

Law
Firm
Partner
Moves
in
London

♦ January –
February 2026
Issue No. 91

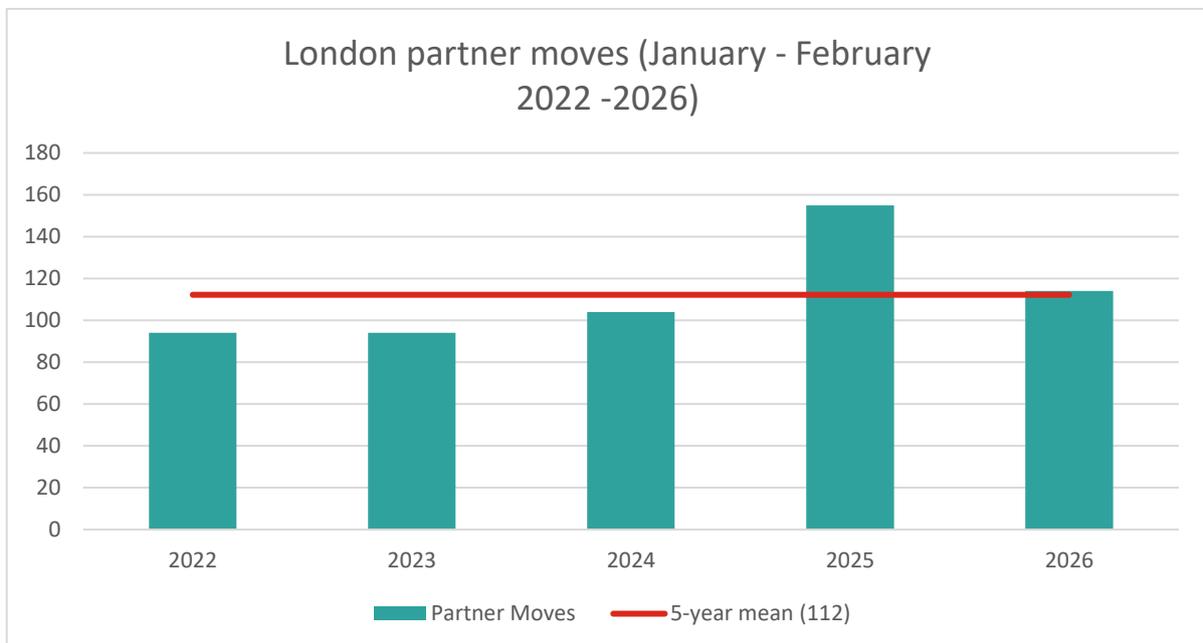
Welcome to the 91st edition of Law Firm Partner Moves in London, from the specialist partner team at Edwards Gibson, where we look back at announced partner-level recruitment activity in London over the past two months and give you a ‘who’s moved where’ update. Our records go back to 2007, and this is [our methodology](#).

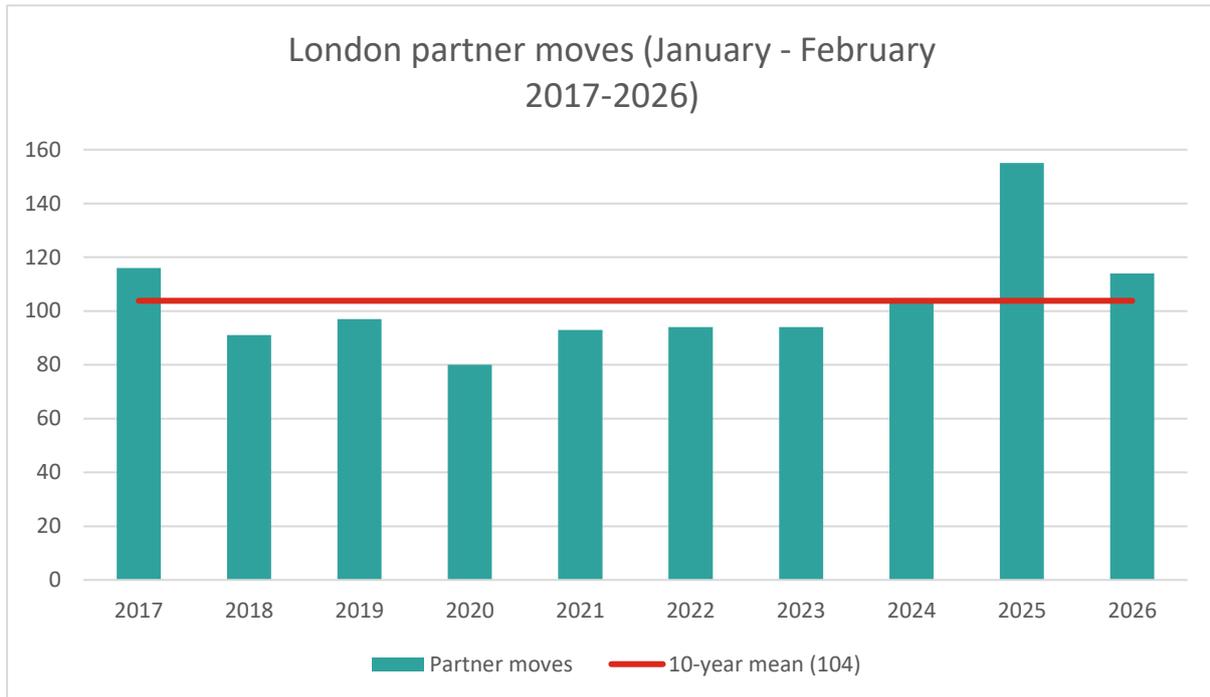
📌 **January – February 2026**

With few exceptions, our January-February “the transfer season” edition tends to record the highest number of moves in any given year. This bi-monthly round-up contains **114** partner moves — **26% down** on the **155** recorded in [the same period last year](#).

At first glance, the figures suggest a sharp slowdown in partner recruitment. However, this impression is misleading. While there has indeed been a substantial drop against last year’s extraordinary numbers, hiring activity in the first two months of 2026 remained close to record levels by historical standards — **2%** above the cumulative five-year average (**112**) and **10%** up on the ten-year average (**104**).

Last year’s unprecedented spike in partner hires continues to distort both year-on-year comparisons and longer-term averages (see graphs below).





The 10-year comparison shows 2026 as having the third highest level of partner recruitment on record for the January-February period, beaten only by 2025 and 2017. At the time 2017's numbers were significantly higher than any previous years up to that point, due to the market shock created by the collapse of KWM Europe (at the time a Top 20 law firm) in December 2016.

The most coveted firm this edition was **Pinsent Masons** which hired **5** partners, followed by **Paul Hastings**, **Sullivan & Cromwell** and **Winckworth Sherwood** which hired **4** partners each. Next up was **Addleshaw Goddard**, **Blake Morgan**, **Hill Dickinson**, **Latham & Watkins**, **Norton Rose Fulbright** and **Simmons & Simmons** which hired **3** partners apiece.

