



Coverage Highlights

Sample Third Party Quotes & Headlines



HEADLINE: Alston & Bird Swallows Firm, Opens In CA
"Alston & Bird is launching a large-scale expansion in California."



"The additions will give Alston & Bird a total of 900 attorneys, making it the largest Atlanta-based law firm."



HEADLINE: Law giant Alston & Bird expands to CA

"Alston & Bird's acquisition of a Los Angeles firm and a Silicon Valley intellectual property practice gives it a beachhead."



"It puts them (Alston & Bird) on the map as a credible emerging national firm."
– Ward Bower, Altman Weil legal consultant



"The 94 lawyers joining the firm will give Alston almost 900 lawyers, pushing its head count higher than that of King & Spalding to make it the largest firm in Atlanta."



"Atlanta-based Alston & Bird entered California with a bang on Wednesday... Industry analysts characterized Alston's expansion during a down economic market as a bold move."

Alston & Bird Coverage Report – California Expansion

As of August 7, 2008

Regional (Newspapers, Legal Trades and Business Publications)

Los Angeles/Silicon Valley Area

- *Los Angeles Business*
- *San Francisco and LA Daily Journals*
- *Metropolitan News-Enterprise*
- *The Recorder*
- *Pacific Coast Business Times*
- lawsincalifornia.com
- SiliconValleyNews.net
- SanJoseNews.net
- The Legal Pad (The law blog for California)

Atlanta

- *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*
- *Atlanta Business Chronicle*
- *Fulton County Daily Report*

Charlotte

- *Triangle Business Journal*

Legal (International, National)

- *The National Law Journal*
- *The AmLaw Daily*
- Law.com
- *The Lawyer*
- *Corporate Legal Times*
- *ABA Journal*
- IP Law 360
- *Legal Week*
- Above The Law blog
- Law and Lawyers blog
- LegalServicesDirectory.com
- International Law Office.com

National Business

- *The Wall Street Journal* Law Blog
- Bloomberg
- The Deal.com
- *Business –to– Business Magazine*

Misc.

- Yourstreet.com
- blogmyway.com

Coverage that ran following the press release distribution



July's Private Practitioner Moves

August 5, 2008

Yitai Hu, Sean DeBruine and Steve Hemminger have joined the Silicon Valley office of US firm Alston & Bird from the local office of US firm Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld.

Bloomberg.com

Merrill, 3Com, MySpace, Lilly, Tullett in Court News (Update1)

By Elizabeth Amon

Bloomberg

Alston & Bird to Acquire Weston Benshoof, Expand in California

[Alston & Bird](#) will acquire the 83-lawyer Los Angeles firm Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish and a group of 12 attorneys in Silicon Valley to gain its first offices in California. The additions strengthen the firm's litigation and IP practices, Alston & Bird said.

The additions will give Alston & Bird a total of 900 attorneys, making it the largest Atlanta-based law firm. The 12 lawyers joining from the Palo Alto office of Washington-based Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld include intellectual-property partners Yitai Hu, Sean DeBruine and Steve Hemminger, the firm said July 30 in a statement.



Movers & shakers: Aug. 1, 2008

by Carolyn Murphy and Baz Hiralal

TheDeal.com

Alston & Bird LLP is expanding in California. Los Angeles firm Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish LLP and its 83 attorneys will join the firm, effective Sept. 1. Allston is also opening an office in Silicon Valley. IP litigation attorneys Yitai Hu, Sean DeBruine and Steve Hemminger, among others, join the Silicon Valley office from Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP. In addition, Randall Allen, the former chair of the firm's litigation and trial practice unit, will move to the Bay Area.



Weston Benshoof merging with Atlanta-based firm

July 31, 2008

Stephen Nellis

Seven Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish attorneys in Westlake Village will work for a new firm starting Sept. 1.

Weston Benshoof on July 30 merged with Atlanta-based Alston & Bird; the change becomes official Sept. 1. Los Angeles-based Weston Benshoof has a total of 83 attorneys but maintains a Westlake Village office with seven attorneys, including former Ventura County District Attorney Michael Bradbury and former Thousand Oaks Mayor Charles Cohen.

Along with the Weston Benshoof deal, Alston & Bird announced it will open a 12-attorney Silicon Valley office. The Atlanta firm will have 900 attorneys after the deals are complete.

“Joining Alston & Bird allows us to offer a wider and deeper breadth of expertise to Weston Benshoof’s clients, many of which the two firms share,” Edward J. Casey, the Los Angeles-based managing partner of Weston Benshoof, said in a release.

“While Alston & Bird has been representing clients on the West Coast for years, teaming up with some of the best talent in Los Angeles and Silicon Valley gives us stronger footing in a number of key practice areas that will benefit our clients and better serve their needs,” Richard R. Hays, Alston & Bird’s managing partner, said in a release.

Alston & Bird has offices in New York, Washington, D.C., Charlotte, N.C., Atlanta, Dallas, Palo Alto and Research Triangle Park, N.C. Among the firm’s professionals are former GOP presidential candidate Bob Dole and former Sen. Tom Daschle, an adviser to presumptive Democratic Party nominee Barack Obama.



Alston & Bird Swallows Firm, Opens In California

IP Law 360

By Denise Oliveira

Alston & Bird LLP is launching a large-scale expansion in California with three offices and almost 100 lawyers.

The firm is opening a 12-attorney office in Silicon Valley on Friday with former lawyers from Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP. It is also acquiring the offices of Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish LLP in Los Angeles and Ventura County on Sept. 1.

“Alston & Bird's continued growth is the result of our increasing national and international client base for whom our strategic approach is simple: We will be where our clients are and need us to be,” Richard R. Hays, Alston & Bird's managing partner, said in a statement Wednesday.

“While Alston & Bird has been representing clients on the West Coast for years, teaming up with some of the best talent in Los Angeles and Silicon Valley gives us stronger footing in a number of key practice areas that will benefit our clients and better serve their needs,” Hays said.

The Silicon Valley office will focus on intellectual property and patent litigation and will be staffed with 11 lawyers from Akin Gump. They will be joined by Alston & Bird's Randall L. Allen, the firm's former chair of litigation and trial practice.

Client demand in the intellectual property arena has grown in California, Hays said in a telephone interview Thursday, adding that the new Silicon Valley office will supplement the firm's 160 intellectual property lawyers in offices around the country.

In southern California, Alston & Bird will absorb all of Weston Benshoof, including its 83 attorneys and all of its staff, according to Weston Benshoof Managing Partner Edward J. Casey.

“The firm's reputation for excellent attorneys, client focus and a culture that fosters teamwork makes them the perfect fit for us,” Casey said in a statement Wednesday. “Joining Alston & Bird allows us to offer a wider and deeper breadth of expertise to Weston Benshoof's clients, many of which the two firms share,” Casey said.

Weston Benshoof's extensive environmental and land use practice will be greatly incremented by Alston & Bird's federal and regulatory practice in Washington, D.C., Casey said Thursday, noting that this is just one example of the “great synergies” between the two firms.

