

2019

TEXAS

TRAILBLAZERS

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MICHAEL E. DILLARD

LATHAM & WATKINS LLP



PIONEER SPIRIT Houston can be a tough town for a non-native law firm. But Michael Dillard, an experienced mergers and acquisitions lawyer, jumped at the chance to start a Houston office for Latham & Watkins. "It was a market that really no firm had in any significant way been able to penetrate." Where others had failed, Dillard thrived. In five years as managing partner in Houston, Dillard worked on transactions worth \$239.7 billion. Just since 2018, he has handled more than 40 deals valued at a total of \$27.3 billion. A move from an office-centric to a practice-centric model likewise proved successful. Last year's M&A practice group revenue alone was \$800 million, greater than the total revenue of many Am Law 100 firms.

TRAILS BLAZED Dillard had been doing M&A work for 12 years before he had the more challenging experience of handling transactions involving publicly traded companies. Before long, he represented one public company, Anadarko Petroleum, as it acquired not one, but two other public companies on the same day. "I really got the bug. It was very exciting, and I enjoyed the fast pace of it."

FUTURE EXPLORATIONS One of Dillard's few concerns when he joined Latham was where the new office would fit into the firm's overall strategy. "Would we feel like a backwater and not really involved?" But after his time as managing partner in Houston, he became global chair for Latham's mergers and acquisitions practice, part of a shift from office-based management to an organization based on practice areas. Lately he has spent part of each week in New York, recruiting lateral partners into the firm. Already he has brought in eight lawyers and expects to take on that many more. "I've been very blessed to have been involved in working with great partners, great staff and all the resources that have been made available."