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Citrin Cooperman acquires Shepard Schwartz & Harris



Citrin Cooperman, a Top 25 Firm based in New York, has set up its first Chicago office by acquiring Shepard Schwartz & Harris, a firm that focuses on clients in the real estate, construction, manufacturing and distribution industries, the latest in a string of M&A deals since Citrin received private equity funding last year.

Last November, private equity firm New Mountain Capital bought a 60% stake in Citrin, prompting the firm to split off its non-attest side into Citrin Cooperman Advisors LLC, while the attest side is known as Citrin Cooperman & Co. LLP. The non-attest assets of SSH will be joining Citrin Cooperman Advisors LLC, while the attest assets will join Citrin Cooperman & Company LLP.

Earlier this month, Citrin acquired **Kingston Smith Barlevi**, a firm in Los Angeles that specializes in entertainment clients. In April, Citrin added **McNulty & Associates, Inc.**, a consulting firm in Westford, Massachusetts. In March, Citrin **merged in** Appelrouth, Farah & Co. PA in Coral Gables, and Bloom, Gettis & Habib PA in Miami, and music industry consultancy **Massarsky Consulting** in New York. Last November, Citrin added **OLC Management Inc.**, a California-based business management firm in the entertainment industry.

Citrin has long specialized in entertainment industry clients. Its founder, Joel Cooperman, started out doing the concert books for rock groups like the Who and Yes while working for a predecessor firm of EisnerAmper, according to *Crain's Chicago Business*. After founding Citrin in 1979, his firm continued to do the accounting for the Who until last year. Other music industry clients include AC/DC, the Beach Boys, the Black Eyed Peas, the Gipsy Kings, Jethro Tull, and Joan Jett & the Blackhearts, and movie industry clients like director Martin Scorsese and actors Chevy Chase, Liam Neeson and Ana de Armas.

The latest M&A deal for Citrin doesn't involve a firm involved in in the entertainment industry, but Shephard Schwartz & Harris brings a list of clients mostly in privately held businesses in the real estate, construction, manufacturing and distribution industries. Shephard Schwartz & Harris has 10 partners and over 50 staff members. Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed. Citrin Cooperman ranked No. 23 on *Accounting Today's* 2022 list of the Top 100 Firms, with \$350 million in annual revenue. Citrin has over 260 partners and more than 1,200 employees.

SSH was founded in 1935 by Irving Shepard and Morris Schwartz, who were later joined by Jerome Harris. The firm provides tax, accounting and business advisory services to clients in Chicago and the Midwest. Mary Fuller and Stan Lazar will be co-managing partners of the newly established Citrin Cooperman office in SSH's existing downtown Chicago location.

"To be the first Citrin Cooperman office in Chicago is really a unique experience," Fuller and Lazar said in a joint statement Monday. "We are excited to introduce the Chicago and Midwest markets to the Citrin Cooperman resources and services and continue to help our clients with their personal and business needs."

The firms have been negotiating a combination for a while now. "I've known Mary and Stan for eight years and have enjoyed every conversation we've had, including the negotiations," Cooperman said in a statement. "I am so happy that we are finally together, and we look forward to bringing our vast array of services to their clients and to the Midwest."

Koltin Consulting Group CEO Allan D. Koltin advised both firms on the deal. "Citrin Cooperman is entering the market with all the support and resources of a national firm combined with the personal and local knowledge of a Chicago-based enterprise," he said in a statement. "SS&H was sought after by every national and regional firm in Chicago for a merger. They fit the description of 'Chicago's Best' in terms of talent, entrepreneurship, and leadership and are blessed to have a roster of some of Chicago's most successful businesses and high net worth individuals."

The deal will enable Citrin to expand its footprint to a major market. "Expanding our services in the Midwest, and especially in Chicago, is an incredible opportunity," said Citrin Cooperman CEO Alan Badey in a statement. "And to be able to do so with the top-notch professionals at Shephard Schwartz & Harris, a team that is so deeply entrenched in the market, it's amazing."