

Firms Hone C-Suites as 'The Next Phase of Talent Strategy' Comes Into View

Big Law firms have been reordering their C-Suites this summer, hiring new leaders and creating new roles responsible for efficiency, growth and talent.

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Credit: Nuthawut/Adobe Stock

What You Need to Know

- Jackson Lewis, Barnes & Thornburg, Foley Hoag and Hinshaw & Culberson have all added to their C-suites in recent months.
- Am Law 200 firms are looking for and adding experts in integration.

Big Law firms have been honing their C-Suites this summer, hiring new leaders and creating new roles responsible for efficiency, growth and talent.

Am Law 100 firms such as Jackson Lewis and Barnes & Thornburg, as well as Second Hundred firms like Foley Hoag and Hinshaw & Culberson, have added chief officers of growth, talent and operations over the last month, as competitive pressures across the market have continued to intensify.

While the legal industry for years has become more businesslike in its leadership, and better and better with data and innovation, the core issues now may be fragmentation and integration.

Firms know the rising costs of talent. But more intricate aspects of hiring, like delayed productivity or partner supervision, or attrition costs like client and institutional knowledge disruption, remain common gaps in the talent calculus at law firms, according to a forthcoming ALM Pacesetter Research report.

A number of firms still rely on proxies for those things, like hours worked, realization and collection rates, the report added. Meanwhile, decision-making is siloed, and many firms lack a coordinated talent framework.

"The next phase of talent strategy is not about collecting more data—it is about connecting it and the decision processes around it," Ruth Sierra, an analyst for Pacesetter, [wrote](#) this week.

Still, Am Law firms are looking for and adding experts in integration. Foley Hoag's latest C-Suite hire, Jennifer Davenport, has "led multidisciplinary teams through complex transformation and large-scale integration efforts" throughout a 20-year career advising Am Law 100 and 200 firms, the firm noted. The firm announced Davenport's addition as chief growth and legal recruiting officer this week, adding that expansion and organizational transformation are also among her specialties.

"Her talent and experience position the firm to continue and accelerate our ambitious growth plans," said Chris Ende, Foley Hoag's chief operating officer, in a statement.

Jackson Lewis this week also announced the arrival of Bart Gabler as chief legal operations and practice innovation officer. Gabler, the firm said in a statement, will oversee its legal operations, knowledge management, practice support and innovation teams after serving as chief officer of legal operations at K&L Gates.

Gabler's "background in legal operations, technology and innovation will help us continue modernizing how we deliver legal services while equipping our attorneys with the tools and capabilities to better serve clients," said firm managing principal Samantha Hoffman, in a statement.

Barnes & Thornburg, which also recently added Emily Landry as chief onboarding and integration officer, announced earlier this month the arrival of Buck Owen as chief operating officer. Owen was previously in a similar role at Dentons, in Washington, D.C., and firm managing partner Andrew Detherage noted in a statement that his "experience integrating practices and offices, driving technology adoption and aligning operational excellence with strategic growth is exactly what Barnes & Thornburg needs as we continue to grow and evolve."

The firm made the most lateral partner hires during Q1 of this year, [according to Pirical](#), and noted in a statement that more than 100 lawyers have joined the firm in total so far in 2026. Detherage said the firm is in a strong spot, and adding Owen "positions us to execute on our strategy with even greater speed and precision."

Hinshaw & Culberson at the end of June also announced a new title in its C-Suite: chief talent officer, bringing on Lauren Symington, previously senior director of legal development, integration & technology training at Womble Bond Dickinson.

The firm said the chief talent officer would work to develop national strategies for talent recruitment across markets and practices, while also enhancing lateral integration, as well as development and engagement. Tracy Elmblad, the firm's chief operating officer, said in a statement that Hinshaw's continued expansion depends on attracting, developing and retaining "exceptional" legal practitioners.

"Creating this new position demonstrates our long-term commitment to investing in our people and building the infrastructure necessary to support the firm's ongoing strategic growth. Lauren brings diverse and significant experience in legal talent management. She will help shape the next chapter in Hinshaw's strategic expansion," Elmblad added.

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