

Edwards Angell, Wildman Harrold In Talks To Merge

By **Roxanne Palmer**

Law360, New York (July 6, 2011) -- Boston-based Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge LLP and Chicago firm Wildman Harrold Allen & Dixon LLP confirmed Wednesday that they have been in merger talks for the past several months, but that no final deal was in place.

The potential new enterprise would have about 650 lawyers, according to a joint statement from the two firms.

Edwards Angell would bring its established corporate and intellectual property practices to Wildman's litigation clients, particularly in the private equity, venture capital, life sciences and insurance sectors, plus its considerable geographic reach with 10 U.S. offices and branches in London and Hong Kong. Wildman Harrold, meanwhile, would double the size of Edward Angell's litigation department and offer its established links to legal markets in Chicago and Los Angeles.

"If approved, the new firm would leverage the combined strengths of two highly regarded law firms. Both of the legacy firms would bring complementary strengths and clients to a new enterprise," the two said.

They also have complementary cultures, according to the statement.

"The many discussions have confirmed what we suspected: the respective firms have shared values and, we anticipate, would integrate very effectively," the statement said.

Calls to press representatives and managing partners at both firms seeking comment were not immediately returned Wednesday.

A report released Wednesday by legal management consulting firm AltmanWeil Inc. found that 12 law firm mergers were announced in the second quarter of 2011, a slight increase from the 10 mergers announced over the same period in 2010.

The size of the deals announced this quarter continues a trend toward mergers involving smaller firms that emerged during the recent recession, according to the consulting company's analysis. Ten of the 12 deals reported in the second quarter were acquisitions of law firms with 20 or fewer lawyers, and the other two were acquisitions of firms with less than 50 lawyers, Altman Weil said.

A merger with Edward Angells would compensate for lateral losses suffered over the past year by Wildman Harrold, which topped the list of practices that lost laterals in October 2010 — mostly as a

result of a six-attorney defection to Barnes & Thornburg LLP as well as the loss of an employment partner who left for Quarles & Brady LLP.

--Additional reporting by Abigail Rubenstein and Leigh Kamping-Carder. Editing by Eydie Cubarrubia.

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