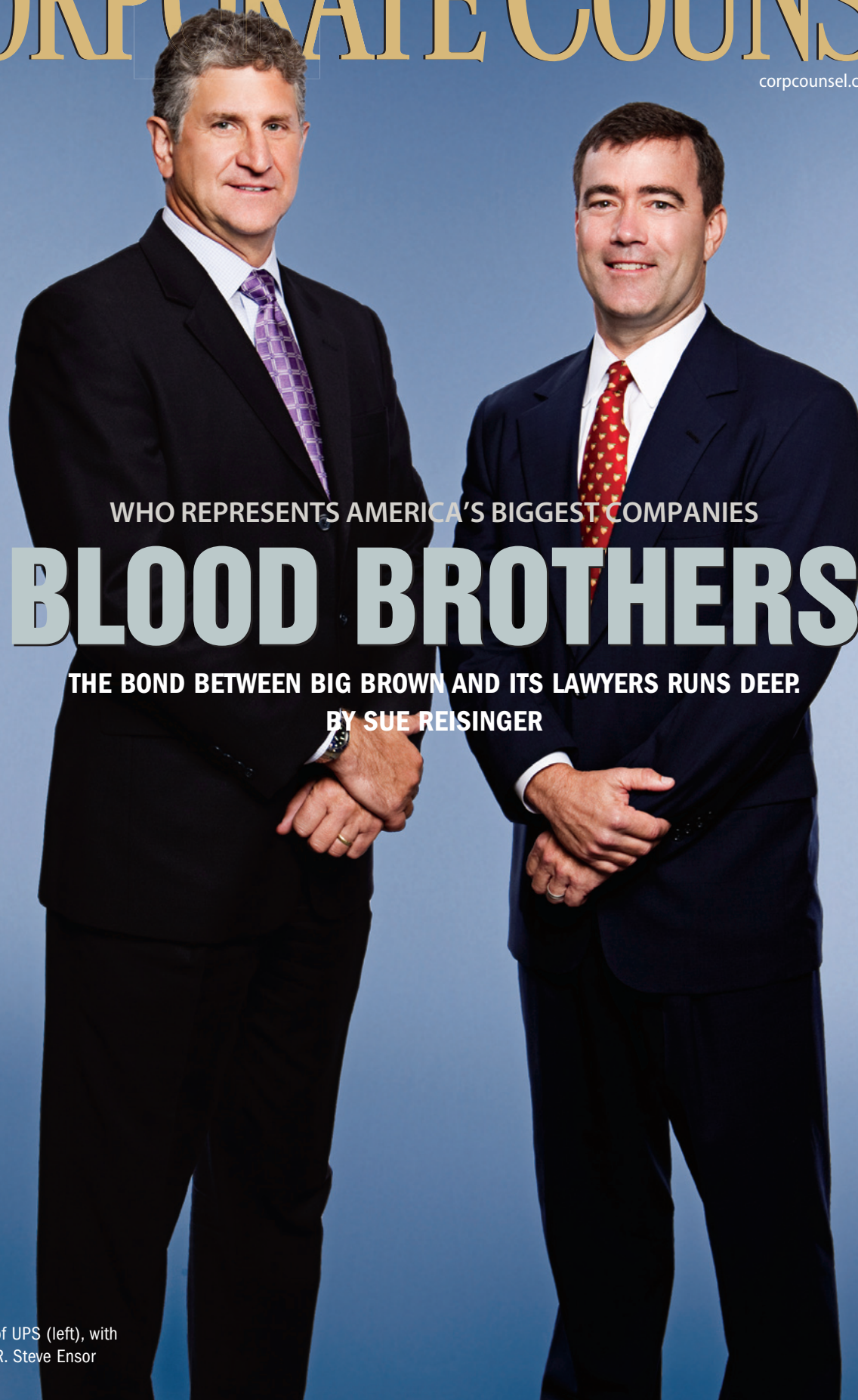


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WHO REPRESENTS AMERICA'S BIGGEST COMPANIES

BLOOD BROTHERS

THE BOND BETWEEN BIG BROWN AND ITS LAWYERS RUNS DEEP.