Weston Benshoof was founded in 1984 and has developed an extensive litigation practice.

“I view this as a natural extension of who we are, and I am very excited about it. I don't have bittersweet thoughts,” said Weston Benshoof's co-founder and former head of its litigation practice, John M. Rochefort.

The two firms are still working out the details of the new managerial structure, Casey said. He expects that Weston Benshoof's current clients will remain committed to the firm.

“That was an important consideration for us, to keep our clients and provide them with more resources, more depth, more talent,” Casey said.

There are no immediate plans to hire new attorneys in the Los Angeles office, but Casey said both firms want to continue to grow in California. “But we want to grow in a responsible way, that matches our clients' needs,” Casey said.

As of September, Alston & Bird LLP will have over 900 lawyers in offices around the country.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Akin to Shutter Offices in Taipei, Silicon Valley; Lawyers to Alston & Bird

July 31, 2008

Law Blog - Dan Slater

*also ran on SanJoseNews.net

About 30 minutes ago, [Bruce McLean](#), the head of Akin Gump, sent an e-mail to all the attorneys at the firm informing them of a “substantial reshaping and enhancement of several practices,” and a “change” in the firm’s “geographical footprint.”

That change involves “withdrawing from Taipei and Silicon Valley,” and moving the lawyers in those offices to Alston & Bird, an Atlanta-based firm. “In addition,” McClean writes, “some of our lawyers in Austin will join Greenberg and Traurig in the coming weeks . . . We are very pleased to report that we have secured a license to practice law in Abu Dhabi and are in the process of opening an office there to serve our clients in the Middle East.”

A spokeswoman from Akin Gump confirmed the authenticity of the memo.



Weston Benschopf Acquired by Atlanta's Alston

July 31, 2008

By Petra Pasternak

The Recorder

Atlanta's Alston & Bird announced Wednesday that it is expanding into Southern California by absorbing Los Angeles midsize firm Weston Benschopf Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish.

Alston also announced the opening of its new Silicon Valley office with 12 attorneys. The Recorder previously reported that 11 Valley lawyers will arrive from Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld. They will be joined by Alston & Bird's former chairman of litigation, partner Randall

Allen, who, according to the firm, is relocating to the Bay Area.

The combination with Weston Benshoof will be effective Sept. 1, according to an Alston press release.

The moves boost Alston & Bird's total lawyer count to more than 900 and add a West Coast presence to its existing six offices, which include New York, Washington, D.C., and Dallas.

"It puts them on the map as a credible emerging national firm," Altman Weil legal consultant Ward Bower said.

Full-service Alston & Bird covers a wide swath of practice areas, including corporate and finance, environmental, tax and insurance. The firm ranked 54th among the Am Law 100 last year and its 2007 revenues totaled \$518 million, a 12.1 percent increase from the year before.

With 83 lawyers, Weston Benshoof is known for real estate development and environmental law as well as litigation. It counts Home Depot Inc. and SunCal among its clients, said name partner Steven Weston.

Weston Benshoof had tried to break into Northern California for years, Weston said. The merger helps with its goal to cover more geography, he added.

At the practice level, Weston said that Alston & Bird, with its team of project finance attorneys in New York, filled a gap in his firm's menu of land development services. And its legislative public policy arm in Washington, D.C., is a federal-level complement to Weston Benshoof's ties to Sacramento.

L.A. Firm Weston Benshoof to Merge With National Firm

July 31, 2008

Metropolitan News-Enterprise

Los Angeles law firm Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish LLP will merge with national firm Alston & Bird LLP as part of the latter's expansion into California, the firms announced yesterday.

Weston Benshoof and its 83 attorneys will officially become part of Alston & Bird on Sept. 1.

Richard R. Hays, managing partner for Alston & Bird, explained that the expansion was necessary so that the firm could be “where our clients are and need us to be.”

Edward J. Casey, managing partner of Weston Benshoof said that joining the larger firm “allows us to offer a wider and deeper breadth of expertise” to clients, many of whom he said the firms share.

Alston & Bird will also open a new 12-attorney office in Palo Alto, bringing in attorneys from Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP. The Silicon Valley branch will be the third office the firm opens this year.

The 900-member firm has offices in New York, Washington, Charlotte, Atlanta, Dallas, and Research Triangle Park, N.C, with core practices areas of intellectual property, complex litigation, corporate and tax law; and national industry focuses in health care, energy, financial services and public policy.

Daily Journal CORPORATION

Alston + Bird Enters Los Angeles, Silicon Valley

Atlanta Firm Merges With Weston Benshoof And Takes IP Attorneys From Akin in Palo Alto

July 31, 2008

By Jill Redhage and Jonathan Vanian

San Francisco and LA Daily Journal

Atlanta-based Alston + Bird entered California with a bang Wednesday. It announced a merger with Los Angeles' 83-attorney Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish, as well as the lateral hires of all 11 attorneys from Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld's Silicon Valley office.

Firm officials also acknowledged they hope to open offices in San Francisco and, perhaps, Sacramento in the coming months.

The Los Angeles merger becomes effective Sept. 1, and the Akin Gump attorneys start work for their new firm on Friday. Both decisions were approved during a partnership vote Wednesday morning, firm officials said.

Alston + Bird, now with more than 900 attorneys, was founded in 1893. Its first merger came in December 1982 in Atlanta, when Alston, Miller & Gaines joined Jones, Bird and Howell to form Alston + Bird. It later established an office in Washington, D.C. Since 1997, it has merged with firms in Charlotte and Raleigh, North Carolina, and New York, and it opened in Dallas in 2007. The firm's core practice areas are intellectual property, complex litigation, corporate and tax, with national industry focuses in health care, energy, financial services, and public policy. Alston's managing partner, Richard Hays, said the firm's existing clients in California drew its attention westward.

"We've been looking in California for a while because of that demand," he said.

The Silicon Valley office is meant to build out the firm's intellectual property platform, complementing the work of its 160 full-time IP attorneys. In San Francisco, the firm's litigation, corporate, financial services and IP clients make a permanent presence attractive, he said.

"We're committed to the market," Hays said of northern California. "We're excited and ready to grow." He said the firm's presence in Silicon Valley will aid its recruiting efforts for its potential San Francisco office. No time frames have been set for that office's opening.

With the merger in Los Angeles, Hays said the firm has doubled down on expanding its 60-attorney energy infrastructure and climate change practice group that was founded at the start of the year.

"Weston has a preeminent land use and environmental practice, so that complements our sustainability and climate change practices," Hays said.

Industry analysts characterized Alston's expansion during a down economic market as a bold move.

"The cautious approach about the economy is to do nothing," said Gary Davis, a legal recruiter with Patterson Davis Consulting in San Francisco. "The aggressive approach is ... to seize the day or take advantage of opportunities available to you when everyone is not doing tremendously well."

Bradford Hildebrandt, chairman of Hildebrandt International Inc. said law firms tend to follow their clients into new markets.

