

COLUMBUS BUSINESS FIRST

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Buckingham Doolittle staff jumps to regional rival Dinsmore & Shohl

Business First of Columbus - by [Kevin Kemper](#)

One of the state's largest law firms will become one of the biggest in Columbus on July 1, after hiring away nearly the entire local office of a competing law firm.

Twenty-eight attorneys from Buckingham Doolittle & Burroughs LLP are joining the Columbus office of Dinsmore & Shohl LLP, taking 8 paralegals and 19 staff workers with them. With that move, the Dinsmore office will jump to 41 attorneys, making it the 10th-largest law office in the region, according to Columbus Business First research.

"We believe we will be able to draw on a broader array of resources," Thomas J. Bonasera, a Buckingham partner, said when asked why he and other Buckingham lawyers are moving en masse.

What the move will mean for Buckingham's future in Central Ohio is undetermined.

The local office of Akron-based Buckingham has enjoyed a reputation for its real estate and construction law and health and medicine practice groups. When its lawyers make the move this summer, they will complement Dinsmore's intellectual property, litigation and general corporate law practice groups, said Donald B. Leach Jr., a Buckingham partner.

Dinsmore's jump into prominence in Columbus legal circles will be a bit like a minnow swallowing a whale. The Columbus office has 14 lawyers and it doesn't rank among the 25 largest law firms in the region. That's a contrast from its profile in Cincinnati, where the hometown Dinsmore is the city's largest firm with 187 attorneys.

And while it's not uncommon for a handful of lawyers to routinely make lateral moves to other firms - four intellectual property attorneys from Calfee Halter & Griswold LLP last month moved to Hahn Loeser & Parks - an entire office secession is uncommon. At least in Central Ohio.

The last such notable move in Columbus occurred in 2003, when 79 attorneys and employees of Arter & Hadden LLP split from their firm's Columbus office to form Bailey Cavaleri LLC. Those attorneys made that move, however, because Arter & Hadden had shuttered its operations.

"We're very excited about the two teams working together to make one big team," said Leach, who once was managing partner of Buckingham's local office and will become Dinsmore's managing partner in Columbus.

Partner, office moves

Leach will succeed Kirk Wall, Dinsmore's current managing partner in the city. Bonasera will become a member of the firm's board of managers. Thomas Hess, Buckingham's managing partner in Columbus, will become a partner at Dinsmore.

"This is by no means a demotion of Tom Hess," Leach said. "Kirk Wall ... will continue to play a vital role."

All of the 12 equity partners moving from Buckingham will become partners at Dinsmore.

The two firms are still working out a possible relocation for the combined operation.

Buckingham's office is at 191 W. Nationwide Blvd. in the Arena District. Dinsmore's office is at 175 S. Third St.

Dinsmore and Buckingham were still working out details of the transition on June 11. It's possible, Leach said, that Dinsmore could take over Buckingham's office in the Arena District, or the attorneys from Buckingham would move. Alternatively, the firm could find a new, third location, he said.

"We are negotiating with them to make it an amicable separation," said Patrick J. Keating, Buckingham's president-elect. "It's a disappointment, but it's certainly their right to determine where they want to go."

When Buckingham loses its Columbus staff, it will employ about 145 attorneys in Akron, Canton, Cleveland Boca Raton and West Palm Beach, Fla.

The firm hasn't decided whether it will attempt to recreate a Columbus office, but Keating said the firm will continue to service Central Ohio clients. Any determination will be made after the lawyers conclude their negotiations, Keating said.

"We still think it's a good market," he said.

Keating and Leach and Bonasera declined to say how many clients, if any, would move to Dinsmore, and they wouldn't identify some of their customers.

For Dinsmore, this is its second acquisition of attorneys in as many months. The firm May 1 acquired Chernesky Heyman & Kress PLL, Dayton's ninth-largest firm. The combination of the firms' Dayton offices made Dinsmore the second-largest law company in that city.

With the addition of Buckingham's lawyers from Columbus, Dinsmore will grow to more than 375 lawyers at all of its offices. Dinsmore also counts operations in Pittsburgh; Lexington and Louisville, Ky.; and Charleston, Morgantown and Wheeling, W.Va.

"We think it's important to be strong in every market we're in," said George Vincent, Dinsmore's managing partner. When Dinsmore acquired Chernesky, all of Chernesky's clients came with it, Vincent said.

