

# American Lawyer

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## Not the Next Latham & Watkins

“Bad Moon Rising” was not only well written, well researched and quite accurate, but right on the money. Laura Pearlman wrote a terrific piece. I am continually amazed that so many firms still operate as a collection of fiefdoms run by tribal land barons. Today’s barons may not have the biggest castle but the biggest book and generally the healthiest egos. When Lou Meisinger, a powerful lawyer, leader, rainmaker and the glue that kept the Troop factions together left, the end was inevitable.

Once we worked closely with the firm, but success, I believe went to many of the partners heads. Many started believing their press clippings and started seeing themselves as the next Latham & Watkins. We saw a distinct change in attitude and manner in which lawyers interacted with each other. Their move from Westwood to Century City was more than symbolic. Doubling in size, fancy art collections, gigantic offices, plush furniture was a much ego as some grand strategic vision. What was lost and a lesson to be heeded by firms today is the importance of leadership, *leadership transition*, and firm-wide culture. While emphasis on profits and keeping top producers happy is important, one can’t lose sight of the fact that a law firm’s major assets are its people. There will certainly be more Troop like implosions - especially with firms that give little more than lip service to corny concepts like people, culture and common goals.

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