



“The Sum is Greater Than Our Parts”: Locke Lord Looks Back One Year After Merge

By Kerry Crisley,
Boston Bar Association,
Director of Communications

Merriam-Webster defines merge as “to join or unite with one another.” It’s a simple phrase that belies the lengthy and complex process that goes with the merging of two entities. Just ask Locke Lord Chair Jerry Clements, who oversaw the merge between her firm and Edwards Wildman in January 2015.



“This is the third or fourth major merger I’ve been involved in, and they are hard,” said Clements. “Each one, it seems, becomes more difficult and complex to get the integration process started and to build upon what we know we can have. It’s hard, but exciting.”

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For Clements, the benefits of this particular merge outweighed the challenges. “For us in Texas, a strong presence in the Northeast was important, and Boston was very compelling for us. It has private equity, public finance, science and technology. Those were things we felt we needed to add and build on. For example, our private equity practice was focused on energy, but Boston’s was much broader. It was a case of the sum being greater than our parts.”

But how long does it take for merging firms to get to the “greater than our parts” stage? According to Boston Managing Partner Matt McTygue and Partner Allison O’Neil, Locke Lord is already there. They credit the firm’s culture of communication with making the merge feel seamless.



“All of them are different, and at first this one felt complicated because we all came together very quickly,” said McTygue. “But this is the first time that people have made an outstanding effort to integrate in terms of visiting our office, having people here visit other offices, and trying to find ways to collaborate right away. I’ve visited the offices in Chicago, Dallas, Houston, New York, and Los Angeles, and they could not be more welcoming to us or more excited about the new skills sets that we bring. And

Jerry has been to Boston at least a dozen times; she’s met with staff, the associates, the partners, the clients. That level of commitment has been very helpful, because you don’t have communications issues when she’s constantly in contact.”

O’Neil agrees. “The communication and visits have been very helpful. With a merger it can be a little bit of a leap of faith to say ‘hold on until 2016,’ but when you have the opportunity to sit across from Jerry it really helps, because when we see an email saying that X, Y, and Z are going to happen and one of your partners is saying ‘I’m not sure what I think about that,’ you can say ‘well, I spoke to Jerry about that and this is what she said is the reasoning behind that.’ She did a great job empowering so many of us here with information, and I think it really helped the merger.”

And all this despite a record-setting snowfall during the first three months of 2015.

“It’s funny, for the first three months of last year people were trying to get to Boston, but their flights kept getting cancelled,” recalled McTygue. “And when we did have people who managed to make it into town they wanted to take selfies next to the huge snowbanks.”

Now that it’s a year later - and the 110.6 inches of snow a distant memory - both McTygue and O’Neil say the added expertise and the potential for cross selling are paying off in better service to clients and broader opportunities for staff.

“My experiences post-merger have been great,” said McTygue. “We’ve seen some turmoil and departures in Boston, but what I see now is the expanded set of services we have for our clients. A number of us have gone on trips to the other offices to talk about what we do, and we’ve had the opportunity to pitch to clients of the broader firm.”

An example that comes to his mind is new business representing lenders in Texas that has stemmed from the debt finance - McTygue’s primary practice group - expertise in Boston, an area that Locke Lord didn’t have as much of pre-merger.

In another instance, the expanded capabilities of Locke Lord secured their retention by a national retail chain to prepare the real estate due diligence with respect

to a potential acquisition involving 1,600 locations. The team consists of 10 lawyers across six offices, including Boston.

For O’Neil, who came to Edwards Wildman to work alongside renowned white collar attorneys, this last year has taken her practice from being a local, Boston-based practice to a national one. “I am being considered on cases that I never would have been considered on before,” she said. “Since the merger, I’ve experienced cross selling in all different offices. When I’m making pitches, my colleagues help me a great deal because they know the client already and have insights into the company. There are cases that I have now that I wouldn’t have gotten without their insights into what the client’s concerns and needs were.”

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And while these engagements are - according to the McTygue - just “the tip of the iceberg,” they are paying off both in morale and benefits.

“The difficulty with this merger was really based on the financial challenges that Edwards Wildman had pre-merger. In the first year, we had more transition to do to get everyone up to the same level of compensation, and that was the piece that was more of a struggle.”

“Last year, we ended up exceeding our budgeted compensation, which was something on the Edwards Wildman side I hadn’t seen since I made partner. That really made it hit home that not only was this a firm that has great lawyers, but is also a professionally run business. There are not just lawyers at the top trying to muddle through management issues, but a really capable team of managers that has made all the difference in allowing us to achieve the success that we did last year and even greater success this year.”

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“Even our most seemingly negative partners, when they received their compensation, they were quite happy,” added O’Neil. “It really helped in setting the tone for this year; people are really putting their head down and focusing on doing good work, and I think that will only bring greater things in 2016.”

Greater things are exactly what Clements has in mind. On her agenda is a new strategic plan and vision statement, with an emphasis on growing the firm’s Boston practice in private equity, life sciences, and real estate. “We can offer clients the breadth and depth of the rest of the firm, and that have proved to be very successful for the lawyers there now.”

At the same time, Locke Lord has not shifted its emphasis on public service. In addition to supporting local organizations like Project Bread and the Greater Boston Food Bank, the firm is taking in two Boston Public Schools students as part of the BBA’s Summer Jobs Program. The emphasis on community involvement, according to O’Neil, is a good way to mentor up and coming lawyers.



“One of the things I always think about with philanthropic and charitable work is that by the time you reach a certain age, you pick the things that you care about,” she said. “I think it’s important to help younger associates determine what it is they want to be part of with their legacy.”

With this particular merge, Locke Lord appears well on its way to establishing a legacy of their own in Boston. “Edwards Wildman always had great lawyers and great teams, but what we didn’t have was a great management team that was good at the finance side,” said McTygue. “Now it is very clear that we have had a major upgrade in that area. That is the basis for which you can do everything else, and that was the one thing that has been the biggest difference - and a very, very positive one.”