places like China," Hirschfeld said. Similarly, as leader of Jones Lang LaSalle’s national retail tenant representation practice, Lew Kornberg has been getting strong signals from his growing roster of clients. "I don’t know that we ever lived in a one-size-fits-all era, but we certainly do not live in one now," Kornberg said. "We hear consistently from retailers that they want specialized expertise that is appropriate for their space."

Through a merger agreement announced in July, Jones Lang LaSalle and Surge Retail are aiming to combine their strengths to meet these demands. The deal gives Ferris and Hirschfeld access to Jones Lang LaSalle’s global network of about 1,000 offices across 70 countries, allowing them to help specialty retail chains expand as they wish. And Jones Lang LaSalle gains a team that brings years of cultivating relationships with the likes of Aldo, Bose, Fossil and Swarovski. "This merger is a huge step forward for us in our effort to give our clients a full suite of services and expert consultation," Kornberg said.

The merger is part of an ongoing effort to expand Jones Lang LaSalle’s retail tenant representation practice, Kornberg says. Over the past few years, the company has hired some 30 brokers in several major markets. "We have gone effectively from zero [tenant reps] as recently as 24 months ago to bona fide representation in most of the major U.S. markets, including New York, Atlanta, Florida, Dallas, Chicago, Los Angeles and D.C.,” Kornberg said. “We are continuing to grow that practice literally daily with the addition of new top talent.”

As senior vice presidents, Hirschfeld and Ferris will work closely with Kornberg to further boost these tenant-rep capabilities. "We’re certainly going to be focused on strategic hires by bringing in people who have a vision for the business and outstanding expe-
Hirschfeld and Ferris had known each other for about a decade before they founded their firm in 2010. Ferris, who had done leasing and development at both Pyramid Cos. and New England Development, launched his tenant-rep career in 2000 by joining Hirschfeld’s urban and specialty retail group at Trammell Crow. “I was then representing the Lids retail chain on the East Coast,” Ferris said. “Michael hired me to help Trammell Crow build a mall platform by leveraging Trammell Crow’s national relationships. I later joined Strategic Retail Advisors as a principal. Michael and I worked together on a more informal basis for many years.”

While Ferris focuses primarily on malls, lifestyle centers, outlets and airports, Hirschfeld is known for his expertise in urban retail. He helped found Garrick-Aug Associates, which grew into one of New York City’s top brokerage firms in the 1970s and ’80s, and later he ran the national retail division at Chicago-based tenant-rep firm Equis. Over the course of his 35-year career, Hirschfeld has represented dozens of retailers, including Brookstone, Mont Blanc and Puma. According to Ferris, Surge Retail came about in part because of a shift in attitude among retailers: Rather than limit themselves to one format or another, tenants were increasingly focused on finding the best real estate, regardless of whether it was in a mall or on Main Street, Ferris says. “We felt strongly that it made sense to combine Michael’s street-retail expertise with my mall expertise, because it really gave clients the best view of all of the opportunities in any market,” Ferris said. “They could look at things from the macro level, and we could make recommendations that were best for them.”

Thanks to the economic crunch, retailers were keen on having the ability to carefully scrutinize more sites before signing a lease. Their real estate committees were also more demanding about data, asking for more details about particular sites and markets. “We live in a circum-spect world these days, where the retailers that are growing are being very judicious and deliberate,” Kornberg said. “This is particularly true in Michael’s and Steve’s world of premium specialty retailers.”

But even in an era in which brokers have Twitter accounts and are wont to post YouTube videos about available sites, it is still helpful to have old-school skills, says Hirschfeld. In a market like Manhattan, where there are at least 30 submarkets — and even submarkets within those submarkets — there is no substitute for walking the streets with a client and taking a firsthand look, Hirschfeld says. “Percentage rent and sales reports are generally less relevant in the urban world, where there is a lot more affect to the site-selection process,” he said. “You can’t ignore the details of rent, frontage, ceiling height, costs and everything else, but at the end of the day, you also have to feel that the site is a good fit.”

Analytics are part of the picture, to be sure, but they are not always the primary driver of the decision. “I come from the school where gut reactions are rarely wrong,” Hirschfeld said. “If the client’s gut reaction is no, then move on. If they say yes, you know what your mission is. It is when they say ‘I don’t know’ that you really have an opportunity. Then you can work with the client to understand traffic counts, competition, all of the factors. That’s the street side of things.”

In much the same way, experience still counts when it comes to helping chains squeeze productivity out of their existing stores — a major priority in today’s tight market, says Ferris. A deft approach to handling lease expirations, such as taking advantage of kick-out clauses and the like, can make a big difference for the client, he says. “One of the things I do for just about all of my clients is their renewals, which are absolutely critical,” Ferris said. “Some brokers are only interested in new deals, but we like to be thought of as an in-house real estate department — part of the family over the long term.” Toward that end Hirschfeld and Ferris have helped clients like Swarovski reorient their business models to take advantage of new opportunities for growth in the years to come. Outlet projects are one example. “Five years ago our business was maybe 10 percent outlets,” Ferris said. “It is almost 50 percent outlet now.” Already mature in the full-price arena, more of the team’s clients continue to break into the outlet sector with Ferris’ help.

And with Jones Lang LaSalle’s global network, both brokers will be able to steer clients toward promising opportunities wherever they happen to emerge in the world. “This is a company that provides all sorts of tools,” Hirschfeld said. “We’ll be able to maximize opportunities for our clients, inbound and outbound.”