

Merger to make Baker Tilly a top 10 accounting firm

The deal with Irvine, Calif.-based Squar Milner creates a firm with nearly \$1 billion in annual billings and almost 4,500 professionals.

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Steven R. Strahler

Baker Tilly US, after doubling in size over the past five years, is set to become a Top 10 accounting firm by revenue via a merger it announced today.

Chicago-based Baker Tilly's deal with Irvine, Calif.-based Squar Milner is to create a firm with nearly \$1 billion in annual billings and almost 4,500 professionals. The merger is to take effect Nov. 1.

Industry consultant Allan Koltin, who advises both firms, says the deal gives Baker Tilly access to the vast California market and more financial resources to develop tech resources, a key to survival in a consolidating market.

The simple answer, you've got to go where the money is," he says.

Baker Tilly CEO Alan Whitman says Squar Milner also is attractive for the number of professionals with other industry expertise. "It brings a diversification to how we approach things," he says.

Last year, Baker Tilly had \$754 million in revenue and Squar Milner had \$130 million, according to Accounting Today, which ranked 12th and 40th, respectively, in size among accounting firms.

Whitman predicts Baker Tilly will double again after this merger through mergers and organic growth. Koltin says the firm also benefits from lateral hires from Big 4 accounting firms.

Baker Tilly over the past two years combined with a Texas accounting firm and made acquisitions in other service areas, including data analytics, municipal advisory, global forensic accounting, valuation and litigation services, it says.

Whitman, 55, worked at Big 4 firm PwC before joining a boutique in Detroit that later became a part of Baker Tilly. "It was a firm that was still building itself. I got a lot of leeway to do things my way," he says of the move.

At Baker Tilly, where he became CEO in 2016, he focused on international expansion. Baker Tilly US is the largest affiliate of London-based Baker Tilly International.

"He had the vision skills and communication skills that, as you know, many accountants don't have," Koltin says.