



Kent Zimmermann

Full Narrative

Kent Zimmermann is one of the leading strategic advisors to law firms in the United States. He has advised on five of the 10 largest law firm combinations to successfully close in the US in the last two years. He is currently advising multiple firms on active merger discussions, multiple Am Law 25 firms on firmwide strategy, and he is also engaged by many Am Law 100, 200 and global 100 law firms on an ongoing basis as a trusted advisor to their chairs and broader senior leadership teams.

A former GC and CEO, Kent counsels and provides insights to industry leaders on the challenges and opportunities they face as a result of the globalization, consolidation, specialization, and segmentation of the legal services market. As part of this work, he routinely conducts one-on-one interviews with chief legal officers, managing directors, and business unit heads at market-leading Fortune 500 and global companies.

Kent is valued for his sophisticated understanding of the evolving legal market and inside knowledge of the strategies, cultures and best practices of high-performing law firms. He has been called “an exceptional presenter” who is “the definition of value.” At the invitation of contributing editor and Harvard Law School Fellow Heidi K. Gardner, he recently co-authored a chapter on law firm merger best practices in *Leadership for Lawyers: Essential Leadership Strategies for Law Firm Success*, volume two (Globe Law and Business Ltd.).

For over a decade, Kent has been a sought-after speaker at law firm retreats and leadership meetings. He also serves as an ALM Intelligence Fellow, contributes to *The American Lawyer*, and has appeared as a legal analyst on CNN Headline News, Fox News, and *The Wall Street Journal's* WSJ Live. His insights have also been featured by Bloomberg, CNBC, Law360, and Reuters.

Before joining Zeughauser Group, Kent was one of three equity partners who developed a small startup, Hubbard One, into one of the fastest-growing private companies in North America. He eventually led the sale of the business to the public company now known as Thomson Reuters. Subsequently, Kent was appointed chief executive and led the turnaround of New York-based West Legalworks, a unit of Thomson Reuters.

Kent is originally from Connecticut. He graduated with honors from Washington University in St. Louis and earned his J.D. from Illinois Institute of Technology's Chicago-Kent College of Law. He lives in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood with his family. He is on the board of the Children's Research Fund of the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago.

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Areas of expertise

Law firm combinations

- Collaborates with firm leadership to develop and build consensus around expansion strategies to accelerate achievement of the firm's vision
- Conducts market analysis and builds consensus among key partners around criteria that a candidate firm would have to meet
- Develops a list of relevant candidate firms and facilitates meetings with firm leaders
- Prepares clients for meetings with candidate firms by supplying relevant data and assisting in identifying and articulating the value proposition of the potential combined firm
- Formally or informally facilitates merger discussions, manages the due diligence process, analyzes data that is exchanged, advises on and develops solutions to bridge performance and other gaps between the firms, and advises on internal and external communications to achieve the firm's objectives
- Advises on realizing the benefits of the combination through client interviews and leveraging cross-servicing and cross-selling opportunities in the combined firm

Strategic planning and implementation

- Conducts firmwide, practice, industry sector team, and office strategic planning, often involving partner interviews, client interviews, strategic planning working sessions, and partner retreats
- Develops written strategic plans
- Participates in and leads strategic review sessions at the senior leadership team level to confirm or update strategic growth priorities
- Undertakes strategic research, including benchmarking of peer and aspirational peer firms on compensation, governance, expense management, and other topics relevant to strategy
- Analyzes data about firms, peer firms, and aspirational peer firms to identify opportunities to improve financial and operational performance

Retreats and ongoing guidance

- Designs, facilitates, and speaks at meetings and retreats for partners, practice groups, industry sector teams, and leadership teams
- Benchmarks against peers and aspirational peers the performance of the firm from a financial and client perspective
- Provides periodic formal and informal consultations on management issues
- Reviews and provides assessments of data about the firm's performance and benchmarks it against peer and aspirational peer firms
- Assists with identifying growth opportunities as the competitive landscape for talent and clients evolves
- Shares and provides analysis of market data and best practices relevant to strategic decisions
- Acts as a sounding board for/coaches chairs, managing partners, and other firm leaders
- Serves as an extension of the firm's leadership and strategy team

Selected recent engagements

- Advising on successfully completed mergers and other combinations, including for
 - 60-lawyer Chicago firm that combined with an Am Law 200 firm
 - 70-lawyer Houston firm that combined with an Am Law 100 firm
 - Am Law 100 firm that combined with another Am Law 100 firm
 - Am Law 200 firm that combined with an Am Law 100 firm
 - Global 100 UK firm that combined with an Am Law 100 firm
- Strategic planning for
 - Global 15 law firm (firmwide)
 - Global 15 law firm (practice groups)
 - Am Law 50 law firm (firmwide)
 - Am Law 100 law firm (firmwide)
 - Am Law 200 law firm (firmwide)
 - Several regional and boutique law firms
- Exclusive collaboration with a distinguished professor at Harvard Business School on research about best practices of high-performing law firms
- Development and launch of client service interview programs for three Global 15 law firms and other Am Law 100 and Am Law 200 law firms

What clients are saying

"You really set a high standard when it comes to client service." —*Chief Operating Officer, Am Law 100 law firm*

"You are an integral part of the [firm] team and your guidance has been invaluable." —*Chair, Am Law 25 law firm*

"Kent was-- invaluable to us." —*Chair of the Management Committee, Global 15 law firm*

"You have been a great help to us in reflecting on our strengths and challenges. Your presentation today was another example of the value of our relationship." —*Executive Committee Chair, Global 15 law firm*

"To say you were well received and highly regarded would be understatements." —*Executive Committee Member, nationally preeminent specialty law firm*

"You bring a tremendous amount of credibility to the process. We appreciate your efforts and advice; you make us look good." —*Vice Chair, Am Law 200 law firm*

"It takes some smarts to do this. And they hired you to do it, which shows they are brilliant." —*General Counsel, Fortune 10 company*

"You are a great listener." —*Management Committee Chair, Am Law 25 law firm*

"You are the definition of value. I relish opportunities to work with you." —*Chief Marketing Officer, Am Law 100 law firm*