◆ **Top partner recruiters in London January – February 2026**

Pinsent Masons	5	(2 laterals)
Paul Hastings	4	(3 laterals)
Sullivan & Cromwell	4	(4 laterals)
Winckworth Sherwood	4	(3 laterals)

Addleshaw Goddard	3	(3 laterals)
Blake Morgan	3	(3 laterals)
Hill Dickinson	3	(3 laterals)
Latham & Watkins	3	(3 laterals)
Norton Rose Fulbright	3	(3 laterals)
Simmons & Simmons	3	(2 laterals)

In addition, **17** firms hired 2 partners each: **Akin, Bird & Bird, Brabners, Browne Jacobson, Cahill, HFW, Hogan Lovells, Irwin Mitchell, Kingsley Napley, Mayer Brown, Michelman Robinson, Osborne Clarke, Shoosmiths, Sidley Austin, Skadden, Stephenson Harwood and Willkie.**

On the other side of the coin, over the same period, **DLA Piper** and **Latham & Watkins** suffered the highest attrition, losing **5** lateral partners apiece to rivals in London.

◆ **Firms with largest attrition in January – February 2026 (partnership to partnership moves only)**

DLA Piper	5
Latham & Watkins	5
A&O Shearman	4
Clyde & Co	3
Laytons ETL	3
Taylor Wessing	3



✦ **Team hires January – February 2026**

The most sizeable multi-partner team move this edition was **Latham & Watkins'** acquisition of a three-partner finance team comprising a real estate finance duo and a structured finance lateral from A&O Shearman.

Elsewhere, **6** firms hired two-partner teams: **Blake Morgan** (corporate and real estate from Laytons ETL); **Cahill** (finance and real estate finance from White & Case); **Mayer Brown** (real estate from Taylor Wessing); **Sidley Austin** (real estate finance and equity capital markets) from Latham & Watkins; **Skadden** (international arbitration from Latham & Watkins); and **Sullivan & Cromwell** which took two separate two-partner teams – finance from Weil, and high-yield and restructuring from Paul Hastings.

✦ **Sullivan & Cromwell ... oh so predictable**

In our [October 2025 edition](#), we noted that the super-elite New York firm's hire of Big Law heavyweight **Mike Francies** — the former long-term London managing partner of Weil — was likely a portent of unusually rapid near-term expansion (at least by its historically uber-conservative standards) in its core areas of private capital, restructuring, and leveraged finance. This edition confirms that trajectory: the New Yorker has hired two separate two-partner finance/restructuring teams, with all four partners being Weil *alumni* and all having previously worked with Francies. This comes on top of a two-partner corporate private equity and corporate tax duo from Kirkland & Ellis, which arrived [at the end of last year](#) — likely linked to former Kirkland restructuring heavyweight **Kon Asimacopoulos**, who joined at the same time as Francies.

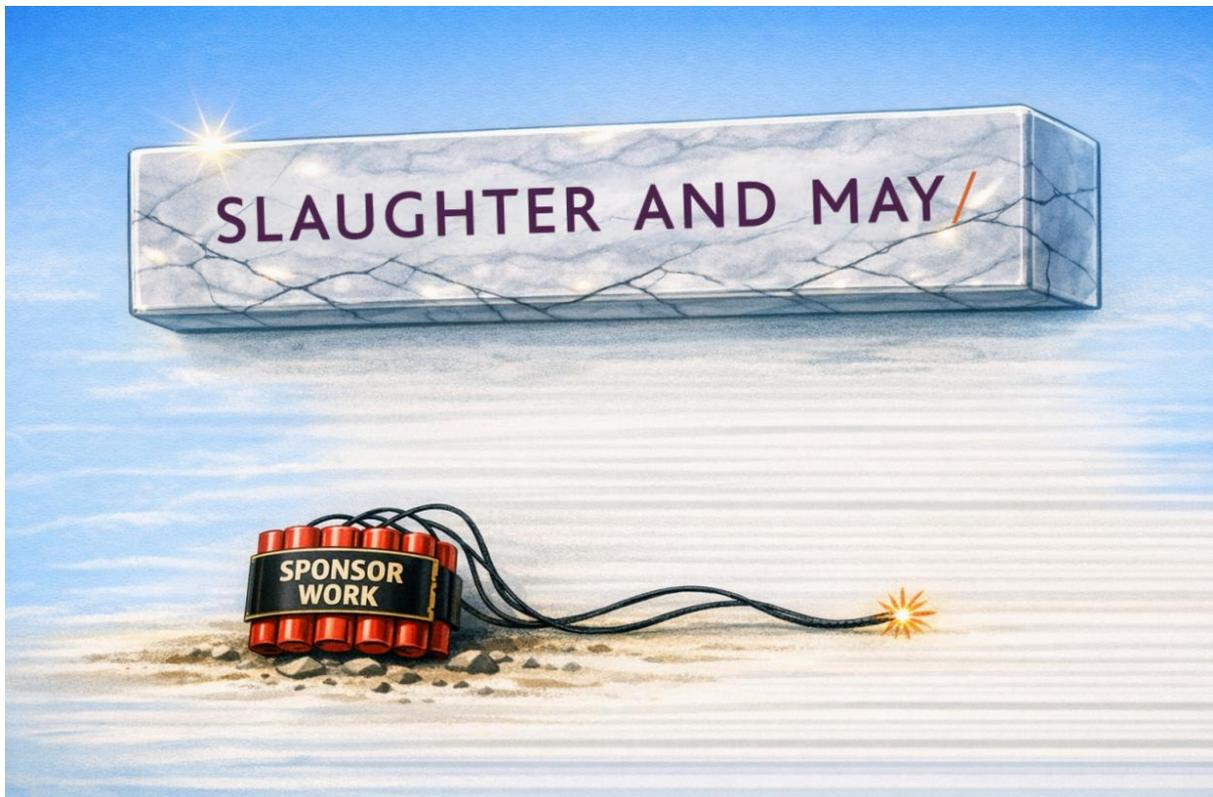
Longer term, perhaps even more significant for its partner growth in London is Sullivan & Cromwell's abandonment of its once-sacrosanct all-equity partnership model

Longer term, perhaps even more significant for its partner growth in London is Sullivan & Cromwell's abandonment of its once-sacrosanct all-equity partnership model. Indeed, in our October edition, we flagged that model as the key constraint on the firm's ability to scale. However, since January 2026, the New Yorker has aped a recent trend adopted by virtually all of its peer and near-peer rivals and created a non-equity partnership tier. As such, the firm will now have the ability to hire a wider range of laterals — as well as “day-one partners” (a proven catalyst for attracting top non-partners) — support quicker internal promotions, and stretch its equity more flexibly to land top rainmakers. It is, essentially, the same playbook **Kirkland & Ellis** has used to great effect and which firms like [Paul Weiss](#) [have successfully adopted to transform their London](#) offices in recent years.

✦ **The maybe (not-so) inviolate Slaughter and May**

This edition records a rare lateral defection from Slaughter and May. In what appears a notable coup for **Paul Hastings**, corporate partner **Mark Zerdin** — co-head of sport and head of Latin America at the Magic Circle stalwart — has jumped to the Los Angeles-founded outfit. At 53, Zerdin departs well short of Slaughter and May’s mandatory retirement age of 60, underlining just how unusual this move is.

