What Happens After the Deal?

Inside the SSC and Harrison Henderson Merger

For many CPA firm owners, the biggest challenge isn't winning clients. It's everything that follows: finding and retaining talent, keeping pace with emerging technology, managing compliance requirements, building future leaders, and carrying the weight of operational decisions while continuing to serve clients at a high level.

And then, eventually, every firm owner arrives at an understandable but difficult question: what happens next? Leadership starts to think about securing their legacy at the same time they are trying to future-proof client stability and the future of their employees. In January 2026, the leadership of Oklahoma-based Harrison Henderson PLLC found the answer that addressed it all.

Founded in 1986, the firm had built a strong local reputation and lasting client relationships across three Oklahoma offices. Yet, as the industry has continued to evolve, leadership recognized that long-term success would require additional resources, expanded capabilities, and a sustainable path forward. Harrison Henderson arrived at a solution that addressed their concerns while staying aligned with their values: They began a merger with SSC CPAs + Advisors.

Today, former Harrison Henderson leaders turned key SSC leaders say the decision has strengthened opportunities for their employees and expanded services for clients, giving both groups greater confidence in the firm's future.

Trust Came Before the Transaction

For firm owners evaluating merger opportunities, financial considerations are obviously important, but cultural alignment and mutual trust determine whether a partnership will succeed.

Fortunately, Harrison Henderson and SSC had an established relationship that extended well before merger discussions became serious. The firms had been interacting for years, which allowed them to develop a professional respect for one another and a shared understanding of client services.

As former Managing Partner of Harrison Henderson, Steve Henderson explains:

> *"Without our long relationship with SSC's leadership, we probably wouldn't have done the deal, to be honest with you. That's half of the battle…knowing and trusting the people you are partnering with. There was a high level of trust here."*
>
> **Steve Henderson**
> CPA, PFS, CFP®, CKA®
> Director, *Formerly with Harrison Henderson*

That foundation made it easier for both organizations to have honest conversations about the future. It also gave Harrison Henderson confidence that its clients and employees would be in good hands. Ultimately though, the decision came down to trust: "Any kind of deal is going to fall apart eventually if you don't have trust." For owners considering their own future, the lesson is clear: a successful merger hinges on finding a partner with shared values.

A Long-Term Solution for Succession and Growth

Like most CPA firm leadership, Harrison Henderson's owners weren't simply looking for an exit strategy. They wanted a long-term solution that would protect the firm they had built while creating new opportunities for clients and staff. After further review, they believed SSC's growth trajectory, employee ownership structure, and commitment to client service made it an ideal fit.

According to SSC Director Jana Ramsey-Weaver, formerly with Harrison Henderson, "It was a long-term solution to succession. That really resonated with us."

SSC's Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) was particularly appealing as it creates a vested interest in the organization's future among employees while offering continuity beyond a single generation of ownership.

Just as important, SSC offered the scale needed to create new opportunities without sacrificing personal relationships—"SSC was big enough to provide growth opportunities for our team, but not so big that we would lose the personal touch with our clients," said Jana. For many small- and mid-sized CPA firms, that balance can be difficult to find, but Harrison Henderson found it through their partnership.

A Thoughtful Transition Process

Disruption is understandably one of leadership's biggest concerns during a merger. Will employees embrace new systems? Will clients experience interruptions? Will the integration process become overwhelming? According to Jana, SSC's measured approach helped minimize those concerns among the team: "I would describe the transition as slow and steady, but I think that's okay. You don't want to rush a transition."

Rather than forcing immediate change, SSC moved deliberately, introducing new processes and technology over time while supporting employees throughout the transition. SSC's internal resources also played a significant role in ensuring a smooth integration. Jana noted, "Their IT team did a lot of the heavy lifting in the beginning, and that helped make the transition go smoother for us."

Many firm owners worry about what happens after a merger agreement is signed, but a well-planned integration process can ease many of those pain points.

Creating More Opportunities for Employees

Recruiting, retaining, and developing talent is one of the greatest challenges CPA firms face. Harrison Henderson was able to address this challenge and create a stronger future for its employees. As Steve explains, "Giving staff opportunities that we probably couldn't have done at our size was an important part of the merger decision."

By joining a larger organization, Harrison Henderson employees gained access to additional career paths, specialization opportunities, leadership roles, and professional development resources.

"Now our team has options for a line of service. They can do what they really love," Jana explained, reflecting on the impact of the merger on employees.

For owners concerned about providing their employees with greater professional opportunity, a merger offers access to professional and developmental resources that may be difficult to create as an independent firm.

- Specialization Opportunities
- Professional Development Resources
- Leadership Roles
- Additional Career Paths

Better Resources. Broader Client Solutions.

To retain and expand a company's client base, a merger needs to create more value for clients. Since joining SSC, the former Harrison Henderson team can tap into expanded service offerings and specialized expertise that benefit their clients, addressing a broad range of needs.

As Jana notes, "By merging with SSC, we were able to add so many valuable services and resources to our clients that we weren't able to provide on our own."

Today, clients have access to services like audit and review engagements, business valuations, sophisticated tax strategies, additional wealth management resources, and strategic planning capabilities. SSC's expanded geographic footprint and service offerings also provide additional support as client needs evolve. Importantly, those expanded resources were added without sacrificing the trusted relationships clients had already established while partnering with Harrison Henderson.

Preserving Culture While Building the Future

Many firm owners worry about whether the culture they created will be protected and retained following a merger.

The Harrison Henderson team began the merger with SSC, hoping their positive prior interactions with SSC were representative of the company's values. According to Steve, "SSC's culture has been pretty much what we thought it was going to be. Blending two firm cultures is never easy, but that part has not disappointed or surprised us."

Since the merger, former Harrison Henderson employees have been welcomed into a collaborative environment that emphasizes relationships, communication, and long-term success rather than short-term transactions. As Jana puts it, "They care more about the team and the people than just the transaction." SSC's people-first values have helped create a strong foundation for the combined organization to integrate harmoniously.

Looking Ahead

For Harrison Henderson leadership, the merger was about more than just growth. It was about creating a stronger future for employees, clients, and the firm itself. Reflecting on the merger, Jana Ramsey-Weaver notes, "Partnering with SSC has been a game changer. Our team is stronger than ever, our clients are better served, and we now have long-term stability."

For CPA firm owners navigating questions about succession, talent retention, growth strategies, or sustainability, the merger between SSC and Harrison Henderson offers an important reminder: An effective merger doesn't replace what you built; it preserves your life's work while giving your CPA firm the resources and stability needed for the next chapter.