"Law firms open offices to follow clients and client demands. Most offices that are opening in California reflect that," he said.

Formal negotiations between Alston and Weston Benshoof began four months ago, said name partner Steven Weston.

A Weston Benshoof attorney will be elected as partner-in-charge of the Los Angeles office, and another will join Alston's management committee.

Ward Benshoof, another founding partner, said the firm struggled to break into northern California on its own. Joining Alston will give the firm the resources to do that now, he said.

"We wanted to expand in the state," said Benshoof. "We want to have a presence in San Francisco and a presence in Sacramento. This lets us achieve what we wanted to be doing."

Edward Casey, Weston Benshoof's managing partner, said some attorneys from Alston's East Coast offices plan to relocate to Los Angeles, though Hays said the number has yet to be determined. The firm plans to continue hiring in Los Angeles, as well, and has already fielded calls from interested attorneys, but benchmark numbers for further expansion have not been set, Hays said.

To make for a successful merger, the firm has to concentrate on integration, attorneys on both sides said. To aid that process, Hays said that more than 150 of Alston's partners have met Weston attorneys, and every Weston attorney has met Alston attorneys.

"We have a very strong understanding of their practices and we have a strong sense of a shared culture," he said. "We are dedicated to the proposition that we have to serve our clients by practicing as one."

In Silicon Valley, Alston gains three intellectual property partners - Yitai Hu, Sean DeBruine and Steven Hemminger. They are joined by two counsel, five associates, one staff attorney and a patent specialist. Randall Allen, chair of Alston's antitrust group and former chair of the litigation group, is relocating to the Bay Area from Atlanta to head up the firm's northern California efforts. Alston will take over Akin Gump's existing office space in Palo Alto.

"The Akin partners were courted by more than a dozen law firms," said Martha Sellers Klein, the consultant from Mlegal Consulting Inc. who placed the group. "They were drawn to Alston + Bird because of its national strength in IP litigation, strong West Coast client base, and collegial, award-winning culture."

DeBruine said that he and Hu had practiced together for the firm then known as Shaw Pittman before its merger with Pillsbury Winthrop, and the duo decamped from that firm to join Akin Gump shortly after, in the spring of 2005.

Akin Gump originally seemed committed to growing its IP practice nationwide, DeBruine said, including a "rock-solid" commitment to patent prosecution. But, the firm ended up splitting in late 2007 from the Philadelphia-based patent prosecution boutique with which it had merged, he added, and several other IP defections followed.

"What really prompted us to look for another opportunity were the difficulties we had recruiting out here," DeBruine said. "We found the Akin Gump brand was not particularly well-known, nor within IP circles. Not to say that they didn't have strengths, but they're an East Coast firm."

He said his group was attracted to Alston for its "stellar existing client base," its "solid and growing reputation" and their commitment to their IP practice.

"At the end, it was something of a gut feeling," DeBruine said.

Akin Gump, meanwhile, will refocus its energies in northern California on its San Francisco office, home to 12 attorneys. Asked whether the firm was considering reopening in Silicon Valley, a spokeswoman said the firm had no immediate plans to do so, but that that door could be reopened.

Akin Gump also lost its Taipei, Taiwan, office - its connection to the firm was through Hu, who founded that office originally for Shaw Pittman. Alston decided not to pick up that office, which has been spun off to form an independent Taiwanese firm. Alston's new Silicon Valley attorneys expect to continue the relationship with the firm in Taipei and to do the U.S. patent prosecution work for some of the firm's Taiwan-based clients.

DeBruine added that Alston's merger with Weston Benshoof was a positive factor in their decision to join the firm, as it showed a commitment to California.

Alston & Bird acquires Weston Benshoof, opens Silicon Valley office

July 31, 2008

Amanda Bronstad

LOS ANGELES — Alston & Bird has acquired Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish, a Los Angeles law firm with about 80 lawyers, and opened a separate Silicon Valley office, to establish its first presence on the West Coast.

Weston Benshoof specializes in environmental law, water resources, real estate, construction and land use. The firm has an office in downtown Los Angeles and a small outpost in neighboring Westlake Village, Calif. Alston & Bird, based in Atlanta, will acquire both offices. Its practices include energy infrastructure and sustainability.

The acquisition of Weston Benshoof becomes effective on Sept. 1. With the deal, Alston & Bird has 900 lawyers. Last year, the firm opened an office in Dallas. Other offices, besides Atlanta, are in New York, Washington, Charlotte and Research Triangle Park, N.C.

In addition to acquiring Weston Benshoof's two offices, Alston & Bird has opened a Silicon Valley office in Palo Alto, Calif., with a dozen intellectual property lawyers. Eleven of them come from Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld. Three of those, Yitai Hu, Sean DeBruine and Steve Hemminger, will become partners specializing in litigation. The Akin Gump group represents international clients in technology businesses, such as computer software, Internet infrastructure and electronics.

Also joining the Silicon Valley office is Randall L. Allen, former chairman of Alston & Bird's litigation group, who will relocate from Atlanta to the Bay Area.



US firm adds 94 lawyers in LA merger deal

July 31, 2008

Meredith Hobbs

*also ran on traineesolicitor.co.uk and HildebrantInternational.com

US firm Alston & Bird has secured its expansion into California with the acquisition of a Los Angeles firm and an intellectual property (IP) practice in Silicon Valley.

The two acquisitions, approved by the firm's partnership today (31 July) give Alston almost 100 lawyers in California. The LA firm, Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish, has 83 lawyers, while an 11-lawyer IP group has joined the firm from Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld's Silicon Valley office.

The Akin Gump lawyers will join Alston on 1 August and the Weston Benshoof merger will become effective on 1 September.

The 94 lawyers joining the firm will give Alston a total of almost 900 lawyers, pushing its headcount higher than that of King & Spalding to make it the largest firm in Atlanta.

King & Spalding reported revenue last year of \$615m (£310m) and Alston's revenue was \$518m (£261m). Weston Benshoof managing partner Edward Casey declined to disclose his firm's revenue.

Alston managing partner Richard Hays said the firm added the West Coast offices in response to client demand -- particularly in the IP, energy and sustainability, financial services and litigation areas.

Hays said that last year was the first time that more than half of the firm's revenue came from clients located outside of states where it has offices. The firm opened a small Dallas office last autumn, which now has 15 lawyers. Alston's other offices are in Washington, New York and Charlotte and Raleigh in North Carolina.

The new California offices are the result of a search that began in February, said Hays, who became the firm's managing partner in January. "We want to go where we have success in our high-performing practices," he said.

ajc.com
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



Law giant Alston & Bird expands to California

July 31, 2008

TAMMY JOYNER

*also ran on blogmyway.com, lawsincalifornia.com

California's legal gold rush continued Wednesday as Atlanta's second-largest law firm announced an expansion into the Golden State.

Alston & Bird's acquisition of a Los Angeles firm and a Silicon Valley intellectual property practice gives it a beachhead.

