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## TAMPA BAY Business Journal

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# Superior Uniform model a 'vertical for smaller law firms to outsource'

Tampa Bay Business Journal - by [Jane Meinhardt](#) Staff Writer

Two Clearwater lawyers who basically became legal staffing services guinea pigs for The **Office Gurus**, a unit of **Superior Uniform Group Inc.**, have no regrets about their expanded ways of doing business.

John V. Tucker and Eric E. Ludin expect their firm to gross nearly \$1 million more this year as a result and already have added two lawyers.

"We've had four straight months of record intake, and the cases in our system are moving," said Tucker, managing partner of **Tucker & Ludin PA**, and like Ludin, a former president of the **St. Petersburg Bar Association**. "We are opening more files and increasing the quality and number of cases."

Four months ago the firm contracted with The Office Gurus to solve staffing issues and improve business.

The lawyers have reduced their costs, and the company is no longer wallowing in time-consuming human resources issues such as trying to find knowledgeable staff willing to work. Instead, five people working for them at The Office Gurus in El Salvador are providing remote staffing that has allowed the law firm to efficiently focus on its core businesses.

It is the first time The Office Gurus has provided legal services staffing, but it won't be the last.

"Our El Salvador operation works mostly for outbound telemarketing customers," said Michael Benstock, CEO of Superior Uniform and a director of The Office Gurus. "We went with a small firm for legal staffing first, and we think it's a vertical for smaller law firms to outsource some work."

### Service offerings widen

Superior Uniform (Nasdaq: SGC), which is headquartered in Seminole, started the business unit in downtown San Salvador to diversify and add revenue in 2008. With nearly 150 employees, The Office Gurus sells call center/contact center functions to other companies.

It is a strategic spinoff of Superior Uniform's own administrative and customer service operations in a country where the company has had a manufacturing facility for nearly 25 years.

El Salvador is a progressive, stable country with a huge English-speaking population and a willing, educated work force, Benstock said.

Ninety-two percent of the population attends free schools, grades one through nine, according to the **U.S. Department of State**. Reports show a high degree of literacy and English language courses required.

Dominic Leide, managing director of The Office Gurus, visited Tucker & Ludin's office and then hired and trained five Salvadorans as the firm's staff. Ludin and Tucker then traveled to San Salvador and met with the employees.

"We handled the recruiting, the background checks and did all the testing," Leide said. "They understand the American culture. Two are lawyers, and others are attending law school."

The employees in El Salvador use the law firm's case management technology, work on the firm's server, answer the firm's telephone, contact clients, set up court hearings, obtain medical and other records needed for cases, and even make lunch appointments and marketing arrangements for Ludin and Tucker. They work in a restricted access, paperless office with strict privacy regulations and can prepare legal instruments such as pleadings and eviction notices.

"Our firm's biggest challenge was finding good staff," said Ludin. "It was killing us. We are doing this with The Office Gurus because we couldn't find help in the U.S. I went through six people in two years to replace a paralegal who retired."

Since contracting with The Office Gurus, the firm's client communications have dramatically improved, he said. Some clients know they are dealing with employees in El Salvador and have no concerns, he said.

The Office Gurus bill the lawyers for the hours the employees work. The firm saves \$25,000 in annual benefits costs per employee.

"I am being a lot more productive in my billing now," Ludin said. "I've been practicing for 28 years and in January and February, I billed twice as much as I did any other time in my career."

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