In its many years of operation, Heller has represented corporations such as Apple, Sony, Texas Instruments, Bank of America, Price Waterhouse, and many more high-profile companies.

Troubles have swirled around Heller for a long time now, however. The firm has been in merger talks with numerous other law firms over the past year, but all of those potential mergers eventually collapsed. Suitors included Mayer Brown, Baker & McKenzie, and even Proskauer Rose.

Less than two weeks ago, on September 15th, an entire practice group jumped ship to go to Covington & Burling, a move which in retrospect may have sounded the death knell for the sinking firm.

The legal market is now bracing for a flood of former Heller attorneys. Fortunately, many of them will bring some of Heller's business with them.

The people really hurt by the firm's dissolution are Heller's staff. The attorneys and partners will probably be snapped up fairly quickly, but all the secretaries and paralegals will likely face a grimmer future.

Good luck and condolences to all those who are losing their jobs.

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