Wednesday's announcement means Atlanta's three largest law firms now have a major West Coast presence. King & Spalding, Atlanta's largest law firm, led the way earlier this year. Troutman Sanders entered California last month.

"While Alston & Bird has been representing clients on the West Coast for years, teaming up with some of the best talent in Los Angeles and Silicon Valley gives us stronger footing in a number of key practice areas," said Richard R. Hays, Alston & Bird's managing partner.

Alston & Bird now has more than 100 West Coast attorneys with the addition of the L.A. law firm of Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish and Akin Gump's intellectual property practice in Palo Alto, Calif.

Financial terms of the deals were not disclosed.

California has become fertile legal ground in recent years, partly because of the nation's increasing energy needs.

"What drives us into California is the energy and sustainability practice, in addition to the intellectual property and litigation demand," Hays said. "California is at the forefront of the development of the law and public policy emerging around sustainability issues."

Weston Benshoof has built a reputation in that area, Hays said.

Similarly, Akin Gump's 12-attorney practice in Palo Alto is well-known for its work in intellectual property, a hot field.

Alston & Bird was founded in 1893 as a general practice firm. It has grown through a series of mergers and acquisitions, building its reputation in intellectual property, complex litigation, corporate and tax law.

Wednesday's expansion brings the number of attorneys at Alston & Bird's to more than 900.

The firm will now have eight U.S. locations, including a Dallas office opened last year.



Alston Seals Calif. Deal, Adds 94 Lawyers

July 31, 2008

Meredith Hobbs

*also ran on Law.com

Alston & Bird's partnership on Wednesday approved the firm's expansion into California by acquiring a Los Angeles firm and an intellectual property practice in Silicon Valley.

The two acquisitions give Alston almost 100 lawyers in California. The L.A. firm, Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish, has 83 lawyers, and the IP group is the 11-lawyer Silicon Valley office of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld.

The Akin Gump lawyers will join Alston on Aug. 1 and the Weston Benshoof merger is effective Sept. 1.

The 94 lawyers joining the firm will give Alston almost 900 lawyers, pushing its head count higher than that of King & Spalding to make it the largest firm in Atlanta. King & Spalding has 840 lawyers, according to its Web site.

King & Spalding reported revenue last year of \$615 million and Alston's revenue was \$518 million. Weston Benshoof's managing partner, Edward J. Casey, declined to disclose his firm's revenue.

King & Spalding and another local competitor, Troutman Sanders, have recently gained California offices, while a third big Atlanta firm, McKenna Long & Aldridge, has offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego.

King & Spalding opened offices in Silicon Valley and San Francisco earlier this year that now total 19 lawyers. Last month, Troutman Sanders added 38 lawyers in Irvine, Calif., and San Diego through its merger with the Washington firm Ross, Dixon & Bell.

Alston's managing partner, Richard R. Hays, said the firm added the West Coast offices in response to client demand -- particularly in the IP, energy and sustainability, financial services and litigation areas.

Hays said that last year was the first time that more than half of the firm's revenue came from clients located outside of states where it has offices. California and Texas were at the top of the list, he said. The firm opened a small Dallas office last fall, which now has 15 lawyers. Alston's other offices are in Washington, New York and Charlotte and Raleigh, N.C.

The new California offices are the result of a search that began in February, said Hays, who became the firm's managing partner in January. "We want to go where we have success in our high-performing practices," he said.

Firms all over the country have shown tremendous interest in expanding into California, said Blane R. Prescott, a senior vice president at legal consultancy Hildebrandt International who is based in San Francisco.

"At any one time 20 to 30 law firms from around the United States and London are looking to build a presence in California," said Prescott, who worked on the Alston deal. But he said there are not many established, midsize firms like Weston Benshoof to be acquired. "The market has been heavily harvested," he said.

California is the second-largest legal market in the country, he said, and is much more diverse than New York, the biggest market, which centers around finance. The breaking down of international trade barriers and increased investment interest by foreign entities have heated up the legal market there, as has interest in renewable energy and climate change ventures.

Clients' heightened interest in environmental issues has become a major factor for law firms, said Prescott, and California is on the vanguard for practices and investment in that area.

The Silicon Valley office adds to Alston's IP bench-strength, which Hays said numbers about 160 lawyers firmwide. The former head of the firm's litigation group, Randall L. Allen, will move to Palo Alto, and Alston will take over Akin Gump's lease for the office it's acquiring.

Hays said the firm plans to broaden out from IP and add transactional and commercial litigation capabilities in the Bay Area. "Our existing client demand is as strong if not stronger in transactional as in IP," he said of the Northern California market.

Hays said Alston lawyers knew lawyers at Weston Benshoof because the two firms share clients and that Weston Benshoof's environmental and land-use as well as its energy infrastructure and sustainability practices were a big draw. "This gives us immediate critical mass in areas we're looking for," he said.

Alston pulled together an interdisciplinary energy and sustainability group with 46 lawyers at the beginning of the year in response to client interest in renewable energy, he said. It's also developing its environmental and land-use practice, which includes expertise in climate change issues. There are 64 lawyers practicing in the two groups. "We believe that is the future," said Hays.

"The policy and law around many of these issues is driven by what happens in California. Weston Benshoof has expertise in the California market. That fits well with what we're trying to do," he said.

Casey, the managing partner of Weston Benshoof, said his firm is best known for its environmental and land-use work, as well as its litigation practice.

Casey said the firm decided around the end of last year to start considering acquisition offers from bigger firms. "We recognized that the legal marketplace is changing and we needed more resources to bring to bear for our clients," he said.

An intensive courtship over the past few months culminated in Wednesday's deal, which the Weston Benshoof partners approved Tuesday evening.

"Over the course of the last three to four months, we have met all the lawyers in their law firm. More than 150 of our partners have met their partners," said Hays. He said the careful getting-to-know-you period was to ensure that the firms have practices that are complementary and cultures that will mesh well.

Clients the two firms have in common include AT&T Wireless, DirecTV, Home Depot, BP, Exxon Mobil, Nike and Wells Fargo, said Hays and Casey.

Weston Benshoof chose Alston because the practices were a fit and the Weston Benshoof lawyers liked Alston's culture, said Casey. "They are good people, dedicated to the profession and to providing client service."

He said the economics of a Southeastern firm were "more compatible with the kind of practice areas our firm does work in" than those of a typical New York or Wall Street firm. Casey said the partnership also wanted a firm that had no physical presence in California, "to open up the West for them," which is more common for Southeastern firms than those in other parts of the country.



Reed Smith Sets Its Sights on Silicon Valley

July 31, 2008

Zusha Elinson – from *The Recorder*

Big out-of-town law firms can't seem to resist the allure of Silicon Valley.

Now, Pittsburgh-based Reed Smith is poised to open an office there with the addition of [Richard Scudellari](#), a veteran corporate lawyer from Morrison & Foerster in Palo Alto, Calif., according to people familiar with the move.

It's the seventh Am Law 200 firm to open -- or to promise to open -- an office in Silicon Valley this year, the [most recent being Atlanta's Alston & Bird](#).