Unlike its UK-founded peers, Slaughter and May has largely withstood the predations of US rivals, gaining a reputation for being impervious to partner headhunters. While the firm has seen a handful of lateral departures before, Edwards Gibson estimates that it has only lost two, perhaps three, partners to date that it would have preferred to retain. On the face of it, Zerdin’s exit may place him within that small group.



The magic circle firm’s almost mystically cohesive partnership is underpinned by a combination of premium mandates and its position as the UK’s most profitable Big Law firm. The firm remains a true lockstep, actively eschews mergers and seldom hires laterally (according to Edwards Gibson, it has made only two external partner hires in London ever) — features of a distinctive model that sit alongside, and reinforce, its reputation premium in English law.

Traditionally, this has meant that, despite the seemingly studied insouciance of its partners towards winning work, the firm has often had first dibs on the most complex and profitable FTSE 100 and other blue-chip matters. But the model has its blind spot. Slaughter and May has never been a private capital powerhouse. Before the financial crisis, this scarcely mattered; since then, as the centre of gravity in Big Law has shifted decisively towards sponsor-led private capital, it has. While the firm remains hugely profitable by UK standards, its relative position has inevitably slipped when set against the US elite that dominate the most lucrative funds, buyout and credit mandates.

The irony is obvious. To remain competitive Slaughters is pushing deeper into private capital ... Yet the more it succeeds here, the more vulnerable it becomes to US profit differentials and the inherent portability of sponsor-led client relationships

Paradoxically, that same absence from the sharp end of private capital has, until now at least, offered a degree of protection. US firms may be prepared to pay extraordinary sums for private capital rainmakers, but they have been far less willing to do so for still-expensive, if non-sponsor-led, corporate and finance partners — no matter how formidable their technical quality. On the rare occasions Slaughters has lost partners it would have preferred to keep, they have typically been prime, PE-facing corporate names — think [Murray Cox to Weil](#) (2021) and [Robert Chaplin to Skadden](#) (2022).

The irony is obvious. To remain competitive Slaughters is pushing deeper into private capital — even formalising its sponsor push through its “Global Sponsors Group”, which explicitly spans private equity and private credit, alongside sustained thought leadership in private credit. Given the strength of its brand and bench, it will doubtless win share. Yet the more it succeeds here, the more vulnerable it becomes to US profit differentials and the inherent portability of sponsor-led client relationships — which, in turn, raises the headhunter temperature on its best rainmakers.

Why this matters: if the more-than-decade-long private capital dynamo keeps firing, Slaughters’ growing proximity to sponsor work — and the portability that comes with it — risks eroding the cultural moat that has long protected English Big Law’s only remaining “true partnership” (non-LLP) from lateral raids.

◆ **Sidley’s enduring magnetic attraction to Latham laterals**

In an ongoing rolling raid, this edition sees two more laterals depart Latham & Watkins for Sidley Austin — taking the tally to a round dozen finance and capital markets defections in 18 months. The five acts run as follows: **Act I** (Aug ’24) a five-partner sponsor-side leveraged finance strike led by Latham’s former London Managing Partner and its one-time London finance Chair; **Act II** (Oct ’24) a US high-yield/capital-markets duo; **Act III** (Dec ’24) a late add to round out the original finance cohort; **Act IV** (March/April ’25) two additional capital-markets laterals; and **Act V** (early ’26) — a real-estate-finance and equity capital markets duo — to complete the dozen (for now).



Other Fun Facts January – February 2026

- **26%** of moves this edition were female (**30**).
- **10** firms hired from in-house or business: **Baker McKenzie** (from Google), **Bird & Bird** (from PRS for Music), **Burges Salmon** (from Dream Games), **Euclid Law** (from Sainsburys), **Marks & Clerk** (from UBS), **Osborne Clarke** (from AB InBev), **Pinsent Masons** (from Close Brothers and Korn Ferry), **Shoosmiths** (from Goldman Sachs), **Willkie** (from the Competition Appeal Tribunal) and **WilmerHale** (from UnitedHealth).
- **28%** of all moves (**32**) were moves from non-partnership roles (either moves from in-house or non-partners elevated to partnership upon moving from another law firm).

[SCROLL BELOW FOR OUR FULL JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2026 REPORT](#)

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss this article or any other aspect of the market in more depth.

Scott Gibson, Director scott.gibson@edwardsgibson.com or +44 (0)7788 454 080

Sloane Poulton, Director sloane.poulton@edwardsgibson.com or +44 (0)7967 603 402

Please click [here](#) to understand our methodology for compiling Partner Moves

◆ **Addleshaw Goddard**

A trio of laterals for the international firm which adds: planning specialist **Hannah Quarterman** from Hogan Lovells, where she was head of planning; banking and finance lawyer **Will Turner** from Dentons; and non-contentious construction specialist **John Woolley** from Pinsent Masons. Quarterman focuses on mixed use regeneration projects covering compulsory purchase orders, heritage issues and community infrastructure. Turner advises on debt finance matters including general corporate lending, private credit and margin style lending. Woolley handles construction projects with a heavy focus on the energy and infrastructure markets.

◆ **Akin**

A brace of laterals for the Texan born outfit which adds: finance specialist **Adrian Chiodo** from Covington & Burling, where he was head of European leveraged finance; and US qualified corporate tax lawyer **Sam Riesenber**g from Mayer Brown. Chiodo, who makes his [third lateral move in five years](#), advises on leveraged finance, private credit, U.S. and European term loan B, general banking and corporate financings. Riesenber counsels fund sponsors, sovereign wealth and pension funds, institutional investors and family offices on international tax matters, spanning private credit, private equity, M&A, fund formation, infrastructure funds, investment structuring and the tax aspects of asset-management operations.

◆ **Ashfords**

The Exeter headquartered firm welcomes immigration lateral **Ben Xu** from Laytons ETL. Xu focuses on business immigration across the technology, life sciences, financial services, healthcare and accountancy sectors.

◆ **Baker McKenzie**

Prodigal daughter! Disputes lawyer **Sarah West** returns to the firm at which she trained after a near three-year in-house stint at Google where

she was a senior counsel. West, who joins the dispute resolution team, will cover technology disputes, investigations, compliance and ethics advice.

◆ **Bird & Bird**

Two new faces for the technology focused firm which welcomes: media and telecoms specialist **Gordon Moir** from TMT boutique Wiggin, where he was head of telecommunications; and in-house competition litigation lawyer **Emma Radcliffe** from PRS for Music. Moir handles telecoms, regulatory, antitrust and strategic advisory work. Radcliffe, who prior to joining PRS for Music was a partner at Macfarlanes, covers antitrust litigation with particular expertise in defending collective actions and other class actions.

◆ **Bishop & Sewell**

The London firm hires corporate lawyer **Alex O’Leary** from JMW Solicitors. O’Leary focuses on M&A, investment rounds, private equity exits, JV arrangements, EMI and general commercial advice.

