

Ex-Boies Schiller Trio Opens Litigation Firm In Florida

By **Michele Gorman**

Law360 (January 8, 2020, 6:49 PM EST) -- Three Boies Schiller Flexner LLP partners have left the BigLaw firm to launch a litigation shop based in the Miami area that will focus on providing alternative fee arrangements to clients and hiring diverse lawyers, the trio announced this week.

When Heise Suarez Melville officially opens on Jan. 22, the litigators — Mark Heise, Luis Suarez and Patricia Melville, all first-generation Americans — hope to hit the ground running to build a "truly diverse firm," from associates and partners to every aspect of litigation, they told Law360 on Wednesday.



Former Boies Schiller partners Mark Heise (from left), Patricia Melville and Luis Suarez will launch a litigation firm later this month.

Heise added that the team hopes the firm earns a reputation for setting "the highest standards in quality of the legal work and the cases that we win, and quality and diversity of the people we have working for us and what it is we do for the community."

That community involvement, he added, might include helping a children's organization or mentoring young law students.

Their decision to stray from the traditional billable hour will more closely align their interests with their clients' and provide more flexibility, allowing them to deliver a better product at a better price, according to the attorneys.

An **alternative fee arrangement**, or AFA, typically refers to any method other than the straight billable hour to pay for outside counsel to work on a matter. The dominant AFA is often a fixed or flat fee, but there is a diverse assortment of other methods — contingency, fee cap, success bonus — that attorneys can explore.

Heise said he has worked at Boies Schiller since 2002, when he merged his firm, Heise Markarian Foreman, with the powerhouse.

Suarez, who just last month was named an equity partner at Boies Schiller, said creating a new firm is "a natural next step" for the group. He said he's confident they'll "be able to continue to do the

types of high-end litigation that we've been accustomed to doing."

Still, the attorneys said the decision to walk away from their careers and colleagues at Boies Schiller wasn't easy. While they worked together at Boies Schiller for nearly two decades, the three lawyers have "laughed, cried, suffered with [each other] in the pursuit of justice for our clients," Suarez said.

Melville joined Boies Schiller nearly two decades ago and rose the ranks to partnership. She said her practice has focused on matters ranging from product liability cases to antitrust matters.

"I bring a broader perspective to every case, not only as a woman but also from having successfully managed and tried highly contentious, complex matters on both sides of the fence," she said in a statement.

Heise Suarez Melville is based near Miami in Coral Gables, Florida.

The trio's departure from the legal powerhouse comes a few weeks after Boies Schiller **put forward** two partners to potentially take over the firm from its founders, including famous litigator David Boies.

In December, the firm's executive committee unanimously recommended that New York-based attorney Nick Gravante and London-based Natasha Harrison be named as managing partners as part of a plan for "transitioning the management of the firm to the next generation."

The committee also recommended that Boies be reelected as chairman. Both proposals have been approved by firm partners.

--Additional reporting by Emma Cueto. Editing by Marygrace Murphy.

Update: This article has been updated to reflect the partner approval of the leadership recommendations at Boies Schiller.