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High-profile lawyers spin out of big firms, form new ones

Ex-Baker Donelson, Adams and Reese partners open offices

Birmingham Business Journal - by [Crystal Jarvis](#) Staff

Two new law firms – both spinoffs of top law firms in the Birmingham market – plan to focus on different litigation specialties.

Frohsin & Barger LLC, started by former **Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz PC** partners, will focus on white-collar criminal cases, especially those that involve fraud.

And RichardsonClement PC, which was founded by former **Adams and Reese LLP** lawyers, will help defend Fortune 500 companies and local businesses.

Founders of Frohsin & Barger, Henry I. Frohsin, James F. Barger and their associate J. Elliott Walthall, all worked on a high-profile litigation case known as the Axion Case while working at Baker Donelson. The case involved defense contracting company **Axion Corp.**, which was shut down by the government after its owner, Alex Latifi, was charged with export violations and federal fraud.

The trio defended Latifi, who was later deemed innocent and the government was ordered to pay \$364,000 in attorney fees – the first time in Alabama the government was ordered to pay a criminal defendant their attorney fees.

The firm, which officially opened on Nov. 1, plans to work on fraud cases on both ends of the spectrum, to defend and prosecute fraud cases, Frohsin said.

“It’s not a well-known type of law, but it’s something we’re seeking to make bigger to help stop that type of fraud,” Barger said.

And amid this financial crisis, fraudulent activity will likely increase as professionals have the opportunity to take advantage of the \$700 billion bailout funds now being doled out by the government to financial institutions and other public companies, Barger added.

“Unfortunately, we think there’s going to be more and more fraud as more taxpayer dollars are put into businesses,” he said. “There’s a lot of fraud going on out there and we want to put an end to it.”

Ralph Summerford, president of Birmingham-based Forensic/**Strategic Solutions PC**, an accounting firm that specializes in fraud examination, agrees that the possibilities of fraud are endless since rules about the bailout money are essentially being made up as they go along.

“They don’t have any real oversight of it,” he said. “That’s the problem.”

Forensic/Strategic has seen a slight uptick in their workload amid the economic downturn, but “it’s nothing like what we expect” in the future, Summerford said.

“There’s going to be a lot more investigation that goes on,” he said. “And we hope a lot more oversight (of companies).”

Frohsin & Barger has its temporary operations in the Wachovia Tower in downtown Birmingham but plans to move to its permanent location at 1 Highland Place on Highland Avenue in early December, Barger said.

The other new firm, RichardsonClement, was founded by Morris Wade Richardson, Neil Richard Clement, Charles T. Grimes and Todd M. Hige, who all worked in Adams and Reese’s Birmingham office. They hired David E. Malick, who focuses on intellectual property law and church law, as an associate.

The firm, which opened in late February on the U.S. 280 corridor at 200 Cahaba Park Circle, has a number of clients on its roster, Richardson said.

“For us it was a matter of picking up our practice and moving it to another location,” he said.

While the firm hopes to grow in the future, “right now we are just focused on growing our office here in Birmingham,” he said.

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