

# Downey Brand LLP

## 2019 VAULT PROFILE HIGHLIGHTS



### TOP 150 UNDER 150

#14 BEST MIDSIZE FIRM CULTURE

#18 BEST MIDSIZE FIRM TO WORK FOR



## THE SCOOP

Founded in 1926, when Sacramento was still a young, burgeoning metropolis, the three-lawyer firm of Downey, Brand & Seymour constituted about three percent of the city's 100 or so attorneys. The firm's growth was slow early on, with only 5 attorneys in 1946. But it continued to grow over the decades, expanding to new offices and locations. Now with nearly 100 attorneys of its own, Downey Brand is Sacramento's largest law firm.

### Notable in NorCal

Downey Brand handles most every type of civil matter, though its practice reflects its location in the state's capital and in the middle of the state's agricultural heartland. The firm's particular strengths include business, litigation, and natural resources, and its attorneys specialize in a wide variety of specialties within these areas—more than 40 at last count. With additional offices in San Francisco; Stockton; and Reno, Nevada, the firm is well established in northern California and Nevada.

In 2018, 14 Downey Brand attorneys were named Northern California Super Lawyers, and seven were named Northern California Rising Stars. In addition, *Sacramento Magazine* recognized 54 attorneys from the firm as Top Lawyers. And firm chairman Bill Warne was among 100 attorneys on *The Business Journal's* Influencers list in the "Law" category.

### Litigating over Land—and Water

Downey Brand boasts a strong general commercial litigation practice. Many of the region's leading companies trust their most significant litigation to the firm—with good reason. Downey Brand's attorneys have a proven record of successfully handling a wide variety of complex, high-stakes commercial and business cases, counseling both plaintiffs and defendants in business, employment, eminent domain, environmental law, family law, food and agricultural, intellectual property, products liability, land use, trust & estates, and water rights litigation. The firm also boasts an appellate & writ practice and even has a certified appellate specialist: Jay-Allen Eisen. Eisen has advised on more than 300 appeals and writs in his almost-50-year career.

The firm has a noteworthy natural resources practice, including such areas as air quality, environmental enforcement defense, environmental remediation, land use, and water law. Its environmental litigation practice has been recognized nationally and in California by U.S. News – Best Lawyers®, and its water law practice has been recognized by U.S. News – Best Lawyers® Sacramento. Among the firm's clients are companies and individuals in a range of areas, including aerospace, energy, petroleum, maritime, mining, manufacturing, and agribusiness. Downey Brand attorneys are no strangers to matters involving toxics and pollutants, including site cleanup and remediation, water quality and waste discharge, cost recovery litigation, and defense of environmental enforcement actions. And in the land-use arena, they counsel on such areas as entitlements, zoning, the National Environmental Policy Act, and more.

### NorCal's Corporate Counsel

With its headquarters in the state capital, Downey Brand serves as outside general counsel for many of Northern California's leading companies, including privately held and family-owned companies, non-profits, and publicly traded companies. For other national and regional companies, Downey Brand's corporate and business lawyers are called upon to act as special counsel to handle complex business and real estate

## FIRM INFO

### CONTACT INFO

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### LOCATIONS

Sacramento, CA (HQ) • Reno, NV  
• San Francisco, CA • Stockton, CA

### PRACTICE AREAS

Aerospace • Appellate & Writ Practice • Banking & Financial Institutions • Bankruptcy & Insolvency • CEQA/NEPA • Class Action Defense • Climate Change & Sustainability • Construction • Corporate Finance • Corporate Law • Disability Access • Emerging Companies & Venture Capital • Eminent Domain & Inverse Condemnation • Employment Counseling • Endangered Species • Environmental Enforcement Defense • Environmental Remediation & Due Diligence • Equine • Family Law • Financial Institutions • Flood Protection Law • Food & Agriculture • Food Safety • Higher Education • Insurance • Intellectual Property & Licensing • Land Use • Litigation • Mergers & Acquisitions • Municipalities • Nonprofit/Tax-Exempt Organizations • Privacy & Data Integrity • Products Liability • Retail • Real Estate • Regulatory Law & Business Permitting • Taxation • Water Rights & Resources • Water Quality Law • Wealth Transfer

### THE STATS

No. of attorneys: 92  
Chairman and Managing Partner:  
Scott Shapiro  
Recruiting Chair: Meghan Baker

### EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

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transactions. Some of the firm's recent experience includes advising a selling group on an \$85 million cash-and-stock merger transaction; guiding a family-owned winery through reorganization; and achieving a dismissal for a financial institution in a multi-million-dollar breach of contract suit.