◆ **Blake Morgan**

Three hires for the national firm which adds: a two-partner team from Laytons ETL comprising corporate lawyer **Joan Yu**, and commercial property specialist **Scott Hilton**; and private client lawyer **Daniel Church** from VWV. Yu, who was head of corporate at her former firm, advises on M&A, corporate finance, venture capital and equity capital markets. Hilton covers real estate investment, development and leasing. Church handles wills, powers of attorney, tax planning and estate administration.

◆ **Brabners**

The Liverpool headquartered national firm makes its City debut with two hires - corporate lateral **Stuart Hatcher** from Forsters; and litigation lawyer **Russell Strong** from alternative law firm,

gunnercooke. Hatcher primarily advises entrepreneurs and high net worth individuals on private company M&A and investments. Strong handles commercial disputes and enforcement.

✦ **Browne Jacobson**

A brace of laterals for the national firm which welcomes: data and privacy specialist **Phil James** from Eversheds Sutherland; and direct real estate lateral **Christian Major** from K&L Gates. James, who joins as UK head of data, privacy and cybersecurity, advises on data privacy, cyber security & information rights. Major counsels investors, developers and corporate occupiers on acquisitions, disposals, development, leasing and asset management.

✦ **Burges Salmon**

In-house corporate technology lawyer **James Maynard** makes the switch to the Bristol-headquartered outfit from Dream Games, where he was general counsel. Maynard will focus on M&A and venture fundraising.

✦ **Cahill**

After suffering a series of [high-profile defections to rivals](#), the elite New Yorker begins to re-stock its ranks with finance laterals **Jeremy Duffy** and **Lisa Seifman** from White & Case. Duffy, who was head of EMEA bank lending at his former firm, handles cross-border financings with a focus on multi-jurisdictional leveraged buyouts and senior and subordinated finance arrangements. Seifman advises on real estate financings, including real estate investment acquisitions and disposals, development financing, NPL portfolio purchases and "loan on loan" matters. The pair also have a niche in data centre deals.

✦ **Charles Russell Speechlys**

In a vertical hire, the City firm elevates direct real estate lawyer **Chiara Del Frate** from K&L Gates, where she was a special counsel across the firm's London and Milan offices. Del Frate, who is Italian

and UK qualified, advises on real estate investment deals.

✦ **Cohen & Gresser**

The New York boutique, best known in London for disputes and corporate crime, adds corporate lateral **Olga Ponomarenko** from Latham & Watkins. Ponomarenko counsels private equity sponsors, sovereign wealth funds, multinational corporates, and financial institutions on M&A, equity capital markets transactions, and corporate matters across the technology, energy, financial services, retail, and infrastructure sectors.

✦ **CMS**

The international firm strengthens its corporate crime bench with the addition of **Carl Newman** from Withers, where he was head of white-collar defence and investigations. Newman focuses on financial crime and misconduct, acting for regulated entities and individuals.

✦ **Curtis**

Corporate tax veteran **Vimal Tilakapala** arrives at the New York firm from A&O Shearman - where he was most recently a consultant, having stood down from the partnership at legacy Allen & Overy in 2022. Tilakapala, who was one-time head of tax at Allen & Overy, has a focus on finance related tax including structured financing, regulatory capital, securitisation and the taxation of financial instruments; with a sub-niche in tax disputes.

✦ **DLA Piper**

Intellectual property litigator **Calum Smyth** defects to the global firm from TMT boutique Wiggin. Smyth primarily handles contentious matters with a particular focus on patent litigation and copyright and software disputes.

✦ **Doyle Clayton**

The employment boutique welcomes financial services regulatory lawyer **Benedicte Prowne**

from Osborne Clarke as its head of regulatory. Perowne advises on both contentious and non-contentious matters ranging from compliance and governance arrangements to enforcement actions.

✦ **Druces**

Technology and IP lawyer **Daniel Lloyd** defects to the London firm from TLT. Lloyd's practice covers commercial contracts, digital content, intellectual property rights, consumer law and telecoms regulation.

✦ **Duane Morris**

The US firm elevates international arbitration lawyer **Nahi El Hachem** from Willkie, where he was a senior associate. El Hachem handles investment and commercial arbitrations across the construction, energy, oil & gas and financial services sectors with a particular focus on disputes arising out of M&A transactions.

✦ **Euclid Law**

One in, one out! Sparking a chain reaction of competition moves this edition, the antitrust boutique nabs in-house lawyer **Amy McMeekin** from Sainsburys, while simultaneously losing a competition lateral to Van Bael & Bellis (see below). McMeekin, who was head of competition and consumer law at Sainsburys and has a particular angle in the retail sector, has experience of abuse of dominance, merger control and state aid.

✦ **Fieldfisher**

In a vertical hire, the European firm welcomes data specialist **Chris Cartmell** from PwC, where he was a director and co-head of the data protection strategy, law and compliance practice. Cartmell advises on cyber, data and digital regulations.

✦ **Fladgate**

Litigation lateral **Milan Kapadia** makes the move to the London firm from RWK Goodman, where he was head of London dispute resolution and

banking. Kapadia covers banking and finance litigation, restructuring and insolvency, civil fraud and general commercial disputes.

✦ **Fox & Partners**

The employment and partnership boutique hires disputes lateral **Nikki Edwards** from Howard Kennedy. Edwards advises on an eclectic range of contentious matters including shareholder disputes, director and boardroom conflicts, partnership issues and business fraud.

✦ **Freeths**

The Nottingham headquartered outfit adds corporate lawyer **Zum Mohammed** from listed firm Gateley, where she was head of London corporate. Mohammed handles M&A, joint ventures, corporate advisory matters and restructurings.

✦ **Gilson Gray**

Commercial litigation lawyer **Paul Madden** arrives at the recently launched London office of the Scottish firm from Cayman Islands firm Harneys. Madden covers funds disputes, alternative funds' solutions, securities litigation, shareholder disputes, and corporate insolvencies.

✦ **Goodwin**

European Patent Attorney **Colm Murphy** joins the Boston-spawned outfit from fellow US firm Cooley. Murphy advises on biochemical, pharmaceutical and medical-device patents across the full European patent spectrum.

✦ **HCR Law**

In a vertical hire, the national firm adds corporate lawyer **David Jahoda** from London firm Druces, where he was a senior counsel. Jahoda advises on M&A, equity capital markets and general corporate matters.

✓ **Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer**

Leveraged finance lawyer **Stuart Brinkworth** decamps to the newly merged transatlantic firm from Mayer Brown where, until September 2025, he was European head of leveraged finance. Brinkworth handles a variety of UK, European, and cross-border-leveraged finance transactions, including private equity-backed leveraged buy-outs, public bids, recapitalisations, rescue-style financings, and restructurings.

✓ **HFW**

The marine flavoured firm adds shipping finance lateral **Simon Petch** from Watson Farley & Williams and aviation litigation vertical **Guy Marrison** from Hogan Lovells, where he was a counsel. Petch advises banks, financiers, owners, operators, and maritime industry experts on debt, leasing, structured finance and corporate matters. Marrison specialises in aviation and aviation finance disputes, advising lessors, airlines, banks and funds.

