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Barclay Damon Acquires 20-Lawyer LeClairRyan Group in NY, Boston and Conn.

The group has “fiercely loyal clients” and generates millions of dollars in business, said Barclay Damon managing partner John Langan.

By Christine Simmons and Jack Newsham

After stop-and-go discussions, a major part of the LeClairRyan diaspora—a group of 20 lawyers, including the collapsing firm’s former president—has found a new home with Northeast regional firm Barclay Damon, spread across New York, New Haven and Boston.

The team includes three attorneys in Manhattan, all five of LeClairRyan’s remaining lawyers in Boston, and 12 lawyers in New Haven, Connecticut, a new location for Syracuse-founded Barclay Damon. They joined the 300-attorney firm on Friday.

The last president of now-shuttered LeClairRyan, Elizabeth Acee, and Janice Grubin, who was the leader of LeClairRyan’s New York City office, are among Barclay Damon’s new partners.

Overall, the team includes attorneys focused on litigation as well as bankruptcy, labor and employment, finance and real estate. Three attorneys join as equity partners, while the rest are contract partners or associates. About five staff members from



John Langan, Barclay Damon managing partner, and Elizabeth Acee. Courtesy photos.

LeClairRyan are also moving to Barclay Damon, the firm said.

“Strategically, this is incredibly significant for us because it adds lawyers in Boston and New York, very important markets for us,” while building up the firm’s bankruptcy and labor and employment groups and adding a Northeast office in Connecticut, said managing partner John Langan in an interview.

Despite the gloomy headlines about LeClairRyan in recent months, the group has kept its business. They have “fiercely loyal clients,” Langan said. While

he declined to specify their book of business, he generally described the new hires as generating millions of dollars in revenue. Acee said in an interview there were “several single practices that are well into the seven figures.”

The LeClairRyan attorneys in New York and Boston will move to Barclay Damon’s offices in those cities, while Barclay Damon is exploring taking over LeClairRyan’s office lease in New Haven, Langan said.

Grubin, the head of LeClairRyan’s New York office, is joining Barclay Damon as co-

chairwoman of the firm's restructuring, bankruptcy and creditors' rights practice area, serving alongside co-chairman Jeff Dove.

The incoming Barclay Damon attorneys in Boston include partners Daniel Blake, Benjamin Carroll, James Carroll, Gillian Woolf and associate Siobhan Tolan. The New Haven group is composed of Acee, partners Charles Andres, Richard Bowerman, Michael Caldwell, Brian Donnell, Daniel Elliott, Niclas Ferland, Ilan Markus, Margaret Penny Mason, Robert Wonneberger and associates Jacob Pylman and Shaleem Yaqoob. In New York, the laterals are partners Michael Case, Robert Gross and Grubin.

Back-and-Forth Talks

The group comes to Barclay Damon less than a month after **LeClairRyan confirmed** publicly that it was dissolving and amid a scramble among competitors to pick up the most profitable groups left.

While Acee said talks began with Barclay Damon last spring, she said her group also had positive discussions with Clark Hill and other firms that had similar rates and revenue-per-lawyer numbers.

Barclay Damon's talks with LeClairRyan attorneys have waxed and waned in the last month. But in the last week and a half, Barclay Damon came into the picture again and the deal fell into place, Langan said.

"They were heading in another direction. They came back and

said we want to talk," Langan said. "It was fortunate for us that [talks with other firms] didn't work out and it allowed us to get back into the picture. The deal still made sense to us.

"It came to be through a somewhat unusual, different circumstance, but we're no less excited about it," Langan said.

Acee said the lawyers she was moving with were heavily focused on litigation. She said Barclay Damon's transactional and advisory work in the energy, M&A, tax and health care fields complemented the skills that she and her former LeClairRyan colleagues brought to the mix.

LeClairRyan is still in the process of winding down and continues to face claims from various vendors. Langan said he was not concerned that any liabilities would flow to Barclay Damon by adding the group. "We've looked at those issues. We're obviously comfortable bringing them on," he said.

The business potential immediately made sense, he indicated. The LeClairRyan attorneys and Barclay Damon began integrating on at least six client matters on the first day together, he said.

Based on this deal and **other lateral hires** last year in bankruptcy, Barclay Damon "went from having a small practice to having a full-fledged bankruptcy, distressed asset, restructuring" group, Langan said. "It's really going to help us in the coming years" if there's more demand for

bankruptcy during an economic decline, he said.

Langan also spoke highly of the employment law attorneys, including Acee, whom he described as having a "seven-figure book of business."

This is the latest group acquisition for Barclay Damon, which has added laterals from smaller firms in the last two years. A large-group combination with Damon Morey in 2015 resulted in the firm's name change from Hiscock & Barclay to Barclay Damon. Over the last two decades, the firm's lateral recruiting has increased the firm from 50 to nearly 300 attorneys.

Barclay Damon is known for its energy industry focus, including regulatory, transactional and litigation work for pipeline companies, utilities and various other clients in renewable and alternative energy, electric power, nuclear, and oil and gas. The firm also boasts of strengths in intellectual property, M&A, tax and health care.

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