Legal observers say it can be difficult for out-of-town firms to land a corporate lawyer like Scudellari, who does work for tech companies like Credence Systems Corp. and Cybersource Corp. But what can be even more challenging is building beyond the initial lateral hires.

"Scudellari is a great first step for anyone looking to establish an office in the Valley," said Bill Nason, a recruiter with Watanabe Nason & Seltzer who was not involved with the move. "But with the continual influx of new firms coming to the Valley, chasing a very finite talent pool, you've got to wonder how any of these firms are ever going to get critical mass."

Reed Smith, which has more than 1,500 lawyers around the world, has been moving lately to bulk up with Valley-esque lawyers, albeit in San Francisco until this point. Earlier this month, the firm hired [Sergio Garcia](#) from Fenwick & West, where he served as co-chairman of the life sciences group.

Garcia, who represents venture-backed life sciences companies, said he liked Reed Smith because of its "global platform" and its history in his field.

"This firm has shown a dedication to the life sciences sector that few other firms have," Garcia said.

Garcia said the new Silicon Valley office will also be important for his practice "because the Valley continues to be a significant geographic area [where] my clients need coverage, and where many of the venture capital firms continue to reside."

Garcia will also be helping to build out the office, which for now will be occupied by Scudellari, he said.

"I'm definitely committed to spending time in the Valley, helping the firm build up the office," Garcia said.

Scudellari does corporate and securities work as well as M&A deals. Most recently, he led a team representing Credence Systems in its merger with LTX Corp. He also does corporate work for Cybersource -- a large online payment management company in Mountain View, Calif. -- where he has also sat on the board of directors since 1997. It was not clear whether Scudellari would be bringing any clients with him to Reed Smith.

The addition continues a hiring spree by the firm in California, where it first gained a foothold by merging with Oakland's Crosby, Heafey, Roach & May in 2003.

Reed Smith spokeswoman Jamie Moss declined to comment, as did Morrison & Foerster chairman Keith Wetmore. Scudellari did not return calls seeking comment.

THE AM LAW DAILY

Alston & Bird's Westward Expansion

July 30, 2008

Drew Combs

[Alston & Bird](#) announced its California debut today by merging with an 83-attorney Los Angeles firm and opening a new office in Silicon Valley with 11 lateral hires.

The AmLaw Daily had [previously reported](#) the Atlanta firm was in merger talks with Los Angeles-based [Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish](#), which is known for its real estate and litigation practices. Alston's merger with Weston instantly adds 83 California attorneys specializing in litigation, real estate development, and environmental law to the Atlanta firm's roster. The move brings Alston's total headcount to more than 900.

Alston & Bird's westward expansion also includes the opening of a new office in northern California with the addition of a group of intellectual property attorneys from [Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld](#). (This and other Akin Gump partner defections are part of [a news report today](#) in sibling publication *Legal Times* about a shift in strategy by firm management meant to boost profits.)

Richard Hays, managing partner at Alston & Bird, says the firm's expansion is driven by an increasingly national and international client base. Alston's work for clients such as United Parcel Service, Wachovia, and Aflac covers a wide range of practice areas including general commercial litigation, tax, and intellectual property.

Clients of Weston, which was founded in 1984, include the Boeing Co. In addition to its Los Angeles office, Weston has a small office in Westlake Village, California.

TRIANGLE BUSINESS JOURNAL

Atlanta law firm to absorb Weston Benshoof

July 30, 2008

**From the Atlanta Business Chronicle*

Alston & Bird LLP is putting its mark on California, with plans to absorb in September the Los Angeles law firm Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish LLP and its 83 attorneys.

Weston Benshoof is known for its environmental and land use practices, but it also litigates in real estate, construction, and water resources issues.

Atlanta-based Alston & Bird also said Wednesday it has opened a 12-attorney office in Palo Alto. The addition of the new lawyers in California will bring the total number of attorneys at Alston & Bird to more than 900.

"Alston & Bird's continued growth is the result of our increasing national and international client base for whom our strategic approach is simple -- We will be where our clients are and need us to be," said Richard R. Hays, Alston & Bird's managing partner, in a prepared statement. "While Alston & Bird has been representing clients on the West Coast for years, teaming up with some of the best talent in Los Angeles and Silicon Valley gives us stronger footing in a number of key practice areas that will benefit our clients and better serve their needs."

Alston & Bird Merges with L.A. Firm, Opens Office With Akin Gump Lawyers

July 30, 2008

*also ran on SiliconValleyNews.net

[Rumors of a potential merger](#) between Atlanta-based [Alston & Bird](#) and an 83-lawyer Los Angeles law firm have proven true.

The 800-lawyer Alston & Bird [announced today](#) its acquisition of Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish. At the same time, Alston said it is opening a 12-lawyer office in the Silicon Valley staffed by intellectual property lawyers from Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, including rainmaker Yitai Hu.

[Akin Gump lost Hu](#) after it refused his request to allow him to stay permanently in his native Taiwan. Previously he had split his time between offices in that country and in California.

Weston Benshoof has highly regarded land-use and environmental practices that will complement Alston's energy-infrastructure and sustainability practices, according to a press release. Alston & Bird managing partner Richard Hays also praised Weston Benshoof's "talented and deep litigation department" in the press release.

The Akin Gump lawyers joining the Silicon Valley office primarily represent international technology companies.



Atlanta law firm to absorb Weston Benshoof

July 30, 2008

Los Angeles Business Journal - from the Atlanta Business Chronicle

[Alston & Bird LLP](#) is putting its mark on California, with plans to absorb in September the Los Angeles law firm [Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish LLP](#) and its 83 attorneys.

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"Alston & Bird's continued growth is the result of our increasing national and international client base for whom our strategic approach is simple -- We will be where our clients are and need us to be," said Richard R. Hays, Alston & Bird's managing partner, in a prepared statement. "While Alston & Bird has been representing clients on the West Coast for years, teaming up with some of the best talent in Los Angeles and Silicon Valley gives us stronger footing in a number of key practice areas that will benefit our clients and better serve their needs."

Alston & Bird merges with 83-lawyer Weston; hires 12 from Akin Gump

July 30, 2008

Matt Bryne

Alston & Bird has secured its much-anticipated merger with west coast firm Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish.

The Atlanta firm announced today (Wednesday 30 July) that it was merging with the 83-lawyer Weston, a deal that will give the larger US firm its first outpost in Los Angeles.

As The Lawyer reported yesterday (29 July), the firm has also hired a group of 12 IP lawyers, including three partners, from Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld's Silicon Valley office.

The three Akin partners joining Alston are Yitai Hu, Sean DeBruine and Steve Hemminger, all of whom are best known for IP litigation.

“While Alston & Bird has been representing clients on the West Coast for years, teaming up with some of the best talent in Los Angeles and Silicon Valley gives us a stronger footing in a number of key practice areas that will benefit our clients and better serve their needs,” said Richard Hays, Alston & Bird's managing partner.

