

# 'Forget Avocado Toast.' How Porzio Bromberg Offers Young Lawyers A Unique Career Path.

"Our pitch to young lawyers is about what we can do for their careers and bank accounts," principal John Oroho says.

By Dylan Jackson

**Firm Name:** Porzio, Bromberg & Newman, P.C.

**Firm Leader:** John Oroho, principal of the firm and EVP and chief strategy officer of Porzio Life Sciences, LLC

**Head Count:** Approximately 250

**Locations:** Morristown, Princeton, and Ocean City (New Jersey); Wilmington, DE; New York, NY; Westborough, MA; San Juan, Puerto Rico

**Practice Areas:** Full service

**Governance structure and compensation model:** The firm is a Private Corporation with limited and full equity partners. The subsidiaries are LLCs.

**Do you offer alternative fee arrangements?** Yes.

**What do you view as the two biggest opportunities for your firm, and what are the two biggest threats?**

Our two biggest opportunities stem from our firm's unique business model. For clients in the life sciences industry, we wear two different hats. First, we act as legal advisors, as any law firm might. But our firm also runs a subsidiary, Porzio Life Sciences, which offers software products and consulting solutions that help pharmaceutical companies comply with the many regulations imposed on them.

Porzio Life Sciences just released two new products that represent great

opportunities. One, called Porzio GST, helps pharmaceutical companies comply with sunshine laws that require them to be transparent about amounts they pay to physicians. The other, Porzio Third Party Engagement, comes into play when they contract with third parties (for instance, add an individual to their advisory board or engage a doctor for a speaking engagement). Both products are effective not just in the U.S., but in jurisdictions around the world, and provide access to a repository of information that is second-to-none.

The threats we face relate to both sides of our business. As a law firm, we're keeping an eye on accounting firms that would like to be in the business of providing legal advice. As a global compliance platform, we are now in direct competition with Goliaths like PricewaterhouseCoopers and IQVIA. That's a step up for us, but we're holding our own. In fact, in the last full year of transparency reporting, our systems analyzed over 20 million healthcare professionals' spend transactions.

**The legal market is so competitive now—what trends do you see, and has anything, including alternative service providers, altered your approach? Is your chief competition other mid-market firms, or is your firm competing against big firms for the same work?**



John Patrick Oroho principal with Porzio, Bromberg & Newman.

Courtesy photo

On the law firm front, our chief competition comes from large firms that are looking to create consulting subsidiaries to perform work similar to what we do through Porzio Life Sciences.

Alternative legal service providers are out there, but pricing has been a challenge for them. They are having trouble getting away from the billable hour model. We've learned how to make fixed fees work at this point and are even using them more on litigation engagements.

**There is much debate around how law firms can foster the next generation of legal talent. What advantages and disadvantages do midsize firms have in attracting and retaining young lawyers, particularly millennials?**

For some reason, midsize firms (and others) spend a lot of energy discussing the office trimmings that young lawyers supposedly desire—which snacks, office furniture, or what have you. To me, those discussions feel at best distracting, and at worst infantilizing.

Our pitch to young lawyers is about what we can do for their careers and bank accounts. As to the former, we tell associates that if they work with our life sciences group—which interacts with so many different companies—there is a fair chance that they will be recruited by a life sciences or pharmaceutical company. We have more alumni in the industry than any law firm and just saw a former associate become interim CEO at a drug maker. Our clients sometimes apologize to me for hiring away our talent, but it's a compliment that only deepens and often expands our relationships. And millennials find the possibility of those career opportunities attractive.

We also offer young lawyers the opportunity to increase their income by cross-selling the services of our tech subsidiary, Porzio Life Sciences. On those sales, our lawyers earn origination bonuses that can last for years. Forget avocado toast. Why wouldn't you want to go to a firm with a tech subsidiary doing cutting-edge work that will give you recurring revenue?

**Does your firm employ any nonlawyer professionals in high-level positions (e.g. COO, business development officer, chief strategy officer, etc.)? If so, why is it advantageous to have a nonlawyer in that role? If not, have you considered hiring any?**

We do have a c-suite of professionals in leadership for the law firm who work directly with the attorney leaders and with Porzio Life Sciences. At Porzio Life Sciences, we recently reached a point in the evolution of that business where we really had to become a true global technology company, developing products

ourselves. At that point, we brought in someone with the right high-level experience at Boehringer Ingelheim, PwC, and elsewhere to build out our technology team. Mike O'Connor, who is not a lawyer, is the chief product officer for Porzio Life Sciences, and a critical component of our growth strategy.

We also have internal people who started right out of college as regulatory assistants, analysts and associate VPs who, through the years, have become the top experts in global transparency in the industry. We've created innovative career paths within Porzio Life Sciences as well as different types of bonus and commission revenue streams in which nonlawyers can participate. So while we know originations are king within the legal industry, people in product development can also participate in product revenue and benefit from product sales, which makes this a very attractive place to be for nonlawyers. We strongly believe in these additional revenue streams and plan to add even more to help attract a more well-rounded team.

**What would you say is the most innovative thing your firm has done recently, whether it be technology advancements, internal operations, how you work with clients, etc.?**

The most innovative thing we've done, as owners of Porzio Life Sciences, is executing that transition into a global technology company. Previously, we had created our compliance products with joint venture partners. We would contribute our regulatory know-how, and our partners would contribute technology expertise. In early 2020, we agreed to wind down the JV for our U.S. reporting compliance product. It gave us a little more than a year to develop our own software product. That would have been challenging enough, but then two weeks after signing the wind-down, pandemic lockdowns went into effect.

We assembled our technology team and built a reporting compliance product covering 46 countries, including the U.S., in a 14-month window. So far, this year, we will do more implementations of our new system in one year than we ever did in the last 10 years of our JV system.

Additionally, our work within Porzio Life Sciences is built on an innovative service model that offers a host of self-service products, databases and knowledge platforms, proprietary client-facing technologies, a captive ALSP, and consulting offerings—all of which started when we found ourselves with a surplus of staff and paralegal talent. Adoption of innovation initiatives is a constant struggle within many law firms, but we feel we've cracked the code.

**Does your firm have a succession plan in place? If so, what challenges do you face in trying to execute that plan? If you don't currently have a plan, is it an issue your firm is thinking about?**

We're well positioned on our succession planning thanks to the groundwork we laid five years ago. At that time, Jeff Campbell had served as our managing principal for nearly 20 years. He had led us through a period of great growth in which we established three subsidiary businesses: Porzio Life Sciences, LLC; Porzio Governmental Affairs, LLC; and Porzio Compliance Services, LLC. We all recognized that to sustain the success that Jeff and other leaders had overseen, we would need a clear succession plan. Working with a consultant, we developed a plan under which he transitioned out and Vito Gagliardi became our managing principal and head of our three subsidiaries.

The execution has been smooth, although we continue to evaluate all aspects of the succession plan, including a provision requiring principals to surrender their equity at age 70.