✓ **Hill Dickinson**

Three laterals for the national firm which welcomes: finance lawyers **Joz Coetzer** from Fasken, and **Marc Naidoo** from Howard Kennedy; and IP and technology disputes lawyer **Chris Williams** from Clyde & Co. The finance pair launch Hill Dickinson's international finance offering, bringing expertise in banking, finance and emerging markets. Williams handles TMT and IP disputes including patents, copyright, trademarks and confidential information.

✓ **Hogan Lovells**

Following its recently announced tie-up with Cadwalader, the transatlantic firm adds two new faces: government contracts and procurement specialist **David Hansom** from Clyde & Co, where he headed the team; and energy and project finance vertical **Lisa Quelch** from Latham & Watkins, where she was an associate. Hansom advises on public procurement, subsidy control, and government contracting, with a focus on the

defence, energy transition, real estate, education and healthcare sectors. Quelch, who has an emerging markets (in particular Africa) focus, handles infrastructure and project financings, prepayments, sponsor-covered loans, corporate financings and structured debt.

✓ **Hugh James**

Commercial lawyer **Jonathan Askin** defects to the Welsh headquartered firm from Blake Morgan. Askin covers commercial arrangements, including supply chain and outsourcing contracts, data and AI governance, procurement and regulatory matters.

✓ **Humphries Kerstetter**

The City disputes boutique welcomes commercial litigation lateral **Matthew Scully** from Clifford Chance. Scully has an eclectic litigation practice encompassing banking, corporate, antitrust and fraud disputes.

✓ **Irwin Mitchell**

Double vertical hires for the national firm which elevates a brace of directors from Lawrence Stephens: regulatory specialist **Ricardo Geada** who was head of regulatory solutions at his former firm; and litigation lawyer **Asim Arshad**. Geada handles compliance, investigations and market access, with a particular angle on the legal cannabis sector. Arshad advises on commercial disputes, civil fraud and regulatory issues, particularly around blockchain and crypto assets.

✓ **Katten**

Restructuring lateral **James Davison** defects to the Chicago headquartered firm from DLA Piper. Davison's practice covers debtor and creditor side mandates advising on accelerated M&A, capital structure resets, workouts and contingency planning.

✓ **Kennedys**

The insurance flavoured firm elevates disputes lawyer **Samson Spanier** from Norton Rose

Fulbright, where he was a counsel. Spanier, who is qualified as a barrister, advises on commercial litigation and arbitration matters.

◆ **Kingsley Napley**

Two disputes hires for the London firm which adds: lateral **Tim Lowles**, from alternative law firm Level; and vertical **Romilly Holland** from McDermott Will & Schulte, where she was a counsel. Lowles covers commercial litigation with a particular emphasis on sport, contentious media, reputation management and the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights. Holland focuses on international arbitration handling commercial and investment disputes with an angle in the energy, telecoms and hospitality sectors.

◆ **Latham & Watkins**

The global leviathan poaches a three-partner finance team from A&O Shearman comprising: real estate finance duo **David Oppenheimer** (who was global head of real estate finance at his previous firm), and **David Varne**; and structured finance lateral **Lucy Oddy**, who returns to the firm she left a decade ago and where she was previously a partner. Oppenheimer and Varne advise lenders, private equity funds and other investors on intercreditor arrangements, loan portfolio sales and cross-border property acquisitions. Oddy handles a broad range of structured debt and asset-backed financing transactions, including CMBS, RMBS, CLOs, covered bonds and asset portfolio sales and financings.

◆ **Macfarlanes**

Tax litigator **Kate Ison** makes the switch to the elite City firm from BCLP. Ison covers both direct and indirect tax encompassing: corporate tax risk management, internal investigations, HMRC civil enquiries and criminal investigations.

◆ **Marks & Clerk**

After leaving UBS where she was “head of legal digital information and data” in March last year, commercial and tech lawyer **Fiona Phillips** re-emerges at the patent and trademark firm. Phillips advises on AI governance and regulation, AI vendor contracts, cyber-incident response and data-protection compliance.

◆ **Mayer Brown**

A two-partner real estate team - comprising corporate real estate specialist **Mark Rajbenbach** and direct real estate lawyer **Victoria Butcher** - decamp to the Chicago spawned firm from Taylor Wessing, following its recently announced tie up with Winston Strawn. The duo handle investment sales and purchases and leases, structured acquisitions and disposals, real estate joint ventures, and corporate real estate transactions, bringing particular expertise in the hotels, leisure and logistics sectors.

◆ **McDermott Will & Schulte**

Antitrust veteran **Kristina Nordlander** re-emerges at the US firm after standing down from the partnership at A&O Shearman in December 2024. Nordlander, who will split her time between the London and Brussels office, handles EU competition law matters, including antitrust investigations, merger control, regulatory challenges, and litigation before the European Commission and the EU courts.

◆ **Michelman Robinson**

Following its [London debut last year](#), the Los Angeles headquartered firm continues its City build-out with two disputes hires (one lateral and one vertical) in the form of: **Sukhi Kaler** from CMS and **Charalampos (Harry) Dimoulis** from Linklaters, where he was a managing associate. Kaler’s practice covers the entire litigation process, from pre-action advice to trial and appeals across the mining, aviation, banking and life sciences sectors. Dimoulis, who is both UK and Hong Kong SAR qualified, handles cross-

border disputes, collective actions, and competition litigation.

✦ **Morgan Lewis**

The US firm bolsters its employment offering with the addition of **Katherine (Kat) Gibson** from DLA Piper. Gibson advises domestic and international employers on employment litigation, transactional support, and business protection, but also has a sub-niche in contentious and non-contentious data privacy law.

✦ **Morrison Foerster**

In a vertical hire, the West Coast firm elevates corporate tax lawyer **Freddie Schwier** from Davis Polk, where he was a counsel. Schwier handles tax matters on M&A, private equity, capital markets, restructuring, and finance transactions, alongside general tax advisory mandates.

✦ **Norton Rose Fulbright**

A trio of laterals for the global Verein which welcomes: insurance disputes specialist **James Cooper** from Clyde & Co, where he was chair of global insurance; finance lawyer **Samir Bensaker** from the London office of Paris headquartered Gide; and restructuring lateral **James Moore** from DWF in Leeds. Cooper, who is English and Hong Kong qualified, advises insurers and directors and officers on global D&O and financial institutions claims. Bensaker, who is dual English and French qualified, handles securitisation and related structured finance transactions, primarily in connection with the French market. Moore counsels insolvency practitioners, banks, distressed companies, directors, investors, corporate debtors and creditors on restructuring matters.

✦ **Osborne Clarke**

Two hires for the Bristol headquartered firm which adds: corporate lateral **Sunjay Malhotra** from Pinsent Masons, where he was co-head of corporate finance; and in-house competition lawyer **Miguel Perez Guerra** from AB InBev,

where he was a director and head of antitrust, IP and commercial. Malhotra advises on equity capital markets transactions and venture capital financings with a particular focus on the life sciences and technology sectors. Perez Guerra, who will split his time between Osborne Clarke's London and Brussels offices, will cover antitrust matters across the digital markets, technology and retail sectors.