Weston is best known for its environmental and land use practices, seen by Alston as complementary areas for its own energy infrastructure and sustainability practice.

It is also known for litigation including intellectual property and class actions.

Weston Benshoof will officially become part of Alston & Bird on 1 September, 2008.

Law Firm Merger Mania: Alston & Bird Swoops In on Weston Benshoof

July 30, 2008

By David Lat

Just to close the loop on this [prior report](#), the talks between [Alston & Bird](#) and Los Angeles-based [Weston Benshoof](#) have borne fruit. Alston's acquisition of Weston is official. From a firm-wide email just issued by A&B managing partner [Richard Hays](#):

This morning, the partners voted overwhelmingly to expand the firm into California with the opening of two new offices. The Los Angeles-based Weston Benshoof firm and their 83 attorneys will become a part of Alston & Bird and, additionally, we will be opening an office in Silicon Valley with a group of eleven (11) intellectual property lawyers formerly with Akin Gump.

The complete memo appears after the jump. The official press release from [Alston & Bird](#) appears [here](#) (PDF).

Elsewhere on the A&B front, we've been hearing all sorts of rumors about goings-on over there -- some of them in [comments](#), and some by email. There may be nothing to them; but if there's anything to report, you know [where to reach us](#). Thanks.

ALSTON & BIRD -- MEMORANDUM -- ACQUISITION OF WESTON BENSHOOF

I am pleased to share some very exciting news about the firm. This morning, the partners voted overwhelmingly to expand the firm into California with the opening of two new offices. The Los Angeles-based Weston Benshoof firm and their 83 attorneys will become a part of Alston & Bird and, additionally, we will be opening an office in Silicon Valley with a group of eleven (11) intellectual property lawyers formerly with Akin Gump. I am also pleased to report that our partner, Randall Allen, will be relocating to the Bay Area to lead the effort.

Weston Benshoof is a highly regarded firm with special expertise in litigation and energy and was ranked by Chambers USA in 2008 as one of the best environmental practices in all of California. The 2008 edition of Benchmark: Litigation, a guide to America's leading litigation firms

and attorneys, ranked Weston Benshoof as one of the leading litigation firms in California, also making note of the firm's acclaimed environmental litigation abilities. The lawyers joining us in Silicon Valley have extensive experience in IP litigation and represent international clients involved in a variety of technology-related businesses.

Our office in Palo Alto will open this Friday, August 1, and the combination with Weston Benshoof will occur September 1. This schedule is aggressive, but we are up to the challenge and much has already been accomplished.

For some time, the firm has searched for an appropriate California base to serve our growing number of West Coast clients. An extraordinary number of our attorneys have spent a great deal of time and energy telling the A&B story, performing due diligence, negotiating and now in making the integration happen. The teamwork displayed throughout the process has been strong and apparent and ultimately played a big role in moving both groups to Alston & Bird.

These are exciting times, and I am confident that you will be hearing more about this from many sources. But I wanted to share the quick news with you personally. The contribution each of you makes daily sustains what is great about the firm, and I look forward to joining with you to welcome these new members of the Alston & Bird family.



Alston & Bird acquires L.A.'s Weston Benshoof

July 30, 2008

Atlanta law firm Alston & Bird acquired L.A.-based Weston Benshoof.

The merger gives Alston its first two offices in California, in Los Angeles and Westlake Village, and 83 local attorneys specializing in litigation, real estate development and environmental law.

With the added attorneys, the firm boasts 900-attorneys and eight domestic offices.

The firm also announced it's opening a 12-attorney office in Silicon Valley.

Weston Benshoof Looked at Bay Area for Years

July 30, 2008

Legal Pad – The Law Blog for California

With the merger between Atlanta giant Alston & Bird and Los Angeles midsize firm Weston Benshoof finally official ([.pdf](#)), Legal Pad caught up with Steven Weston on the telephone to ask him what makes a firm drop its independent streak after more than two decades.

The answer sets Weston Benshoof apart from many other smaller firms that continue to boldly resist consolidation: “We weren’t interested in standing still,” Weston said. “Even though I was confident we had a good market share here, I wasn’t sure what that would look like in 10 years.”

Weston said his firm, with 83 lawyers known mainly for land development and environmental law and litigation, searched for four years for an entrée into the Bay Area.

There were many conversations with Walnut Creek’s Miller Starr Regalia, Weston said, and others. But nothing was coming together and Weston felt larger competitors were getting ahead.

“Some clients will import you, but more likely they will look at folks who have local experience and local knowledge,” Weston said. Meanwhile, competitors like Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, Allen Matkins Leck Gamble Mallory & Natsis and Cox, Castle & Nicholson continue branching out to other geographic areas.

“They have more opportunities or a larger size that permits them to do some things that we weren’t able to do, and that’s troublesome,” Weston added.

Alston & Bird, with its team of project finance attorneys in New York, filled a hole in Weston Benshoof’s menu of land development services. And its legislative public policy arm in Washington, D.C. is a federal-level complement to Weston Benshoof’s ties to Sacramento, Weston said.

Weston said he's pretty excited about the possibilities that come with the resources and backing of a 800-lawyer firm with six offices across the nation. With a [toehold secured](#) in Silicon Valley, Alston & Bird is already chatting with unnamed lawyers in San Francisco, and the firm is eager to branch out to Sacramento, Weston said. "San Francisco is going to be the next step."



Alston & Bird makes a move into California

July 30, 2008

[Alston & Bird LLP](#) is putting its mark on California, with plans to absorb in September the Los Angeles law firm [Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish LLP](#) and its 83 attorneys.

Weston Benshoof is known for its environmental and land use practices, but it also litigates in real estate, construction, and water resources issues.

Atlanta-based Alston & Bird also said Wednesday it has opened a 12-attorney office in Palo Alto, Calif. The addition of the new lawyers in California will bring the total number of attorneys at Alston & Bird to more than 900.

"Alston & Bird's continued growth is the result of our increasing national and international client base for whom our strategic approach is simple -- We will be where our clients are and need us to be," said Richard R. Hays, Alston & Bird's managing partner, in a prepared statement. "While Alston & Bird has been representing clients on the West Coast for years, teaming up with some of the best talent in Los Angeles and Silicon Valley gives us stronger footing in a number of key practice areas that will benefit our clients and better serve their needs."



Alston set to vote on adding two Calif. offices

Firm will merge with L.A.'s Weston Benshoof and take on Akin Gump's office in Silicon Valley, pending partner approval

July 30, 2008

Meredith Hobbs and Zusha Elinson

Alston & Bird will add 90 lawyers in California, pending a partnership vote this morning.

At 8 a.m. today, the firm's partners are to vote on adding a Los Angeles office through a merger with 80-lawyer Los Angeles firm Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish, plus a Silicon Valley office by acquiring Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld's 10-lawyer IP group in Palo Alto, according to a source close to Alston.

The Weston Benshoof partnership was expected to vote on the merger Tuesday afternoon, according to the source.

