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# PMB Helin begins acquisition spree

## Houston's McEvoy first to be bought by Austin accounting firm

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PMB Helin Donovan LLP is acquiring a Houston firm — and it's the first in a series of planned acquisitions for the Austin accounting firm, which aspires to be one of the

100 largest in the nation.

Austin-based PMB Helin Donovan, which employs about 54 workers here, acquired McEvoy & Co., a 33-year-old Houston firm with 12 workers. Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

PMB Helin Donovan, the fourth-largest Austin-based accounting firm, plans to acquire more firms with 10 to 20 employees apiece in the western United States to build out its national footprint and produce annual revenue of more than

\$30 million, Managing Partner Tom Wilkinson said. He declined to disclose current revenue.

A move to the top 100 would run counter to the historical trend in which local firms have been targeted for acquisition by the national firms rather than establishing a national firm that's based in Austin, he said.

But the city's growth during the last decade positions it for a firm



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PMB Managing Partner Tom Wilkinson wants his firm to go national.

## PMB: Austin's second-largest accounting firm has a plan to grow nationally

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with a national presence.

"This is sort of the breaking-out time for us to do this," Wilkinson said. "Maybe we're coming into our own as a city. People are talking about Austin as they never have before."

In addition to Austin, PMB Helin Donovan operates offices in Dallas, Houston, San Francisco, Chicago, Seattle and Spokane, Wash. Prospective target firms would be in cities such as Denver, Phoenix and Salt Lake City, Wilkinson said.

PMB Helin Donovan opened a Houston branch office in 2006. McEvoy & Co., which was founded in 1978, provides tax, accounting and business consulting services. All of the firm's employees will become part of PMB Helin Donovan, Wilkinson said.

Because of the additional workers, PMB Helin Donovan is expanding its

existing Houston office while retaining the McEvoy office in the Galleria area of Houston.

Austin is the fourth-largest market in Texas, but locally based accounting firms haven't kept pace with the demand for alternatives to the industry's Big Four: Ernst & Young LLP, Deloitte LLP, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and KPMG International.

Two of the city's five largest firms are based here. Austin-based Maxwell Locke & Ritter LLP is No. 1 with 52 certified public accountants, according to the most recent list of firms in the *Austin Business Journal*.

In Austin, PMB Helin Donovan employs 33 certified public accountants and 50 professionals. It is ranked as the city's second-largest locally based accounting firm, according to *Austin Business Journal* research.

The trend of local acquisitions is project-

ed to continue as firms attempt to establish larger footprints and expanded specialized services, said Gary McIntosh, a partner with Weaver LLP and former board member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

"The entrepreneurship of Austin has grown, and the accounting business is a big part of it," he said. "So the accounting firms want to get in the niches."

The PMB Helin deal is the latest in a string of local accounting firm mergers in recent months.

In January, Maxwell Locke & Ritter LLP acquired Round Rock-based Peña Swayze & Co. LLP for an undisclosed amount. The combined firm, with predecessor firm roots to the 1960s, now employs more than 90 workers, including 20 partners.



McIntosh

In September 2010, San Antonio-based Padgett Stratemann & Co. LLP moved its Austin office from downtown to Barton Springs Road in a space that officials expect to house 60 workers within a couple of years, after acquiring local mainstay Sprouse & Anderson LLP in 2007.

The firm plans to grow its local business by targeting health science and health care companies, coupled with a focus on the construction industry, officials said.

In July 2010, Austin-based Cooper Graci & Co. merged with 550-person national practice Carr Riggs & Ingram LLC. Cooper Graci, which was founded in 1981, operated offices in Austin and Georgetown.

PMB Helin Donovan was formed in 2007 when Austin-based Helin, Donovan, Trubee & Wilkinson LLP acquired San Francisco-based Pohl, McNabola, Berg & Co. LLP. The firm now claims clients in more than 30 countries and more than 100 workers in seven offices.