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New Lawyers Section

Adding lawyers just one part of Koenig's job

By John Flynn Rooney
Law Bulletin staff writer

Sometimes when midsize law firms merge, complications can occur.

But that didn't happen in 2013 when Clark Hill PLC's 220 lawyers and Pittsburgh-based Thorp, Reed & Armstrong LLP's 90 lawyers combined, said Ray J. Koenig III, managing member of Clark Hill's Chicago office.

In fact, the merger became a boon for Clark Hill's Chicago office, which now has 48 lawyers and doubled in size the last two years.

Firmwide, there are now 343 lawyers working in 11 U.S. offices.

"Before the merger, collaboration across the offices was not as great as it is now," Koenig said. "The merger has really strengthened the feeling of having one unified firm."



Clark Hill attorney
Leslie Gutierrez

clients," Koenig said.

The merger "resulted locally in our ability to serve a wider variety of clients and broader practice areas," including bankruptcy matters, Koenig said.

The combination of the firms also has helped the Chicago office recruit lawyers.

For example, Scott N. Schreiber, a member in Clark Hill's Chicago office, can work on a bankruptcy matter with a colleague in the firm's Pittsburgh office.

"We don't work in a bunch of silos, and that comes through to the

"We think it's enhanced our image in the marketplace as a desirable place to work," Koenig said.

The firm's major practice areas in Chicago are litigation, intellectual property, health care and customs and international trade. Firmwide, major practice groups include banking and finance, corporate and employment as well as government and public affairs.

Clark Hill's local clients include BMO Harris Bank, PNC Financial Services Group Inc. and MB Financial Bank.

Its Chicago members charge average hourly rates between \$350 and \$600.

Clark Hill, with its roots in Detroit, opened a Chicago office in 2007. When Koenig joined the firm two years later, there were slightly more than 10 lawyers in the Chicago office.

He has served as managing member since 2011. Koenig was elected to a seat on the firm's seven-member executive committee in 2013.



Clark Hill attorney **Ray J. Koenig III**

Koenig's goals as managing member include associate retention and development as well as "smart growth."

That, Koenig said, means "bringing in members and other attorneys to develop business from current clients and attract new clients."

During 2013, the firm's Chicago office hired 12 lawyers. Last year, another 13 lawyers were added — increases that occurred for many reasons, he said.

"Those factors include a growing client base and resulting need for additional attorneys," he said. "The next factor would be the Clark Hill brand became established in the market and the merger resulted in a national firm which was more attractive to larger clients and attorneys."

Five of the 13 lawyers joined the Chicago office over a two-month period ending in May.

Those additions allowed the firm to enter the bankruptcy practice market here and bolstered its IP and litigation practices.

Before Schreiber's hiring last year, Clark Hill did not have a bankruptcy lawyer



Clark Hill attorney
Scott N. Schreiber

continued on page 2

continued from page 1

working in Chicago.

Koenig spends about 10 percent of his time on his roles as managing member and on the executive committee. That includes several hours each week interviewing potential lawyer recruits.

He represents families, financial institutions and closely held businesses in trust and estate litigation.

Leslie Gutierrez, a Clark Hill associate for 3 1/2 years, works closely with Koenig on estate and trust litigation matters.

Koenig lets Gutierrez attend client meetings and work directly with clients on litigation matters from start to finish, she said.

“He stands out as a partner because he gives you just the right amount of guidance — but also the right amount of autonomy to learn,” Gutierrez said. “His door is always open.”

Rick Ingram, general counsel for Chicago Parking Meters LLC, has been a Clark Hill client for about five years. He called Koenig a smart, practical lawyer with good business sense.

Koenig “makes sure (matters) are assigned to the right person,” Ingram said. “He follows up. He has a really good sense of how to get things done in an efficient manner.”

Trends in estate and trust litigation

include more challenges to estates before people die. Koenig said he does not know the reason for the increase.

with the firm now known as Peck, Bloom LLC. He remained there until joining Clark Hill in 2009.

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Generally, there is an upswing in estate litigation because the current older generation has accumulated more wealth than those in the past, Koenig said.

Another area with increased disputes involves the generational succession of family businesses. Some first-generation business owners delayed succession planning, he said.

Koenig was raised in White Lake, Mich., a Detroit suburb, along with his brother by their divorced single mother, Deborah Koenig. She is a retired U.S. Postal Service carrier.

Koenig received his bachelor’s degree from Michigan State University.

He then moved to Chicago and enrolled at DePaul University College of Law. He graduated from there in 1999.

Koenig’s first job out of law school was

“I was ready to broaden my practice at a firm where I could have an equity stake,” Koenig said. “I really enjoyed the time at my first firm. It was just time to move on.”

As for the current space situation at Clark Hill’s Chicago office, it nearly fills two floors at 150 N. Michigan Ave.

Firm officials are in discussions with their current landlord about leasing more space, Koenig said.

The hiring of additional lawyers will continue here, especially in the banking, finance and employment practice areas. But Koenig does not have a specific number in mind.

“We will continue to attract lawyers to meet the needs of current clients and complement the practices of current attorneys,” Koenig said.

Ray J. Koenig III is a member in Clark Hill’s Litigation and Personal Legal Services Practice Groups and serves in the leadership role as the Managing Member of Clark Hill’s Chicago office. His areas of emphasis and experience include: will contests, will construction, citations to recover, probate litigation, trust contests, trust reformation, trust construction, total return trusts, trust litigation, breach of fiduciary duty claims, fiduciary litigation, claims for fiduciary and legal fees, guardianship litigation, elder law, estate planning, probate estate administration. **Contact him at: rkoenig@clarkhill.com or (312) 985-5938.**

Leslie Gutierrez is an Associate with the Litigation Practice Group in Clark Hill’s Chicago office. Leslie has experience in handling a wide variety of legal issues, including contract disputes, common law fraud claims, securities fraud, criminal defense, contested guardianships, foreclosure defense, zoning board appeals, e-discovery disputes, products liability defense, breach of fiduciary duty claims and class action defense. Her areas of emphasis include commercial litigation, business torts, real estate disputes and estate litigation and administration. **Contact her at: lgutierrez@clarkhill.com or (312) 985-5917.**

Scott N. Schreiber is a member of the Corporate Restructuring and Bankruptcy practice group and Chicago office Bankruptcy leader. Scott has served as lead counsel to business debtors, creditors, creditors’ committees and equity holders in a wide range of bankruptcy matters, including domestic and international bankruptcy and insolvency proceedings, and out-of-court workouts. **Contact him at: sschreiber@clarkhill.com or (312) 985-5595.**

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