

Nixon Peabody Hiring Partner: Student Recruitment Model Is 'Antiquated'

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By [Debra Cassens Weiss](#)

The hiring partner of Nixon Peabody says the traditional law firm recruitment model needs to be changed, and his law firm is already examining alternatives.

Hiring partner John Snellings told the [Boston Business Journal](#) that his firm is considering an apprenticeship program. The old recruitment system "is antiquated," he told the publication. "It just does not make economic sense. It does not make good business sense."

Nixon Peabody has already cut starting salaries for new associates from \$160,000 to \$145,000 and reduced the number of offers for full-time jobs made to summer associates. Last year the firm offered jobs to 95 percent of summer associates; this year the offer rate was about 60 percent, the Business Journal says.

Other law firms are also cutting or eliminating their summer associate programs, the story says. One of them is Sullivan & Worcester, which hired only nine students for its summer program this year, and is holding off on making any offers.

Randi Friedman, assistant dean at Northeastern University law school, said she thinks smaller associate programs and lower offer rates are just the tip of the iceberg. "My gut says that there are bigger changes coming," she told the publication. "It's going to be the beginning of a new era. I already have seen a change in the law students. They see the world can change in an instant."

In Snellings' interview with the Boston Business Journal, he referred to an environment in which cash-crunched clients are objecting to high billing rates for new associates working on their matters. "If a young lawyer can't work on a matter because their rates are too high—how do we get them the training they need?" Snellings asked.

One of the ideas at Nixon Peabody, Snellings said, is to create a "center of excellence" where first-year associates would train until they can graduate to a larger market.