✦ **Paul Hastings**

Four hires (three laterals and one vertical) as the Los Angeles spawned firm welcomes: corporate M&A specialist **Mark Zerdin** from Slaughter and May, where he was co-head of sports and head of Latin America; corporate tax lawyer **Alicia Osei** from Macfarlanes; corporate venture capital specialist **Ferish Patel** from Cooley (Singapore); and private funds vertical **David Richardson** from Simpson Thacher, where he was an associate. Zerdin, who has a particular niche acting for sports teams and sporting regulatory bodies, covers public and private M&A, private equity investments and joint ventures; in a coup for Paul Hastings, Zerdin's move is a rare example of a (seemingly prime) lateral departure from Slaughter and May. Osei handles private funds and private capital tax, with a focus on fund formations, secondaries, continuation funds and carried interest structures. New York qualified Patel, one of Cooley Singapore's founding partners, counsels fast-growth companies, financial sponsors and institutional investors on minority and control investments, joint ventures, buyouts, and exits. Richardson advises sponsor side clients on the structuring, establishment and operation of private investment funds in the credit, private equity, infrastructure and real assets space.

✦ **Paul Weiss**

Private equity infrastructure specialist **Paul Foote** makes the switch from fellow Wall Street outfit Simpson Thacher. Foote, who joins his new home as head of European infrastructure M&A, advises

private equity and infrastructure clients on domestic and cross-border deals, including acquisitions, disposals, joint ventures, restructurings, leveraged buyouts and take-privates.

◆ **Pinsent Masons**

A quintet of hires for the international firm which adds: pensions specialist **Susie Daykin** from Travers Smith; antitrust lateral **Alex Stratakis** from Van Bael & Bellis, where he was head of UK competition; in-house incentives lawyer **Ian Shaw** from Korn Ferry; in-house disputes lawyer **Jessica Wicker** from Close Brothers Group, where she was head of legal for litigation; and international arbitration vertical **Cem Kalelioğlu** from WilmerHale, where he was a counsel. Daykin handles all aspects of pension law, with a particular focus on trustee advisory and pensions risk transfer matters; her hire follows that of fellow Travers Smith pensions lateral Dan Naylor, [whose move was announced in September 2025](#). Stratakis advises on merger control and FDI screenings, together with cartel defence and distribution and licensing. Shaw, a former partner at Orrick in London, advises corporates on the design, implementation and operation of executive and employee share-based incentive plans. Wicker, who returns to the firm where she qualified, will advise corporates and financial services institutions on contentious and strategic litigation matters. **Kalelioğlu**, who is triple-qualified in England, Ireland and Turkey, covers investor-state and commercial arbitrations, across the energy, construction, aerospace, manufacturing and agriculture sectors.

◆ **Pogust Goodhead**

Continuing to bolster its bench on the funded class-action Mariana Dam trial, the controversial litigation flavoured firm nabs disputes lateral **Gemma Anderson** from Quinn Emanuel. Anderson reunites with her former Morrison & Foerster colleague Jonathan Wheeler, [who joined Pogust Goodhead in November](#), to assist on the

second stage of the largest group action claim ever brought before an English court.

◆ **Proskauer**

Funds finance lateral **Mei Mei Wong** defects to the New York firm from DLA Piper. Wong's practice covers NAV facilities, capital call facilities, GP financings, preferred equity structures and private credit financings.

◆ **Quinn Emanuel**

The US disputes powerhouse strengthens its offering with the addition of litigation specialist **William Charles** from Milbank. Charles handles commercial dispute resolution and regulatory (and internal) investigations, particularly in the financial services sector.

◆ **Reed Smith**

Corporate and equity capital markets lawyer **David (Davey) Brennan** defects to the US firm from Gowling WLG, where he was co-chair of global tech. Brennan advises on equity capital markets and private/public M&A, acting on a broad range of fundraising matters on both issuer and bank side, including IPOs, secondaries, buyouts, and takeover code matters.

◆ **Ropes & Gray**

In a very rare vertical hire for the all-equity partnership, corporate private equity lawyer **Lavinia Ralli** is elevated by the Boston born firm from Clifford Chance where she was a counsel. Ralli, who prior to her short stint at Clifford Chance was a senior lawyer at Ropes & Gray client Partners Group, covers portfolio investments across asset classes and jurisdictions, with a focus on sponsor-side transactions, liquidity solutions and asset management mandates.

✦ **Seladore Legal**

In a vertical hire, the London headquartered litigation boutique elevates international arbitration lawyer **Peter Edworthy** from Milbank, where he was a senior associate. Edworthy focuses on international arbitration and related High Court litigation with a particular focus on the energy, infrastructure, construction, and technology sectors.

✦ **Shoosmiths**

A brace of hires for the national firm which bags: finance lateral **John Dawson** from CMS; and energy and infrastructure finance lawyer **Graham Knight** - who, most recently, was contracting in the loan negotiation group at Goldman Sachs. Dawson advises borrowers, lenders and investors on the full spectrum of financings in the private debt markets including acquisition financings, fund financings and restructurings. Knight handles the negotiation and execution of financings for international and domestic energy and infrastructure projects.

✦ **Sidley Austin**

Continuing its year-and-a-half long rolling raid on Latham & Watkins, the Chicago headquartered outfit chalks up its eleventh and twelfth lateral hires from its Los-Angeles rival in the form of real estate finance specialist **Jeremy Trinder** and equity capital markets lawyer **James Inness**. Trinder, who was formerly co-chair of global real estate at Latham & Watkins, handles real estate investment and financing transactions. Inness, who was co-head of equity capital markets at Latham & Watkins, counsels issuers, underwriters and major shareholders on primary and secondary equity capital markets transactions.

✦ **Simmons & Simmons**

A trio of fresh faces for the international firm which adds: corporate lawyer **Mark Chivers** from DLA Piper; construction disputes specialist **Alison ('Ali') Fagan**, also from DLA Piper; and tax

disputes lawyer **Henry Bennett-Gough** from PwC, where he was a director. Chivers focuses on corporate M&A and is best known as a public company takeover specialist. Fagan, who relocates from DLA Piper's Manchester office, advises procuring authorities, private sector partners, secondary market investors, project funders and delivery contractors on infrastructure and PFI disputes. Bennett-Gough, who is a Barrister, handles a wide range of contentious tax matters from investigation through to litigation in courts and tribunals.

✦ **Skadden**

A two-partner team for the Wall Street firm which snaps up international arbitration and public international law duo **Sophie Lamb KC** and **Samuel Pape** from Latham & Watkins, where Lamb was global co-chair of international arbitration. The pair cover international arbitration, public international law and commercial litigation acting for corporates, financial institutions and sovereign entities across a range of sectors including: energy, mining, banking, technology, manufacturing and aviation.

✦ **Squire Patton Boggs**

New York qualified finance and debt capital markets lateral **William Liu** defects to the international verein from K&L Gates. Liu has a particular focus on high-yield bond offerings and leveraged loan transactions; his hire follows that of Heather Rees, who made the switch from K&L Gates [last November](#).

