

Press Coverage | February 3, 2025

Mergers Are About People, Not Paperwork: Here's Why

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Bilal Zaheer and Dan Pulka were quoted in the February 3, 2025 *The Recorder* article, [“Mergers Are About People, Not Paperwork: Here's Why.”](#)

Bilal Zaheer, partner at Troutman Pepper Locke, formed through a recent merger with Troutman Pepper and his legacy firm, Locke Lord, emphasizes the importance of a systematic approach to internal business development, stating:

“Create a list of colleagues to meet across offices, map out visits to key locations, use firm support to reach out and introduce yourself, and develop a six-month plan to capitalize on the energy and resources immediately post-merger.”

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The early days of a merger are a shrinking window of opportunity—a rare moment when people are eager to connect and build relationships. Leaders who act quickly during this phase can turn initial excitement into lasting collaboration. As Zaheer puts it:

“Law firm mergers are like creating a blended family—there's initial excitement and eagerness to connect, and the sooner you can take advantage of that, the more likely you are to see benefits from the merger. The key is to strike early: make introductions and ask for meetings with new colleagues, and show up at firm events while people are still open and engaged. Remember, the infrastructure is there, but the firm won't merge itself—energy and human connection require active participation from the lawyers.”

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“Very early on in the merger discussions between Troutman Pepper and Locke Lord, we prioritized our practices across the firm getting together, getting to know more about each other, and making them aware of the cross-collaboration opportunities that would be available in a combined firm,” said Daniel Pulka, chief business development and marketing officer at Troutman Pepper Locke. “More than 200 partners from Troutman Pepper met 200 partners from Locke Lord before we even combined with the goal of how we can better serve our clients with our combined resources.”