

LAW WEEK COLORADO

WilmerHale's Corporate Practice 'Out in Front'

Chalyse Robinson's move to WilmerHale just the beginning of a big year

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When Chalyse Robinson joined Keith Trammell at WilmerHale in January 2019, it was more of a reunion for their clients than for either of the attorneys.

The two had worked together at Hogan Lovells in Denver between 2004 and September 2017, when Trammell moved to WilmerHale. At the time, WilmerHale hadn't been in Denver long and was building out its corporate practice. The two attorneys continued to work together across firms, but they heard from their clients that there were some inefficiencies. "We'd really love for you to be working together again," Trammell said clients would tell him. So Robinson joined Trammell — and some of their former team members — at WilmerHale.

By the numbers, the reunion seemed to be a smart move: their corporate practice closed 39 deals worth \$6 billion. There can be plenty of other things to read into those numbers as well — Trammell said they represent the type of business in the Denver market as well as the firm's approach to serving both local and national clients.

That corporate practice includes Trammell and Robinson — who are in complementary practices with Trammell working in acquisitions and private equity and Robinson working in debt finance — as well as two of counsel and four associates. Bringing those complementary practices together was one of the efficiencies their clients were looking for. Robinson said that now that they are working with the same team members again, they can often be ahead of some of the work that comes up in their deals. For instance, one client was working on a buyout and Trammell suggested they bring in Robinson to involve the company's lender. The deal, which didn't have any debt elements at its start, turned into a debt deal.

That complementary focus extends beyond just the corporate group. Trammell said WilmerHale's Denver office is set up with partners in complementary practices — partners aren't competing with each other but instead are each bringing something to the table for clients, he



Keith Trammell (left) and Chalyse Robinson, who lead WilmerHale's corporate practice in Denver, closed 39 deals in 2019 valued at approximately \$6 billion. / LAW WEEK, TONY FLESOR

said. The result of that is an entrepreneurial style of practice for Trammell and Robinson. He said they're now "out in front" at the firm in terms of their visibility in the market.

"The draw [to WilmerHale] was the opportunity to start something fresh and really take a risk and have something that's really ours that we built," Robinson said of her transition to WilmerHale. She said that extends to hiring the corporate practice team and building the culture within it. That group currently includes themselves, two of counsel and four associates. They said they're open to growth in private equity, but they're not interested in growing the practice just for growth. They have a mindset that bigger isn't better, "better is better," Trammell said.

And their leadership in the Denver office extends to WilmerHale's other offices as well.

Trammell said the pair look to reach local companies as well as national ones. It just happens that much of that can be done from Denver.

Trammell said Denver has been undergoing revolutionary changes as national companies relocate to the city. The small-town feel and Western lifestyle are still here, but the business landscape has been shifting as other companies relocate here.

That has affected the type of work — particularly in the M&A space — available to attorneys as well. He said he believes many firms are being put in a position of making a choice of having to compete with "major-market law firms" for the high value national work or to lower their rates and cater to local clients. He said he believes it's possible to do both, though.

"Companies are feeling the heat here in

Denver to continue to perform and defend their place in the market and really create value for all of their stakeholders. And it's exciting but yet stressful, and we feel that excitement and that stress. We're in the same place," Trammell said. "When you look at 39 deals over the year, touching resort, hospitality, tech, tech-enabled services, healthcare, life sciences, financial services, energy, that's Denver. ... We are as reflective of the Denver business community as our clients are in that regard." •

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