✦ **Stephenson Harwood**

Two hires (one lateral and one vertical) for the international firm which welcomes: private client specialist **Emma Jordan** from Taylor Wessing, where she was head of contentious trusts; and non-contentious construction vertical **Matt Pearson** from Ashurst. Jordan, who is qualified as an English Barrister and a Jersey Advocate, counsels trustees and high net worths on civil

fraud, asset-tracing and recovery within the context of offshore trusts and structures. Pearson handles non-contentious real estate construction encompassing commercial, mixed-use, high-end residential, BTR and student accommodation schemes.

◆ **Sullivan & Cromwell**

In a striking continuation of what, for the historically reticent Wall Street outfit, amounts to an unprecedented London hiring surge, Sullivan & Cromwell recruits two separate two-partner teams comprising: finance specialist **Patrick Bright** and restructuring lawyer **Will Needham** from Paul Hastings, where Bright was chair of high-yield financing and Needham was chair of European financial restructuring; and finance duo **Alastair McVeigh** and **Chris McLaughlin** from Weil. New York qualified Bright counsels investment banks, sponsors, corporates and bond investors, focusing on high-yield offerings, leveraged and acquisition finance. Needham handles financial restructurings, distressed debt, capital solutions, bespoke financings and alternative investment matters across Europe. McVeigh and McLaughlin act for financial institutions, direct lenders, private equity sponsors, and corporates on a wide range of financing matters, including cross-border leveraged financings, high-yield financings, corporate lending, convertible instruments, asset-backed financings, and restructurings. All four partners will have management responsibility at their new home with Bright expected to lead the high-yield financing team; Needham projected to co-head EU restructuring and special situations; McVeigh slated to head the European private credit offering and McLaughlin set to lead the leveraged finance practice. The quartet are all Weil *alumni* and will reunite with their former Weil London managing partner Mike Francies.

◆ **Taylor Wessing**

In its first London hire since its announced transatlantic merger with Winston & Strawn, the technology flavoured outfit reinforces its IP bench with **Jeremy Drew** from RPC, where he was a one-time board member, and head of the commercial division. Drew, who has a particular angle in sport and consumer brands, advises on contentious and non-contentious IP including trademark litigation, copyright, licensing, sponsorship and regulatory matters.

◆ **Van Bael & Bellis**

One-in one-out for the Brussels headquartered firm as it loses its head of UK competition to Pinsent Masons (see above) but replenishes its stock with the addition of competition specialist **Becket McGrath** from London antitrust boutique Euclid Law. McGrath, who replaces Alex Stratakis as head of UK competition, advises corporates on behavioural investigations, distribution, e-commerce and merger control.

◆ **Wedlake Bell**

Insolvency and restructuring lawyer **Finella Fogarty** joins the City firm from RPC. Fogarty advises insolvency practitioners, banks, corporates and individuals on restructuring and turnaround situations, including all forms of formal insolvency covering both contentious and non-contentious matters.

◆ **Weightmans**

The insurance flavoured national firm welcomes commercial technology lawyer **Rehman (Rem) Noormohamed** from Fieldfisher. Noormohamed, who is also qualified as an electronic and communications engineer, advises on commercial, AI/technology, telecoms, data and IP matters.

✦ **White & Case**

In a vertical hire, the New York firm elevates funds lawyer **Chris Jeanes** from Akin, where he was a counsel. Jeanes advises private equity firms, sovereign wealth funds and other investors on a variety of fund raisings and secondary transactions, including GP-led continuation vehicles and the acquisition and sale of large portfolios of fund interests.

✦ **Wikborg Rein**

Velkomst! Dry shipping specialist **Fanos Theophani** defects to the Norwegian headquartered outfit from marine boutique Preston Turnbull. Theophani handles all aspects of dry shipping, P&I and defence, as well as international trade and commercial disputes.

✦ **Willkie**

Two additions for the US firm which adds restructuring lateral **Marc Hecht** from fellow New Yorker Simpson Thacher; and competition lawyer **Greg Olsen**, where he was an ordinary member of the Competition Appeal Tribunal. Hecht advises sponsors, portfolio companies, capital and liquidity solution providers, par lenders and secondary investors on situations involving financial stress, restructuring and insolvency. Olsen, who was one time head of antitrust at Clifford Chance, handles merger control, antitrust investigations, cartels and abuse of dominance matters.

✦ **WilmerHale**

The regulatory flavoured US firm welcomes in-house lawyer **Rupert Bondy** from UnitedHealth Group, where he was, most recently, senior counsel and executive vice president for governance, compliance, and security. Bondy, who relocates from the US, and joins as the co-chair of crisis management and strategic response, is set to advise the firm's clients through high-stakes crises and investigations.

✦ **Winckworth Sherwood**

Four hires for the London firm which welcomes: private client lateral **Arcangelo D'Apolito** from Italian firm Macchi di Cellere Gangemi; property litigation lawyer **Tim Foley** from Freeths; real estate lateral **Shazia Bashir** from TLT; and private client vertical **Charlie Hancock** from Forsters, where he was a senior associate. D'Apolito, who is dual English and Italian qualified, advises on international tax, trusts and wealth structuring for HNWIs, family offices and corporate clients, with a particular angle in UK-Italian tax matters. Foley handles commercial landlord and tenant disputes, dilapidations, 1954 Act renewals, freehold covenants and easements. Bashir focuses on social housing including mixed-use developments, regeneration partnerships, funding arrangements, and stock transfers. Hancock covers all aspects of private client law, including tax, trusts and succession planning.

[Edwards Gibson Partner Round-Up – click here to read our methodology](#)



Year End Big Law Tie Ups – and the standout is Hogan Lovells Cadwalader



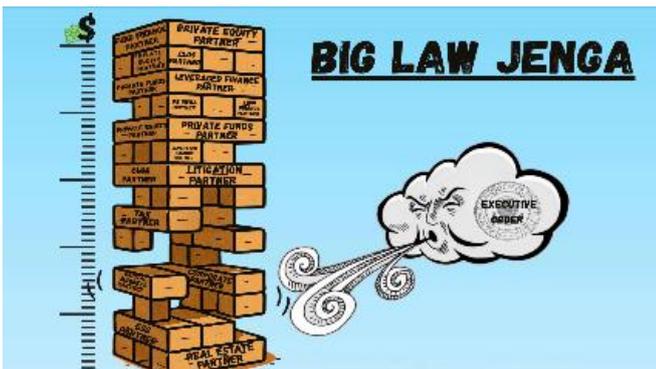
What's behind the escalating three-year bull run in Big Law Partner Hires in London and is it sustainable?