## OUR SURVEY SAYS

**Vault's Verdict:** With an open-door policy, the firm boasts a friendly environment in which attorneys are close and enjoy socializing at happy hours and regular firm events like retreats and the holiday party. Formal training is light, but partners are open to on-the-job mentoring. The managing partner fosters transparency by encouraging associate input and meeting with the associate liaison committee monthly. Regarding management, there are concerns that the executive committee doesn't adequately represent corporate associates and the realities of their practice. With a billable requirement of 1,750 hours, the workload is often manageable and well distributed. But like any firm, work can ebb and flow. Associates feel their compensation is fair, but some wish the system was merit based rather than lockstep. While associates think the firm could have greater minority representation, they feel the firm is making efforts to improve. And at the end of the day, attorneys at Downey Brand are content with the quality of work they receive and support shown from the top.

### ASSOCIATE LIFE

#### Satisfaction

- "High-quality of work, supportive firm leadership, a collaborative environment, and a low billable-hour requirement make Downey Brand a great place to practice law."
- "I work on interesting and impactful matters, my work is respected and valued, and I have a fair amount of autonomy to move the ball on my cases."

#### Firm Culture

- "Downey is very involved in the community, and the lawyers also make an extra effort to socialize with each other—much more so than my prior firm did."
- "The partners have made an effort to ensure associate happiness, whether it be funds for associate happy hours, the associate committee, or general willingness to make themselves available if you ask. The firm has a general open-door policy, and everyone is willing to take a short break to talk about anything you bring up."

#### Associate/Partner Relations

- "Downey Brand has an associate liaison committee that meets with the managing partner once a month. The managing partner is very transparent, shares the motivations of the partnership/executive committee with the associates, and takes associate feedback and ideas into account in decision making."

#### Hours

- "The hours are about right. The billable-hour requirement is low, which helps alleviate pressure to bill. At the same time, there is usually plenty of good work to do."
- "Flexibility in hours and working from home is appreciated. I've never felt I couldn't take the time I needed to tend to personal matters, and the supervising partners of my practice group encourage doing so to keep a positive work-life balance (and to avoid burn out)."

#### Compensation

- "My understanding is that Downey Brand pays its associates at the "market rate" for Sacramento. I think I am fairly compensated in light of my hourly requirement."
- "Associate compensation is consistent with the market and the firm's business model."

#### Quality of Work

- "I have only received substantive work that is appropriate for my level. Something that is a little more challenging gets more oversight, but it also provides an opportunity to learn, which is great."
- "Almost all of my work is substantive (except for some discovery) and in many cases, is work above the level my peers at other firms are doing. Starting at the beginning of my third year, I was given significant opportunities to work directly with clients and consultants. Associates looking to do real, valuable work will find it in spades at Downey Brand."

#### Pro Bono Commitment

- "The firm allows 50 hours of pro bono work to be applied to billable hours. Anything you can dream up can be submitted as a pro bono project. Some great work has been done in areas concerning immigration."

### SUMMER PROGRAM

#### Training, Assignments, & Social Scene

- "While most of the work I completed that summer was similar to my past internship experiences, it was clear that each of the assignments I was given was important to the firm. There were a few projects I worked on that were actually used in some way in some of the attorneys' cases, and it felt good to know that the attorneys at the firm cared about my work and trusted me enough to rely on the quality of my work."
- "The summer program at Downey Brand is a great experience. The social events were fun and down-to-earth, the firm attorneys were excited about getting to know new potential associates, and it was easy to bond with the members of my summer class. Each of the associates who were made an offer accepted, and I think that says something about the quality of the firm, the experiences each of the associates had, and the value the firm places on finding the right fit between the firm culture and summer associates."
- "The summer program had many events that focused on getting to know attorneys from all levels. They provided many meaningful opportunities to see how associates acted with each other, how partners acted with each other, and most importantly, how partners acted with associates. There is a strong sense of genuine friendship among most of the associates and partners with the appropriate reverence based on station."