

Five minutes with... an expanded Morrison Foerster

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This year, international law firm Morrison Foerster (MoFo) [officially merged](#) with California-based litigation boutique Durie Tangri (DT).

Founded in San Francisco, the United States, in 2009, DT grew significantly, expanding its client base and capabilities and eventually opening a second office in Los Angeles in 2018. Its lawyers represent clients in a wide range of legal areas – including trademark, patent and copyright litigation – and have been widely recognised for their achievements, including featuring in the [WTR 1000](#).

In this instalment of our 'Five minutes with...' Q&A series, WTR chats with Joyce Liou, co-chair of MoFo's trademark group and DT co-founder Joseph Gratz (now a partner at MoFo), to discuss the motivations behind the merger of the two firms, the process of integrating their respective practices and how the merger will serve to both strengthen and expand MoFo's existing offering to clients.

Can you tell me what made the DT team a good fit for this merger?

Liou: DT built one of the United States' premier trial practices, representing clients in diverse areas of complex litigation, including trademark, copyright and patent litigation. Its practice strengths and sector focus across technology and life sciences aligned perfectly with ours. MoFo knows tech and life sciences inside and out – we work for virtually all the biggest technology companies in the world (including four out of five of the largest global tech companies by market capitalisation) and nearly half of the top 20 life sciences companies globally.

Beyond client work, our new colleagues are also a good fit for MoFo culturally. It was instantly clear that we share the same values and commitment to diversity and inclusion, making them a match on all levels.

Gratz: Agreed, [from the DT end] we spent the last decade expanding our client base and capabilities. Our move to MoFo was a natural evolution of the firm. Both firms have deep roots in the San Francisco Bay Area. As Joyce also noted, we share a focus in the tech and life sciences sectors, so we know the fields and have known each other as key players in this space for some time.

Does the addition of the DT team expand the firm's offerings, in terms of the range of industry expertise and IP capabilities on offer to clients?

Liou: Yes, this was really a case of strength meeting strength. The DT team expands MoFo's bench of all-round IP litigators and trial lawyers who can take on any type of contentious dispute, while bolstered by MoFo's trademark and patent prosecution practices. Although we've focused primarily on intellectual property, the DT team also has significant experience in professional liability, privacy, white-collar crime and investigations, contract and commercial matters, class actions and appellate matters. So, their addition strengthens our capabilities in other practice areas as well.

What are some of the key challenges when a new team joins a firm and how do you overcome them? How do you build a shared culture? And what does a fully integrated team look like?

Liou: Containing our excitement and not overloading our new colleagues! More seriously, having worked with the group over the years, we knew our cultures aligned and that they would be a great fit on all levels. Sharing the same values and work culture made the first few weeks of the integration process seamless.

Gratz: The MoFo team has been supportive and a pleasure to work with as we get settled. As Joyce mentioned earlier, both firms share the same values, which was a key factor for us in the context of the merger. In thinking about DT's future, we also wanted our next generation of lawyers to have a global platform to grow their practices. A few weeks in, we already feel the transformational impact of having access to MoFo's global offices in key tech and life sciences hubs around the world and collaborating with a deep bench of IP and trial lawyers in the Bay Area, across the United States and internationally. To share an anecdote, our [appellate colleagues](#) jumped in to collaborate with an existing DT team on two trademark secondary liability appeals that I argued in the Ninth Circuit last month.

What are DT's notable achievements and awards that MoFo clients should be aware of?

Liou: Recent notable representations by DT include:

- a defence verdict for Activision Blizzard in a copyright case over its blockbuster *Call of Duty Black Ops 4* videogame;
- a defence verdict for Redbubble in a copyright and trademark infringement case brought by Atari; and
- a defence verdict in a patent case for Aptiv over USB technology.

Its lawyers have been externally recognised as preeminent IP practitioners for years, including Daralyn Durie, Ragesh K Tangri and Joseph Gratz, who are ranked by Chambers nationally and in California. This year, IAM Patent 1000 ranked Daralyn in Tier 1 for Litigation in California. She was also recognised as one of the 'Women Leaders in Tech Law' by the California Legal Awards.

As well as this merger, MoFo recently opened new offices in Boston and Austin, and added IP capabilities in London – is the firm looking to expand even further in the near future?

Liou: MoFo is always assessing strategic opportunities, whether geographically, at the practice level or concerning specific individuals. Our recent Boston and Austin office openings and our additions in London reflect strategic investments to meet our clients' needs for outstanding IP and transactional support for their most difficult questions.

Our Boston office significantly strengthened our IP capabilities on the East Coast and is in the heart of one of the world's biggest life sciences hubs. The office has grown to more than 60 lawyers since opening in 2019 and we have made several additions to the office since, including that of technology transactions and life sciences transactions and licensing partner Matt Karlyn, who works closely with early-stage tech and life sciences companies, and investigations and white-collar defence partner Nate Mendell, who previously served as acting US attorney for the US Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts and assists companies with allegations of corporate healthcare fraud, financial fraud, public corruption and criminal IP theft.

Our Austin office provides access to our full-service platform and global network with an initial practice focus on IP litigation, corporate finance and capital markets, and emerging companies and venture capital for the tech, life sciences and healthcare sectors. Many of the firm's key technology clients have been growing rapidly in Austin in recent years and we anticipate this trend will continue as Austin continues to attract start-ups and venture capital funding. As part of the office's opening, leading IP practitioners Brian Nash and Aaron Fountain joined the firm.

Meanwhile, Steven James and the IP team were added in London in December 2022 to further strengthen our global platform with extensive litigation, counselling and prosecution experience across the full spectrum of IP rights, including trademarks, copyrights, trade secrets and patents.

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