BY SUE REISINGER

Richard Rufolo of UPS (left), with
Alston & Bird's R. Steve Ensor

PLUS: ALLSTATE TO EX-EMPLOYEES: "SHHH" • IS THE GLASS CEILING MORE POROUS IN-HOUSE?

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UNITED PARCEL SERVICE, INC.

BLOOD BROTHERS

The bond between Big Brown and its outside firm runs deep.

BY SUE REISINGER

TWO YEARS AGO, ALSTON & BIRD PARTNER R. STEVE ENSOR underwent successful surgery for kidney cancer. While he was under the knife for four hours, a federal appeals court in Pittsburgh decertified the class in a nationwide employee discrimination suit against United Parcel Service, Inc.

When Ensor woke up, he grabbed his BlackBerry to check e-mail and saw the good news from the court. "One of the first things I did was call Rick," recalls Ensor, referring to UPS in-house counsel Richard Rufolo. "I'm not a workaholic, but this was so important—and I was so excited."

Rufolo says that the phone call shows why he and Ensor have worked together so successfully for more than a decade. "We sometimes kid about UPSers who bleed brown blood," Rufolo explains. "Well, Steve Ensor bleeds brown blood." Even from a hospital bed.

Both men say that the partnership between their outfits, which are both based in Atlanta, is as good as it gets. And both say it goes to the basic core values that the firm and company share: integrity, trust, and loyalty. "The corporate cultures of both firms line up perfectly," Ensor says.

The two men began working together occasionally in 2000, when Rufolo moved into the UPS legal department from the business side to handle real estate issues. At the time, Alston & Bird was one of 25 law firms in the UPS core counsel network. UPS requires each to have a go-to "relationship partner" who works closely with the company.

Ensor, whose specialty is labor and employment law, became that partner and began working with Rufolo on budgeting and metrics. When Rufolo was named vice president for labor and employment in 2007, the collaboration grew even closer.

Ensor says his law firm has worked hard to learn as much as they can about the UPS business. His lawyers


even call the delivery trucks "package cars," as UPS always has. And just as new UPS in-house counsel do, some A&B lawyers who work with UPS first spend a day riding a "package car" and delivering parcels. Ensor says his predecessor thought that was a good idea and arranged it.

To cement the relationship, A&B lawyers have sometimes filled in for in-house counsel who are on maternity or some other leave, at UPS's request. And when UPS has a new legal hire, the firm has occasionally brought in the newbie as a "summer associate" to help build understanding.

The firm and company also share a commitment to community service. They have teamed up on pro bono projects to aid the elderly, fight truancy, and build a Habitat for Humanity house. Most of these ideas, the two lawyers say, don't really belong to one side or the other but emerge from general conversations among lawyers of both firms and are collaborative efforts.

The close collaboration extends to money as well. When the economy nose-dived in 2008, UPS saw revenues dip. Ensor asked how A&B could help. UPS and the law firm analyzed where they might control or cut costs. Ensor says they also agreed on several alternative fee arrangements that helped lower expenses.

The relationship between Ensor and Rufolo has grown into a personal friendship. They meet for lunch about once a week and take in an occasional Atlanta Braves baseball game. But most of their contact occurs during frequent phone calls and meetings. "Not a day goes by that I don't talk to two or three different UPS-ers," Ensor says.

What makes their partnership so strong? "In a word: trust," says Rufolo. He trusts Ensor's judgment, and he believes the outside counsel is always looking out for UPS's best interests. "It goes beyond just the legal advice," he adds. "It drives the relationship." 

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEX MARTINEZ



IN-HOUSE LAWYER RICHARD
RUFOLLO (LEFT) VALUES
STEVE ENSOR'S LOYALTY.