A winter storm played a role in what became Actavis PLC’s pending $25 billion acquisition of pharmaceutical heavyweight Forest Laboratories. The terrible weather served, participants said, to keep negotiators holed up in the New Jersey hotel room where they were trying to cut the deal.

But an even bigger role was played by Scott Shean, the Latham & Watkins attorney who served as lead partner for Actavis chief legal officer David Buchen.

Buchen characterized Shean as employing a balanced approach, keeping in mind the client’s protection but never losing sight of the need to get the deal done. He devoted so much time to studying Actavis’ business and the firm’s complex structure that “he is almost an extension of our in-house department,” Buchen said.

The blockbuster transaction, announced Feb. 18, ranks as one of the top such pharma deal of the past decade. But it was far from the first collaboration between Buchen and Shean. The pair has worked together on more than a dozen significant transactions, including the $5.65 billion acquisition of Actavis Group by Watson Pharmaceuticals in 2012 and Actavis’ $8.5 billion acquisition of Dublin-based Warner Chilcott PLC in 2013.

Shean said his 15 years of teamwork with Buchen have provided them with a “well-rehearsed playbook that we employ to run a smooth and efficient process” and a strategic advantage. “This allows us to spend time thinking several chess moves ahead to ensure that we can easily navigate any legal obstacles or other difficulties in the transaction, as well as negotiate favorable terms,” Shean said.

Buchen said Shean also brings to the table the “full strength and capabilities” of the multinational Latham & Watkins, where Shean concentrates on mergers and acquisitions, and on serving as outside corporate counsel to other public and private companies on healthcare, technology, real estate and energy matters, among others.

“Scott makes my job easier by managing those resources and providing me with a single point of contact,” Buchen said.