

ABOUT THE LIST

Firm takes an acquisition-lined path to growth

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Miami-based Kabat, Schertzer, De La Torre, Taraboulos & Co. LLC jumped nine spots on this year's accounting firms list, in part thanks to acquisition activity in 2015. But it's not the first time KSDT has grown because of an acquisition – and it's certainly not going to be the last.

Jeffrey Taraboulos, his brother Robert, and **Jorge De La Torre** established De La Torre, Taraboulos & Co. in Miami in 2004 after they acquired a small firm led by Antonio Alentado.



“We increased the revenue of the firm because it went from a one-man operation to three young guys who really had a lot of experience and could offer a lot of services,” Taraboulos said.

But the seeds for KSDT were first planted in 1976, when **Larry Kabat** and **Michael Schertzer** founded Kabat Schertzer & Co.

KSDT was officially born in 2008 when Kabat Schertzer and De La Torre, Taraboulos merged.

“We’ve done 14 acquisitions over 12 years,” Taraboulos said. “We started with an office in the Dadeland area and, through all the acquisitions, we’ve expanded into Homestead and Weston.”

Next up: West Palm Beach.

Taraboulos views KSDT's growth through acquisitions as a bit organic because when accounting firms are acquired, it's really the people who are the assets. And they either gel naturally with the organization and promote the bigger firm, or don't.

“To an extent, it's organic growth, because the minute we acquire, there is a bigger firm, but pricing really hasn't changed for clients,” Taraboulos said. “So they talk to their friends and we grow.”

Marketing an accounting firm's services can be a ton of work, but through acquisition, a firm can immediately gain a fleet of staffers, each with their own client base.

"There is another part of why we do these acquisitions. With these acquisitions, I am gaining a ton of talent that are in these firms that would normally not work for someone else," Taraboulos said. "At the same time, we're picking up new markets and other services lines."

KSDT looks for well-rounded staff members with experience across multiple industries. The firm invests in resources that allow each employee to diversify their skill set, which in the end adds more value.

Ultimately, though, acquisitions only work if there's a culture fit. Taraboulos' background is in big, global accounting firms, and he and his brother left their Big 4 (at the time Big 6) firms to go out on their own.

"Our goal is always to be almost like a family. We have the same level of professionalism as anyone else, but our goal is to be like a family company," Taraboulos said. "Anyone who comes to work for me here can tell me what hours they want to work."

That flex-time approach can seem surprising, but Taraboulos swears by it.

"Sometimes it's hard for people to understand that when they get here, they can tell me what hours they want to work," he said. "But as long as they work their 40 hours, we don't care. You build your schedule."

While culture fit is paramount in successful acquisitions, it's also important that clients don't have a disruption in service.

"The most important thing is that clients don't suffer," Taraboulos said. With clients in mind, KSDT looks to do acquisitions at times during the year like in the fall, when firms are less likely to be dealing with big audits and tax returns.

Following KSDT's last acquisition, the firm is looking for a bigger space, or more space in the Dadeland area.