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.”

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 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.

“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 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.

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.
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.