

New Release

For Immediate Release

Law Firm Mergers Decline in the First Half of 2020

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 30, 2020 – The number of law firm mergers in the first half of 2020 is down from the same period in 2019, according to the merger research team at Fairfax Associates.

The second quarter typically sees a low number of mergers, and 2020 followed historical trends. In the second quarter of 2020, we tracked five completed mergers (meaning the effective date of the merger occurred during Q2 2020) for a total of 26 completed mergers for the first half of 2020. While second quarter numbers are in line with 2019, which also saw five mergers completed in Q2, the year-to-date numbers are down from 30 mergers at this point last year and lower than the historical average of 30 mergers per year when analyzing our data over the last 10 years (from 2010 to 2019).

Two of the five mergers completed this quarter involved firms of 10 or fewer lawyers. The three larger combinations were all cross-border mergers.

There were just two domestic combinations in the second quarter, both in the Philadelphia area. They included Cozen O'Connor with Baer Crossey McDemus LLC (nine lawyers) and Lamb McErlane with Imperatrice Amarant & Bell (five lawyers).

Of the three cross-border combinations completed this quarter, two were between Dentons and South American firms originally announced in September of 2019. The involved Jiménez de Aréchaga, Viana & Brause (Montevideo, 28 lawyers) and Rattagan Macchiavello Arocena (Buenos Aires, 30 lawyers). The remaining cross-border combination was Littler with Paruch Chrusciel Schiffter (Warsaw, 20 lawyers).

We expect that merger activity for the balance of the year will continue to be down compared to prior years, given the impact of the pandemic on both the economy and the ability of firms to conduct in-person merger meetings. Thus far one merger has been announced with an effective date in Q3, which is the significant combination of Troutman Sanders and Pepper Hamilton, effective July 1.

Fairfax Associates collects data from published reports, press releases and direct reports from law firms. Mergers are reported where the acquired firm has five or more lawyers. Upon routine verification of the data, some historical numbers may have been updated since previously issued reports, and the number of mergers contained herein may change as additional mergers are announced.

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About Fairfax Associates

Fairfax is a specialist firm of highly experienced consultants focused on serving clients in professional services, and in particular, law firms. Our services and areas of focus include merger strategy and search, merger integration, strategic planning, partnership issues including partner compensation, and governance and organization. We work with the largest international and national law firms and leading firms of all sizes.

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