

K&L Gates Seeks London Growth With Faster Lateral Hiring

By **Marialuisa Taddia**

Law360, London (September 11, 2026, 7:00 PM BST) -- The recent lateral hiring push at K&L Gates signals more than a recruitment drive for the firm's London managing partner: it marks a turning point in how the office attracts and signs up partners.

Paul Callegari told Law360 that seven lateral partner candidates have accepted offers or already joined the London office since the start of 2026. Callegari, who has been in the job since December 2023, said the London office would typically hire only one or two lateral partners a year.

"That evidences the commitment the firm leadership has got to growing London," he said in an interview. "And I am hopeful that by the end of the year we may even hit double figures."

K&L Gates LLP's London office now has 111 lawyers, including 41 partners.

Callegari said the hiring spree is part of a vision unveiled by the firm in 2025, focused on client-centered growth, innovation and lateral recruitment. The firm would operate as a globally integrated firm. The strategy was rolled out alongside a new leadership team, with Stacy Ackermann taking over as global managing partner and Rick Giovannelli becoming co-chair of the management committee.

"London has been given a key part of that," Callegari said. "Many of our clients face increasingly complex and cross-border challenges, and our role is almost like a central hub, if you like, to connect with the right capabilities across the firm."

Callegari said the firm's leaders see London as a crucial financial and legal market. Alongside Texas and California, the city has been singled out as a priority for growth as K&L Gates continues to invest in other offices.

The firm hired two partners in London in June. Sarah Pearce joined the corporate practice from Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP, and Andrew Harper moved to the finance practice from Reed Smith LLP.

The hires are part of a broader push to expand the transactional capability of the London office. Private credit — including restructuring, special situations and corporate and M&A work — is a priority, Callegari said.



Paul Callegari

The office has also targeted growth in international trade and real estate. Its international trade work covers foreign direct investment, sanctions and export, import and cybersecurity controls.

Callegari said that recent hires and planned recruitment is "plugging the gaps" in areas including data privacy, cybersecurity and regulatory work, building on K&L Gates' strengths in London. The capital is a hub for the firm's technology, regulatory and corporate work, alongside a litigation team and transactional practices including finance, real estate and real estate finance.

"We don't believe in bringing on board people that aren't going to mesh with the practices that we already have," Callegari said. "We're looking to pick for people that are going to help us to expand."

The increased number of hires is also the result of what Callegari described as the firm's newly "streamlined lateral process — we were always told by recruiters and everyone else it was too long."

Callegari, an employment law practitioner, said that K&L Gates has overhauled a cumbersome lateral recruitment process that required numerous meetings, lengthy and repetitive lateral questionnaires for partners and multiple layers of internal approvals. The firm has introduced a "lateral growth committee," which includes the global managing partner and meets weekly with potential lateral hires across the firm.

"So we don't spend months pursuing a lateral, only to have firm leadership decide that's not something we actually want to invest in," he added.

Callegari acknowledges the difficulties of recruiting in the London market. But he said that K&L Gates sees "unmet opportunities" for lateral partners who feel constrained in their jobs elsewhere.

"Yes, it's a competitive market, every firm is in London — from the White Shoe, the Magic Circle to the boutiques," he said. "Even despite all of that, and this is what we are told through lateral candidates that we interview, is that we represent a bit of a different proposition."

Callegari said that candidates tell K&L Gates they are drawn to its integrated platform of 46 offices worldwide, which allows partners to link clients easily with other practices and locations.

Some rival firms are not organized as a single global partnership, he continued. Their lawyers confront internal barriers when they try to introduce clients to other practice areas, "which are inhibiting their ability to expand their practices."

Other lawyers are frustrated by the limited geographical reach of their platforms, particularly in the U.S. That makes K&L Gates more attractive to partners who want to grow their practices across international borders.

The origins of K&L Gates' London office reach back to 1858, when Nicholson Graham & Jones — a historical City firm, where Callegari began his career as a solicitor — was established.

"We are not starting from scratch," he said. "We have the foundations in place, and the firm's leadership recognizes that we have the ability to grow on those foundations and to expand on the opportunities that London creates across all of our practice areas."

The office took its first step toward becoming part of K&L Gates in 2005, when Nicholson Graham merged with U.S. firm Kirkpatrick & Lockhart to create Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Nicholson Graham. Two years later, the firm merged with Preston Gates & Ellis of Seattle to form Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Preston Gates Ellis — known as K&L Gates.

But Callegari said that a merger is not part of K&L Gates' plans for London. "The market's very fluid, and opportunities arise and opportunities come and go," he said. "But, at this precise moment, we don't have any plans to expand through a merger."

But he said the firm's growth strategy extends beyond adding lateral hires.

"We see growth in London through not only lateral recruitment, but also continuing to educate our clients on the services that we are able to provide," Callegari said. "It's about looking internally at what we have already, and trying to maximize the potential of our platform to service those clients and to expand those relationships."

K&L Gates launched a "client portfolio program" in April, designed to deepen relationships and attract more work from existing clients across its offices and practices.

The initiative, driven from the U.S. but applied globally, targets clients where the firm already has a share of their legal spend. Callegari said the aim is to expand those relationships: the firm's most valuable clients typically use lawyers across multiple offices and practices.

"We're making sure that we're maximizing those opportunities," he said.

K&L Gates continues to grow globally. The firm posted gross revenue of \$1.37 billion in 2025, up 3.21% from a year earlier, although it does not provide a breakdown by office.

In London, that focus on growth is accompanied by efforts to boost productivity. Callegari said the office uses AI tools including Legora, Copilot and Vincent AI. Callegari said the use of AI has not altered how the firm charges for its work, adding that much of its transactional practice already runs on fixed fees or other alternative fee arrangements.

"So it's not changing the pricing models at all because we've already evolved into those kinds of models," he said.

Artificial Intelligence is factored into how matters are costed. A pricing team in the U.S. helps to set fees for transactions, projects and retainers at levels where the efficiency gains from using AI are shared with clients, Callegari said.

The firm is not seeing any reduced need for associates, he added. But their jobs are changing, with more emphasis on judgment, strategy and client service rather than the routine tasks that junior lawyers did 10 or 20 years ago.

"When I was a trainee, I spent weeks on end in a conference room at Nicholson Graham & Jones dictating a list of documents, and that's not a good use of my time," he recalled.

Callegari's four-year term as London managing partner runs until December 2027. He says it has

coincided with a renewed push by K&L Gates to expand in the City.

"I feel very lucky that I'm doing this role at a time when the leadership of the firm is so focused on growing the London office," he added.

--Editing by Ed Harris.

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