The two deals would give the 800-lawyer firm a sizeable presence in California, where two local competitors, King & Spalding and Troutman Sanders, have recently opened offices. Alston presently has offices in Atlanta, Washington, New York, Charlotte and Raleigh, N.C., and Dallas.

King & Spalding opened offices in Silicon Valley and San Francisco earlier this year that now total 19 lawyers. Last month, Troutman Sanders added 38 lawyers in Irvine, Calif., and San Diego through its merger with the Washington firm Ross, Dixon & Bell.

Alston partner Randall L. Allen, the former head of the firm's litigation group, will relocate to Palo Alto and Alston will take over Akin Gump's lease for the office, assuming Alston's partnership approves the new office, according to the source.

The 10-lawyer Akin Gump IP group, led by patent litigator Yitai Hu, makes up that firm's Silicon Valley office. The office has two other partners, Sean P. DeBruine and Steven D. Hemminger, who would move to Alston along with associates and staff.

Hu and Akin Gump had decided to part ways effective Aug. 1. Firm chairman Bruce McLean said last month that the decision was prompted by Hu's desire to spend more time in his native Taiwan, which didn't make sense for the firm.

Hu, who does patent litigation for big Taiwan-based clients like RealTek Semiconductor, also maintains a patent practice in that country. Akin Gump's chairman has previously said his firm would no longer maintain the Taiwan office, but it was not clear Monday whether Alston would absorb it.

Akin Gump declined Monday to discuss its Silicon Valley plans.

Hu's secretary said he was traveling internationally and DeBruine's secretary said he was on vacation until later this week. Hemminger did not return phone calls seeking comment.

Alston's entry into Silicon Valley is the latest among many. Half a dozen law firms have opened—or have said they plan to open—offices there this year. That includes L.A.'s Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton, Texas-based Baker Botts and King & Spalding. One recruiter said that the two Atlanta firms will do fine in the Valley because of their strong intellectual property practices.

“What both of those firms, in part, have is they have existing and well regarded IP practices,” said Gary Davis, a recruiter with Patterson Davis Consulting who is not involved in the move. “They're not coming out here and saying 'Hey, we represent Coca-Cola so we're a big deal.’”

King & Spalding had profits per partner last year in line with top Bay Area firms, at \$1.4 million. Alston's PPP was \$1 million last year, below top Bay Area firms like Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati or Cooley Godward Kronish.

Coverage that ran prior to the press release distribution

THE AM LAW DAILY

Alston in Merger Talks with Weston Benschopf

July 14, 2008

*also ran in Law and Lawyers blog

Atlanta law firm Alston & Bird is in talks to acquire Los Angeles-based firm Weston Benschopf.

If a deal between the firms is finalized, the combination would give 800-attorney Alston, which has six domestic offices, an outpost in California. The move follows the West Coast expansion of another Atlanta firm, King & Spalding, which opened offices in Silicon Valley and San Francisco earlier this year. Presently 20 attorneys work at King's two California offices.

Alston's potential merger with Weston would instantly give it 80 California attorneys specializing in litigation, real estate development, and environmental law.

Richard Hays, managing partner of Alston & Bird, told The Am Law Daily, "We are actively pursuing opportunities in California, which we feel good about. But we are not in a position to announce anything. We have a lot of demand in California with existing clients and see opportunity with new clients."

Alston's work for clients such as United Parcel Service, Wachovia, and Aflac covers a wide range of practice areas including general commercial litigation, tax, and intellectual property. The firm's 2007 revenues totaled \$518 million, a 12.1 percent increase from the previous year. It ranked fifty-fourth on *The American Lawyer's* list of the 100 highest-grossing firms.

Clients of Weston, which was founded in 1984, include the Boeing Co. In addition to its Los Angeles office, Weston has a small office in Westlake Village, California. Weston's managing partner Edward Casey could not be reached for comment.



Alston & Bird in Merger Talks With California Firm

July 15, 2008

Debra Cassens Weiss

Alston & Bird would have a California office if merger talks with a firm there are successful.

The [Am Law Daily](#) reports that the 800-lawyer Atlanta-based law firm is in merger talks with Weston Benshoof, based in Los Angeles. Weston Benshoof has 80 lawyers who focus on litigation, real estate development, and environmental law.

Alston & Bird managing partner Richard Hays would not confirm the talks with Weston Benshoof, but did tell the Am Law Daily that the firm is “actively pursuing opportunities in California.”

Two other law firms expanding in California include King & Spalding and Troutman Sanders, according to the [Fulton County Daily Report](#). Troutman Sanders is merging with with Ross, Dixon & Bell, which has two California offices. King & Spalding recently added offices in the Silicon Valley and San Francisco, bringing to four the number of offices in California.



Alston & Bird Chief Mum on Merger With Calif. Firm

July 15, 2008

From *Fulton County Daily Report*

*Also ran on Legal Services Directory.com

Richard R. Hays, the managing partner at [Alston & Bird](#), on Monday declined to comment on a published report that his firm was in talks with an 80-lawyer Los Angeles firm, [Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish](#).

"I have earlier said that we have a lot of existing demand from our clients in California, and we've been actively pursuing opportunities there, but I don't have anything to add at this time," Hays told the *Daily Report*.

The [AmLaw Daily](#), a *Daily Report* affiliate, cited two unnamed sources Monday in a story saying Alston was working on a deal with Weston Benshoof.

If a deal between the firms is finalized, the combination would give 800-attorney Alston, which has six domestic offices, an outpost in California.

King & Spalding [opened offices in Silicon Valley](#) and San Francisco earlier this year, with 22 lawyers in its two California offices in Orange County and San Diego.

Also, [Troutman Sanders last month announced that it is merging with Ross, Dixon & Bell](#), which has two offices in California.

AmLaw Daily said Alston's potential merger with Weston Benshoof would instantly give it 80 California attorneys specializing in litigation, real estate development and environmental law. Clients of Weston Benshoof, which was founded in 1984, include the Boeing Co.

Alston's work for clients such as UPS, Wachovia and Aflac covers a wide range of practice areas including general commercial litigation, tax and intellectual property. The firm's 2007 revenues totaled \$518 million, a 12.1 percent increase from the previous year.

In addition to its Los Angeles office, Weston Benshoof has a small office in Westlake Village, Calif. AmLaw Daily said Weston's managing partner, Edward J. Casey, could not be reached for comment.



Everyone's talking about Heller

Last week the merger rumour mill –surrounding US firms went into overdrive. Topping the list was the frenzied gossip about Heller Ehrman and its ever-changing roster of merger candidates, with the number one suitor now widely thought to be Baker & McKenzie.

As one former Heller partner tells The Lawyer: “I’ve heard there’s going to be a deal within the next one to two weeks.”

Elsewhere, Alston & Bird’s –ambitions to strengthen its West Coast operations also leaked out last week. The firm is believed to be in talks with Los Angeles-based -Weston Benshoof – a deal that would give Alston 80 lawyers on the West Coast focused on litigation, real estate and environmental law.