Two Big Law Summer Weddings ... and an Anniversary



"To: Cc or not Cc" – Clifford Chance's subversive new branding



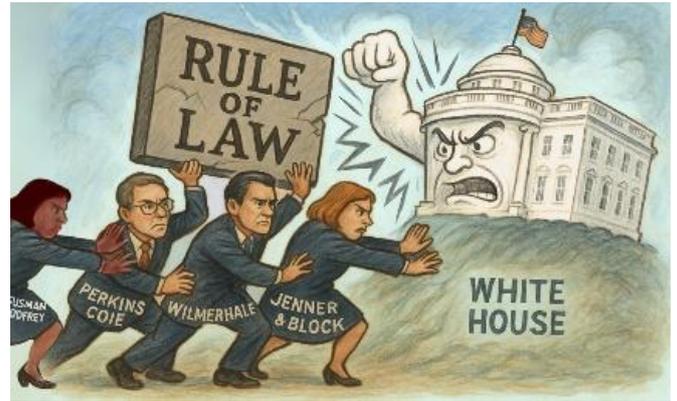
Big Law Jenga: How Private Capital Stars Are Marking Elite Firms Unstable



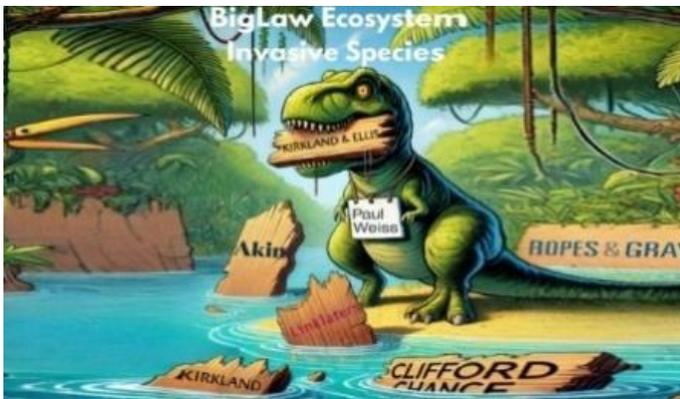
No Accounting for the Big Four in Big Law



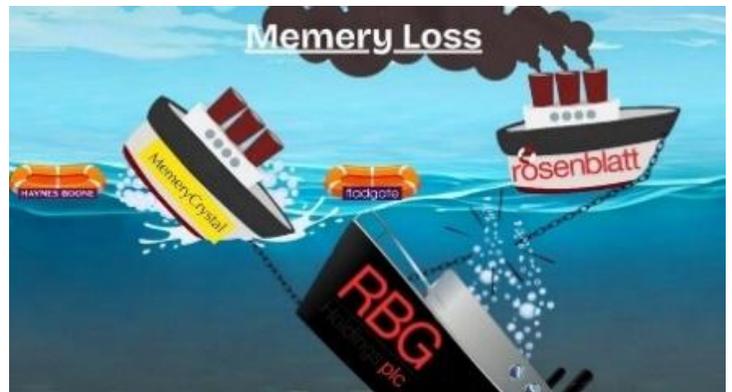
◆ [Freshfields' Non-Share Home Turf Handicap](#)



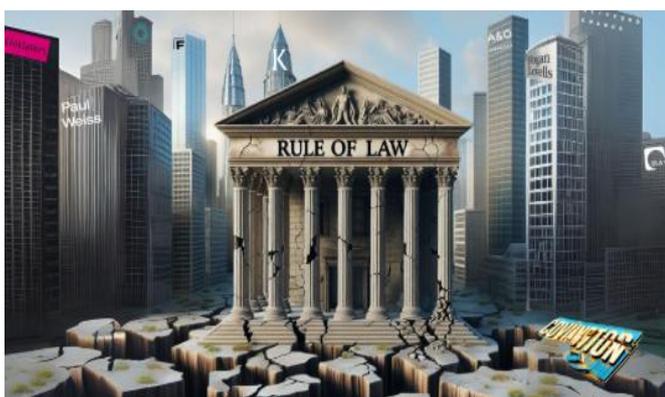
◆ [Big Law's Brave "Few"](#)



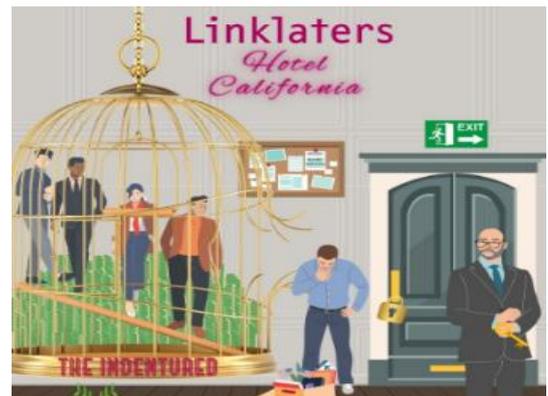
◆ [Paul Weiss – The Invasive Species!](#)



◆ ["Memery Loss" London Law Firm Memery Crystal Sinks](#)



◆ [The financial success of Big Law is predicated entirely on the Rule of Law](#)



◆ [Linklaters – Welcome to the "Hotel California" of Big Law](#)



✔ [Paul Weiss – Blackjack !](#)



✔ [Parallels in Peril](#)



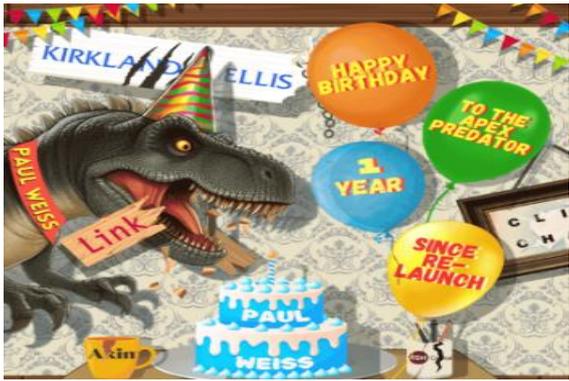
✔ [Beware the £1,000 fish, and the true meaning of MIPIM](#)



✔ [MIPIM 2025 Doppelgänger Style!](#)



✔ [Breaking The Circle – Freshfields Pay Bonanza](#)



✔ [Paul Weiss - Happy Birthday to BigLaw's Apex Predator](#)



✦ [The Pecking Order at MIPIM](#)



✦ [A lawyer's progress to partnership...it's closing](#)

A&O SHEARMAN & STERLING



✦ [So, it's A&O Shearman!](#)



✦ [And you thought \\$20 million was a lot for a lawyer...](#)



✦ [Kirkland & Ellis and Paul Weiss Exchange Blows](#)

[To read more Edwards Gibson articles click here](#)

Related links:

- ✔ [Previous editions of Partner Moves in London](#)
- ✔ [Quantifying your following and writing an effective business plan](#)
- ✔ [Specimen partner business plan template](#)
- ✔ [The Partnership Track and Moving for Immediate Partnership](#)
- ✔ [Legal directory rankings and their effect on lawyer recruitment](#)
- ✔ [Restrictive Covenants and Moving on as a Partner](#)

The Specialist Partner Team



Scott Gibson
Director
scott.gibson@edwardsgibson.com
+44 (0) 7788 454080



Sloane Poulton
Director
sloane.poulton@edwardsgibson.com
+44 (0) 7967 603402

At Edwards Gibson the specialist partner team provides:

- ✔ Confidential partner representation and consultation
- ✔ A search service flexible to our client's requirements
- ✔ Advice on team moves

Based in the heart of the City of London, Edwards Gibson is a dedicated legal recruitment consultancy specialising in private practice partner hires, team moves and in-house lawyer recruitment. We pride ourselves on the depth and clarity of information we provide and have an unrivalled knowledge of the markets in which we work.

Please contact us on +44 (0) 20 7153 4903

REPRESENTATION – SEARCH – TEAM MOVES

www.edwardsgibson.com