

# Dechert's Latest Lateral Binge Bolsters Corporate Group

By Meghan Tribe

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Dechert, which has been busy this year hiring partners on three continents, has continued its hiring tear by picking up a pair of partners from two different firms in New York.

White & Case capital markets and M&A partner Nazim Zilkha has joined Dechert's corporate group in the city, where the latter is also poised welcome Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft capital markets partner Bruce Bloomingdale to its global finance practice. Both lawyers previously worked with one another at Mayer Brown.

The additions of Bloomingdale and Zilkha come a week after Dechert reeled in Ropes & Gray investment management and financial services partner Monica Gogna in London. Earlier this summer, Dechert beefed up its corporate practice in New York by bringing on Linklaters' U.S. banking head Jeff Norton and Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton private equity counsel Gareth Clark.

The new recruits are part of a focused development by Dechert on six core corporate offerings—emerging markets, global finance, permanent capital, private equity and life sciences and strategic transactions—said Mark Thierfelder, chair of the firm's corporate and securities group.

"We're very focused on the specific verticals where we think our clients really need deep expertise," Thierfelder said. He noted that his firm plans on implementing this strategy across the globe, but with an emphasis first on building out its transactional capabilities in New York and London.

"We see New York and London as historically very important centers for the legal business around the globe [and] we expect that to continue," Thierfelder said.



It was this strategy and investment plan for New York and London, as well as the quality and depth of Dechert's M&A and private equity practices, that drew Zilkha (pictured right) to the firm.



Photo: Diego M. Radetschi/NLJ

"I sort of weighed those to Dechert," he said. Zilkha declined to name the legal recruiter he used in making the move to Dechert.

For nearly 25 years, Zilkha has advised a myriad of financial clients, including publicly and privately held corporations, on national and international transactions, such as M&A deals, debt and equity financings and other private equity and capital markets matters.

Zilkha, who began his legal career at midsized New York firm Anderson Kill, joins Dechert after nearly a decade at White & Case, which he headed to in 2007 as part of a five-partner team leaving Mayer Brown. Bloomingdale, now Zilkha's partner at Dechert in New York, also spent time at Mayer Brown, where he once headed the latter's banking and finance group in London.

Bloomingdale is joining Zilkha as part of Dechert's finance practice in New York. He advises corporations and financial institutions on a wide variety of transactions, including structured finance, asset-backed finance and cross-border securitization. He began his legal career at Mayer Brown nearly 20 years ago, splitting his time between New York and London.

Five years ago this month, Bloomingdale left Mayer Brown for Cadwalader alongside capital markets partner

Jeremiah Wagner, who remains at Cadwalader in London. Though Bloomingdale spent most of his time at Cadwalader in the U.K., the last 18 months of his time at the firm were spent building up his U.S. practice, according to Dechert.

“One of the great attractions and things that [Bloomingdale] brings to the table for us is that he has spent significant parts of his career practicing in both the U.K. and the U.S., and we view that as hugely important as we try to grow a truly global platform and beat down the geographic barriers between different practices,” said Richard Jones, chair of the Dechert’s global finance and real estate practices.

And it was the consistency in Dechert’s private equity, leveraged and structured finance and securitization offerings across all its 30 offices that helped convince Bloomingdale to make the move to the 916-lawyer firm, which saw its gross revenue rise slightly in 2016, to \$911.5 million.

“When I looked at the Dechert platform, what I liked about it was it made sense,” Bloomingdale said.

In January, Dechert made two notable partner hires in New York by bringing back former white-collar practice co-chair Benjamin Rosenberg, who had left the firm in 2014 to serve as general counsel at the New York County District Attorney’s Office, and snagging Cahill Gordon & Reindel commercial litigator and executive committee member David Kelley, now a co-leader of his new firm’s white-collar and securities litigation practice.

In London, Dechert hired Kirkland & Ellis banking and finance partner Rob Bradshaw in March, a move that followed Dechert’s recruitment in late 2016 of Kirkland finance partner John Markland and White & Case private equity partner Ross Allardice, as well as Clifford Chance disputes partner Stephen Surgeoner and DLA Piper finance partners Philip Butler and David Miles. In Dublin, where Dechert set up shop in 2010, the firm hired financial services partner Jeff Mackey from local firm Dillon Eustace.

Earlier this year, Dechert also took on a four-lawyer team from Cadwalader in Brussels led by antitrust partner Alec Burnside, added financial services and alternative investment partner Joachim Kayser in Frankfurt from PwC Germany and nabbed a four-lawyer team from Jones Day in Paris led by litigation partner Laurent Martinet.

Outside of Europe and the U.S., Dechert has also been busy expanding its corporate and finance teams in Asia,

where the firm hired Cadwalader capital markets partner Stephen Chan and K&L Gates financial services partner Michael Wong in Hong Kong and Vinson & Elkins partners Xiao Yong and Nicholas Song in Hong Kong and Beijing, respectively. In Singapore, Dechert added K&L Gates corporate partner and cross-border M&A specialist Siew Kam Boon.

Like most large firms, Dechert has also seen several partner departures this year, some of which could still be in the offing due to their tentative positions with the Trump administration. Dechert litigation partner Steven Engel in Washington, D.C., tapped earlier this year to lead the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Legal Counsel, has disclosed his \$1.8 million partnership stake at the firm. Dechert financial services partner Thomas Vartanian has had his name bandied about as a potential pick to serve as the Federal Reserve System’s vice chair of supervision, while Dechert partner Steven Bradbury in Washington, D.C., was up for the general counsel role at the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Other Dechert partners, such as new recruit Kelley (reportedly advising good friend and former FBI Director James Comey Jr.), have been adverse to the Trump administration. The firm is representing the City of Philadelphia in a legal battle with the Justice Department over its sanctuary city status.

Internally, Dechert has revamped its talent and diversity leadership, hiring chief talent officer Alison Nina Bernard from Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson and director of diversity and inclusion Satra Sampson-Arokium from Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer. And the firm has no plans on stopping its expansion efforts elsewhere.

“We’re looking at options in a number of our practices [and] in a number of our locations where we think we can effectively bring the Dechert brand to clients,” said Rick Jones, Dechert’s real estate and finance leader. “They like what we have on offer and we think we can continue to grow the business and offer them more of it.”

**Meghan Tribe** is a reporter covering the changing face of Big Law, from lateral moves and work-from-home programs to diversity initiatives. Contact her at [mtribe@alm.com](mailto:mtribe@alm.com). On Twitter: @TribeMeghan