Then, adding more fuel to the fire, word began to spread on legal –market blogs about a potential link-up between Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman and Nixon Peabody.

Pillsbury New York head Steve Huttler has been quick to kill this latter thread, saying: “There’s absolutely no truth to the rumours. We’ve never spoken with Nixon Peabody. It just demonstrates the unreliability of the blog method of communication.”

Despite the apparent lack of substance to the rumours, the continuing speculation is contributing to the growing sense in the US that the current market turbulence is creating significant opportunities for acquisitive firms – not just in firmwide deals, but also for individuals.

Certainly, the leading London-based firms in New York have rarely enjoyed a better position in the recruitment market than they do right now. The financial strength of firms such as Clifford Chance, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer and Linklaters, coupled with the global platforms they have built over the past decade, is beginning to prove an irresistible combination for potential laterals with itchy feet.

As John Christian, the personnel committee chair for Clifford Chance in the Americas, puts it: “We’ve seen a huge uptick in interest lately. Since last year we’ve hired six lateral partners in the US and we receive résumés almost every day from lawyers who want to come here.

“Higher profits have certainly helped, but the lockstep culture and global reach are also important. I don’t believe any US firm can match our global footprint and collaborative approach.”

Individual lateral moves aside, there is growing evidence that the pace of consolidation in the US legal market is hotting up. Earlier this month US legal market consultant Altman Weil published data that confirmed the widely held impression that the pace of law firm mergers was accelerating. The company’s online tracking service highlighted 26 new mergers and acquisitions between US law firms in April, May and June 2008 – eight more than in the same period in 2007.

“Even in a deteriorating economy law firms continue to pursue a growth strategy via merger and acquisition,” Altman Weil principal Tom Clay says. “And based on our conversations with law firm leaders, we think the pace is unlikely to slow.”

The largest merger in the second quarter of 2008 was that of K&L Gates and Kennedy Covington Lobdell & Hickman, a 175-lawyer firm in Charlotte, North Carolina. Banking centre Charlotte, home to Bank of America and Wachovia, is rapidly becoming one of the favourite destinations for acquisitive law firms.

Indeed, the K&L Gates deal was the second major merger this year involving a Charlotte firm. In March Charlotte-based Helms Mulliss & Wicker was acquired by McGuireWoods, the largest combination in the first quarter of the year.

Clay confirms that Charlotte continues to be a target market for expansionist national firms, despite the market turbulence that has seen banks such as Wachovia rocked by the downturn in the real estate market. However, he adds that it is the West Coast, and in particular California, that remains the biggest prize for most major national firms.

“But there have been no deals of any size since Kirkpatrick & Lockhart acquired Seattle-based Preston Gates at the end of 2006,” says Clay.

Not yet, anyway. Alston & Bird looks set to usurp K&L Gates and add another notch to Altman Weil’s merger-tracking data.

Alston & Bird to Open in Silicon Valley With Akin Group

July 29, 2008

Big Atlanta law firms are seeing a decidedly peachy future in Silicon Valley. Just six months after King & Spalding opened its doors in the tech capital, another Atlanta-based firm, Alston & Bird, is set to do the same. A group of Silicon Valley IP lawyers leaving Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld is planning to join Alston & Bird pending a partnership vote, according to sources familiar with the situation.



Alston & Bird to open in Silicon Valley with Akin group

New office would be the 800-lawyer firm's first foray into California

July 29, 2008

By Zusha Elinson from The Recorder

*also ran on Youstreet.com

Big Atlanta law firms are seeing a decidedly peachy future in Silicon Valley.

Just six months after King & Spalding opened its doors in the tech capital, another Atlanta-based firm, Alston & Bird, is set to do the same.

A group of IP lawyers leaving Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld is planning to join Alston & Bird pending a partnership vote, according to sources familiar with the situation.

The 11-lawyer group, led by patent litigator Yitai Hu, makes up Akin Gump's Silicon Valley office. Hu and the firm had decided to part ways effective Aug. 1. Firm Chairman Bruce McLean said last month that the decision was prompted by Hu's desire to spend more time in his native Taiwan, which didn't make sense for the firm.

Alston has offices in Atlanta, New York, Washington, D.C., and other eastern cities, but the Silicon Valley office would be the 800-lawyer firm's first foray into California.

The firm also reportedly has its eyes on Southern California: The AmLaw Daily, a Recorder affiliate, cited two unnamed sources in reporting earlier this month that Alston was working on a deal to acquire an 80-lawyer Los Angeles firm, Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava and MacCuish.

An Alston spokeswoman declined to comment on the Silicon Valley office or merger talks.

Akin Gump declined Monday to discuss its Valley plans.

Hu, who does patent litigation for big Taiwan-based clients like RealTek Semiconductor, also maintains a patent practice in that country. Akin Gump's chairman has previously said his firm would no longer maintain the Taiwan office, but it was not clear Monday whether Alston would be absorbing it.

Aside from Hu, two other Silicon Valley Akin partners, Sean DeBruine and Steve Hemminger, as well as the office's associates would be headed to Alston, according to sources.

Hu's secretary said he was traveling internationally and DeBruine's secretary said he was on vacation until later this week. Hemminger did not return phone calls seeking comment.

Akin Gump still lists 11 lawyers in an office in San Francisco, although Hunton & Williams picked off three Akin labor lawyers to launch its own San Francisco office July 1.

Alston's entry into Silicon Valley is only the latest among many. Half a dozen out-of-town law firms have opened -- or have said they plan to open -- offices there this year. That includes L.A.'s Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton, Texas-based Baker Botts and King & Spalding.

One recruiter said that the two Atlanta firms, King and now Alston, will do fine in the Valley because of their strong intellectual property practices.

"What both of those firms, in part, have is they have existing and well-regarded IP practices," said Gary Davis, a recruiter with Patterson Davis Consulting who is not involved in the move. "They're not coming out here and saying 'Hey, we represent Coca-Cola so we're a big deal.'"

King & Spalding has profits per partner in line with top Bay Area firms, at \$1.4 million. Alston's PPP was \$1 million last year, below top local firms like Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati or Cooley Godward Kronish.



Alston & Bird to launch two west coast bases simultaneously

July 29, 2008

Alston & Bird is targeting a simultaneous launch of two offices this week on the US west coast.

Partners at the Atlanta-based firm are expected to be voting either later today or tomorrow on the hire of a group of IP lawyers from Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld's Silicon Valley office.

The firm is also understood to have all but finalised the details of its merger with 80-lawyer Los Angeles firm Weston Benshoof Rochefort Rubalcava & MacCuish.

Akin's split with the lawyers in Silicon Valley is understood to be amicable and it is thought to be the Alston vote which is delaying the deal.

Sources close to the Atlanta firm say it is partly the firm's desire to announce both deals simultaneously that has delayed the announcement of the Weston deal.

Last month, Akin closed its office in Taiwan after the departure of rainmaking IP litigator Yitai Hu. It is thought to be Hu's group, which handles both IP patent litigation and transactional work for primarily Korean clients, that is poised to join Alston.

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