



# Downey Brand LLP

## 2020 VAULT PROFILE HIGHLIGHTS

### #8 BEST MIDSIZE FIRM TO WORK FOR • TOP 150 UNDER 150

#### MIDSIZE QUALITY OF LIFE RANKINGS

#5 Hours ( <i>tie</i> )	#13 Firm Culture	#20 Quality of Work
#8 Satisfaction	#15 Compensation	#20 Technology & Innovation
#10 Pro Bono ( <i>tie</i> )	#15 Selectivity	

### THE SCOOP

Downey Brand handles most every type of civil matter, though its practice reflects its location in California'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 sub 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.

#### 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, construction, employment, eminent domain, environmental, 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 also boasts 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 rankings. 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, nonprofits, 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 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.

### FIRM INFO

#### CONTACT INFO

(916) 444-1000  
www.downeybrand.com

#### LOCATIONS

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

#### MAJOR DEPARTMENTS

Appellate & Writ Practice • Bankruptcy & Insolvency • CEQA/NEPA • Construction • Corporate Law & Finance • Employment Law • Environmental Law • Family Law • Flood Protection • Food & Agriculture • Healthcare • Intellectual Property • Litigation • Mergers & Acquisitions • Privacy & Data Security • Public Agencies • Real Estate and Land Use • Taxation • Trusts & Estates • Water Law

#### THE STATS

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

#### EMPLOYMENT CONTACT

Maureen Cooper  
Recruiting Director  
(916) 520-5483  
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### VAULT'S VERDICT

With its roots in Northern California, it is no surprise that Downey Brand recruits from local California law schools, but the firm casts its net wide and seeks candidates from schools across the U.S. High-caliber resumes are in demand, but the firm is also eager to find those who will fit with its amiable culture. Attorneys at Downey Brand tend to be down to earth and friendly; this is a firm where you can drop into another attorney's office without hesitation and where partners are invested in associate growth. Informal mentoring is common, and while formal training hasn't been as strong, it is currently on the firm's radar. Transparency is a high point for the firm, which has an Associate Liaison Committee to boost communication between the partnership and associates. Billables are very reasonable with a 1,750-hour requirement. Overall, associates seem



happy with compensation, which they deem above market for Sacramento but below for San Francisco. High-level responsibility is par for the course. One of the biggest gripes relates to the firm's technology offerings, although associates are pleased with the IT department itself. And according to the firm, it is working on several technological enhancements over the coming year. Associates appreciate the firm's commitment to diversity but see room for improvement, especially as to racial minorities. Pro bono is encouraged. And associates feel they have a long-term place at the firm—the partner track is transparent, and there is room for those who want to stay on as counsel.

## OUR SURVEY SAYS

### ASSOCIATE LIFE

#### Firm Culture

- “There is an annual holiday party, an all-attorneys retreat, and summer associate program events throughout the summer. Associates also frequently organize happy hours, and there is at least one larger associate event (e.g., wine tasting in Napa) each year. Politically, the firm is very diverse and seemingly evenly split along liberal/conservative lines. One of the best things about working here has been forming friendships with other associates and partners.”
- “The firm definitely has a type: collegial, down to earth, friendly, and smart.”
- “Everyone is very professional; the firm organizes associate happy hours about once a month. It's a place where you can walk into another attorney's office at any time and ask them about his/her thoughts on a case. The firm also holds events every once in a while during firm hours.”

#### Associate/Partner Relations

- “The partners have been very conscientious of my time and careful not to overload me. I've also found that partners have been very appreciative of associates' work. A 'good job' always goes a long way, and partners have not been shy to convey this sentiment. The firm has also been particularly transparent about its performance and finances, internal promotion, and performance reviews.”
- “The partners I work with are collaborative, friendly, and treat associates well. Downey is also much more transparent about firm management and finances with its associates than my prior firm, which did not share any of that information. Performance reviews are professionally done, thorough, and fair.”

#### Hours

- “Billable hours are very reasonable, and I have complete flexibility with when and where I work—I've had no issues with working at home or working outside of regular business hours.”
- “The firm has a 1,750-hour minimum. The firm allows 50 hours of pro bono work to go towards this 1,750-hour minimum.”

#### Compensation

- “Given the lower billable hour requirement, compensation is fair. The bonus system provides a real incentive to work more hours than required.”

#### Quality of Work

- “I am routinely staffed on substantive legal work that is appropriate for my level. If I have questions or need feedback, the partners I work with always make themselves available to answer questions, etc.”

- “My caseload is varied and interesting, and most all of my work is substantive.”

#### Training & Mentoring

- “Partners take a real interest in developing the associates at Downey Brand. Training is available and encouraged for those who need it, and the firm does a great job in putting on CLEs so we can stay current and meet our requirements.”

#### Career Outlook

- “Promotion to partnership is realistic and achievable for individuals who would like to make partner. The firm also has counsel positions for those individuals who are more senior than the associate level but have not quite reached the partner level. In addition, some individuals at our firm simply decide to work at the counsel level.”
- “The partner track is fairly mapped out, with additional tiers of counsel and income partner. Many associates who leave the firm go on to work in the public sector in Sacramento for the regulatory bodies they practiced before.”

#### Pro Bono Commitment

- “We are part of Lawyers in the Library where once a month, we staff a free clinic and meet with members of the community to help guide them on legal issues. This month we're helping staff a DACA clinic. Last year we helped with undocumented minors.”
- “Associates are encouraged to take on pro bono matters. Personally, I got to argue a case before the Ninth Circuit, which would not have happened without the firm's commitment to pro bono work.”

### SUMMER PROGRAM

- “We had mentors to help us get work, but a lot of work came just by asking around and getting to know other attorneys. Every assignment was scored by the attorney, and some written feedback was given as well. We had mid-summer and end-of-summer conferences with the hiring [partner] and our mentors to discuss the quality of our work and how we could improve.”
- “... I drafted a complaint, researched for a motion for summary adjudication, [and] researched other complex employment and water law issues.”
- “The firm's summer associate program was terrific. There were many opportunities for social events, including attending local bar events, firm golf tournament, firm ping-pong tournament, summer associate lunches and dinners, and firm-sponsored summer associate bonding. The associates would also invite the summer associates for their own monthly social events, so it was great to get to know what associates thought of the firm. It was great that partners and associates attended all these events.”