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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

Why has there been so little discussion about how merger mania is affecting the careers of individual lawyers? The June article on mid-sized firms (“Mid-size firms: Forced to fight for their place in the market”) focused mainly on firm and market issues, but did not delve deeply into how lawyers themselves are affected.

Only a few years ago, Chicago lawyers could practice at a firm of the size they found most appealing and most favorable for their clients. However, the virtual disappearance of mid-sized firms from Chicago leaves some lawyers feeling disenfranchised.

Many outstanding lawyers practice in mid-sized firms because such firms offer a certain balance between available support resources, entrepreneurialism, and camaraderie. After mergers, they find themselves swept up into dramatically different environments that some find less rewarding and more restrictive. Often, conflict issues arise that fundamentally change attorneys’ relationships

with their key clients. This can have serious effects on a career.

Fortunately for those who prefer to practice at mid-sized firms, there are still a few that don’t plan to be absorbed into mega-firms. Firms that have made the mid-size model work are prospering in the eye of the merger-mania tornado. Increasing numbers of excellent lawyers are considering their options and ultimately will find haven at these firms.

This is an ideal situation for mid-sized firms like ours because it allows them to recruit exceptional attorneys with strong practices who are predisposed to flourish in the culture of a mid-sized firm. Certainly, many attorneys will find practicing within a newly merged entity to their liking. But we are enthusiastic about the opportunities that the mega-merger trend has created for those of us who choose to remain independent.

Very truly yours,
Thomas M. Fahey
Managing Partner
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