

SOUTH FLORIDA EDITION | SUPERSTARS 2017

# ATTORNEY AT LAW

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MAGAZINE®



## SUPER STARS 2017





## 2017 Miami Superstar

**AALM:** When did you first know you wanted to become an attorney? What drew you to this career?

**Sanchez-Medina:** My path to the practice of law was not linear. I'm lucky that a great deal of my life falls under the category that "sometimes it's better to be lucky than good." I didn't engage in significant analysis in electing to go to law school but that decision was one of the wisest decisions I ever made. It's allowed me to become better educated, provide for my family, give back to the community and help people.

**AALM:** Do you have any mentors or professors that encouraged you along the way? What is the best lesson they taught you?

**Sanchez-Medina:** My father has always been my only mentor, but there are many people whose personal characteristics and qualities I admire and try to emulate. Early in my career, I worked for Jorge Hernandez-Torano while at Holland & Knight, and his focus and passion for the practice of law impacted me. I also worked for Michael Kosnitzky, one of the smartest lawyers I know, and he expected an impeccable work product which made me a better lawyer.

Many former presidents of the Cuban American Bar Association shaped the person and attorney I am today: Ray Abadin for his fierce loyalty; Victor Diaz for his preparation; Cori Lopez-Castro for her insight; Gene Hernandez for his temperament. I also have a great deal of respect for Steve Zack, Paul Singerman and Bobby Martinez; their professionalism is impeccable. Ira Coleman and Jerry Sokol of McDermott, Will & Emery for the pride they take in the work product delivered to the client. I would be remiss by not mentioning Ervin Gonzalez. He was a good friend and I always admired him as a lawyer and his relentless pursuit of perfection.

On a different level, the executive director of The Florida Bar, Jack Harkness, is someone who I greatly respect. I admire his strength of character and wisdom.

**AALM:** What was the greatest lesson you learned in law school? How do you apply that to your career today?

**Sanchez-Medina:** The greatest lesson was to read everything. As a transactional attorney, you must read the four corners of the contract. You just cannot cut corners in that regard. A seemingly benign provision entitled, "General" or "Miscellaneous" is no

Robert Klemm Photography



# Roland Sanchez-Medina

## A Practice in Details

reason to not dedicate time to ensuring it does not contain unfavorable terms to your client. Read, read and read, there is no substitute for that.

**AALM:** What do you find particularly rewarding about your practice?

**Sanchez-Medina:** At this point in my career, it's the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with individuals and trying to resolve their problems or achieve their goals. As a younger attorney, you spend a lot of time in the trenches and don't necessarily

spend a lot of time with the client. As you get older, you must clearly be immersed in the transaction, but also be on the same page with the client and completely understand their goals.

**AALM:** What do you find particularly challenging about your practice?

**Sanchez-Medina:** I think daily stress of the practice of law is as bad as I have ever seen. Technology has been a boon for attorneys but also exacerbated the alacrity in which clients want

their services delivered. The word I always use is relentless, the practice of law is just relentless. The pressure of the practice of law can create health issues and aggravate mental health issues. Michael Higer, the newly installed president of The Florida Bar has made lawyer mental health one of his priorities and I expect that the results of this focus will move the needle forward.

**AALM:** What's the difference between a good attorney and an outstanding one?

**Sanchez-Medina:** Our profession is replete with very smart people. Therefore, the measure of intelligence does not separate the wheat from the chaff. I think the passion for wanting to help people and taking pride in your work are the traits that separate the good from the outstanding. Yes, reading a 50-page agreement can be exhausting and at some point you lose focus, but you have to take into consideration the needs of the client and take pride in your work product.

**AALM:** What compelled you to start your own practice?

**Sanchez-Medina:** I am one of the founders of my firm along with Peter Gonzalez and Pablo Quesada. We were friends first which is important because we liked each other on a personal basis. As we started to grow, opportunities arose and Emy Quesada, Gus Lage, Joe Gomez and Carlos Machado joined us. I'm very proud of them as partners and human beings. Good lawyers, and even better people. Working with people you don't like can really damage an atmosphere so we make every effort to ensure we stay true to that philosophy.

**AALM:** How would you describe the culture of the firm?

**Sanchez-Medina:** All of our partners came from large firms and the intensity of those beginnings are still part of our culture but we are able to couple that with a family atmosphere. It's a very nice place to work and we work in earnest to ensure that it stays that way. Our office manager, Gladys Abraham, is extraordinary and gets much of the credit for the warm atmosphere we have. Like many law firms, the lawyers and staff spend more hours at the office than they do at their homes so we must maintain a sense of compassion along the professional environment.

**AALM:** Tell us how your practice has evolved over the years.

**Sanchez-Medina:** I started out as a tax lawyer, and then evolved into a corporate

and real estate lawyer since tax lawyers typically don't lead a deal but serve ancillary roles in many respects. I consider myself a transactional lawyer with skills in those areas. My practice was redefined when that evolution started – from tax lawyer to transactional lawyer. I enjoy the intellectual challenge of corporate, real estate and tax work.

**AALM:** What accomplishment are you most proud of achieving?

**Sanchez-Medina:** Other than my children, I am most proud of starting SMGQ Law and practicing law with people I really admire. I enjoy coming to work. In addition, I am proud to serve as a member of the board of governors of The Florida Bar, and the Orange Bowl Committee. The Florida Bar offers me the opportunity to try to improve the practice of law and interact with 52 passionate attorneys from across Florida. The staff of The Florida Bar is amazing.

Similarly, the Orange Bowl Committee is a group of smart, passionate women and men who promote South Florida and strive to make it a better place to live. Eric Poms and the organization he has developed is without a doubt the best in the country.

**AALM:** What do you most hope to accomplish in the future? Where do you see yourself in five years? In 10?

**Sanchez-Medina:** I hope to be practicing law at a high level, and being involved both in the community and with my profession. At that point, I hope to be in a leadership role in the organizations that I have dedicated my time to. I would like to see the younger attorneys that I work with in my office flourish, evolve and grow in their careers.



## At a Glance

### SMGQ Law

201 Alhambra Circle, Suite 1205  
Coral Gables, FL 33131  
(305) 377-1000  
www.smgqlaw.com

### Practice Areas

Corporate  
Real Estate  
Tax

### Education

LL.M. in Taxation, New York  
University School of Law, 1992  
Juris Doctor, Boston College Law  
School, 1991  
Bachelor of Arts, University of  
Miami, 1988

### Professional Memberships

The Florida Bar, Board of  
Governors  
Cuban American Bar Association  
Dade County Bar Association  
Miami-Dade County FAWL

### Honors

Super Lawyers  
Legal Elite  
Top Transactional Attorney South  
Florida Legal Guide  
Best Lawyers in America

### Community Involvement

Orange Bowl Committee  
South Florida Hispanic Chamber of  
Commerce  
Leadership Florida  
Citizens Board of the University of  
Miami  
Catholic Relief Services  
Professional Advisors Network

### Hobbies

Working Out  
Spending Time With Family  
Reading  
Traveling

### Favorite Quote:

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did so. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover. – Mark Twain