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Butler Snow's chief on latest Nashville expansion: Firm isn't done yet

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For the second time in the past three years, **Butler Snow** has made a major play in Nashville's legal community.

This week, the Mississippi-based firm confirmed its second expansion wave, [adding 13 attorneys from Nashville litigation firm](#) Walker Tipps & Malone. It's a move that solidifies Butler Snow's position as the fifth-largest law firm in Nashville, now with 62 attorneys in its Nashville office.

"We want to be here in force, much like so many other businesses and law firms," Donald Clark Jr., Butler Snow's chairman, told me earlier this week. "As we build out our firm through the Southeast and other parts of the country, Nashville is a major opportunity."

Butler Snow first entered Nashville in fall 2011. Shortly after that the firm [pulled a coup in Nashville legal circles](#), bringing more than three-dozen attorneys over from Miller & Martin. The firm has 16 offices throughout the country, including another in London, and around 300 attorneys.

The latest expansion underscores Butler Snow's quick rise to legal powerhouse in Nashville. Currently, only four firms host a larger roster of attorneys in Music City: Bass Berry & Sims; Waller Lasden Dortch & [Davis](#); [Bradley Arant Boult Cummings](#); and Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz.

"We have grown, but that's not the end game for us," Clark added. "The goal is to certainly have significant size and bench strength to handle any matter. ... But the most important thing is to get really good lawyers. It's not how many you got. It's how good they are."

This week's deal is on par with its past move, Clark said. Though Butler Snow is adding fewer attorneys than the Miller & Martin case, he says the Walker Tipps & Malone team brings

extensive commercial litigation experience that will instantly boost that practice line for Butler Snow.

"As the economy begins to steadily increase, and it sure is in Nashville, it's inevitable there are going to be business disputes that sometimes end in litigation," Clark said. "This is a group of great lawyers who have been doing this for a long time. When the opportunity came along to get together for them to join the firm, we jumped at the opportunity."

One feature of Butler Snow is its use of alternative billing outside of the standard billable hours. Clark said Walker Tipps & Malone has experience handling commercial litigation matters with a similar alternative-fee structure.

[Robert Walker](#), a founder of Walker Tipps & Malone, said his firm – which originated out of Bass Berry & Sims – had long wanted to maintain its independent commercial litigation practice, despite several attempts by other firms in town to bring on board their attorneys.

That makes Walker Tipps & Malone's decision to join Butler Snow, a large firm in its own right, all the more interesting.

"The more we talked to them we decided it was going to be a great opportunity to have a broader platform ... to give us a broader base to deal with the complicated litigation we like," Walker said. "That, plus the culture [of Butler Snow], swung the deal for us."

On Butler Snow's culture, Walker described it as "collaborative and collegial."

"It creates the kind of teamwork we're used to doing with our small firm," Walker added. "In spite of the fact that as large as they are, it was the relationships each of the professionals have with each other. You have to have some bureaucracy [in a large firm], but it seemed that doesn't dominate the relationships."

As for future growth in Nashville, Butler Snow has already acquired 8,000 additional square feet of office space at downtown's The Pinnacle at Symphony Place.

"You will see us continue to grow more in Nashville," Clark said. "The interesting thing about Nashville is it's hard for me to see any negatives in Nashville. I'm amazed at the landscape and you see cranes and new buildings going up everywhere."

"Who doesn't want to be part of that" Clark added. "We certainly haven't experienced any negatives once we've been in Nashville. We've grown really rapidly and the legal scene has great attorneys across the city."

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