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IP lawyers leave Morgan Miller Blair

East Bay Business Times - by [Marie-Anne Hogarth](#)

Six **Morgan Miller Blair** lawyers have defected to start their own intellectual property litigation shop.

Principals Richard Vasquez, Eric Benisek and Jeffrey Lindgren left their firm quietly, taking with them three associates, a contract attorney and a paralegal. After the defections, Morgan Miller Blair has 25 lawyers, down from 34 almost 18 months ago.

The departing attorneys all worked in Morgan Miller Blair's business and technology group, which provides services in litigation, mergers and acquisitions work, tax and intellectual property.

Morgan Miller Blair is best known for its real estate practice representing home builders and commercial real estate developers, which have felt first-hand the effects of the credit crunch and the collapse of the housing bubble.

The departing lawyers, who didn't formally announce their exit when they left in April and are still working on a firm Web site, said their immediate concern was servicing clients that followed them. Their firm will be devoted exclusively to defending companies from intellectual property threats, through litigation and counseling on business strategies.

"For me it is a matter of focus," said Vasquez. "When one firm has one face and is dedicated to one focus, you have the ability to be a more powerful engine. ... You don't have to debate focus. You don't have to share common employees and divide the focus of employees."

Vasquez, a Morgan Miller Blair attorney for the last 19 years, forged a singular practice inside Morgan Miller, traveling to Taiwan to nurture relationships with companies in the Hsinchu Science-based Industrial Park, a technology center in Hsinchu, southeast of Taipei. His clients there included network equipment makers **Accton Technology Corp.**, **Motech Industrial Inc.** and **Arcadyan Technology** that needed IP advice and U.S. lawsuit representation in federal and state court actions.

Vasquez worked closely with Lindgren, who also counseled clients on trade secret and licensing issues in transactions and who had been at Morgan Miller Blair since 2000. The pair have also represented in litigation such companies as **Hitachi High Technologies America**, which has its office in Schaumburg near Chicago, **3Com Corp.** of Marlborough, Mass., **D-Link Systems Inc.** of Fountain Valley, **Enterasys Secure Networks** of Andover, Mass., and **SMC Networks Inc.** of Irvine.

They brought with them attorneys they worked with on these matters, including Eric Benisek, who was named a Morgan Miller Blair principal in January, associates Craig Davis, Stephen Steinberg, Avin Sharma and Robert McArthur, a contract lawyer at Morgan Miller who was formerly a lawyer with **Morrison & Foerster LLP**.

The lawyers said they chose to start their own firm rather than join a national firm because they feel they can service their clients more efficiently than they would in a large shop with multiple offices and other expenses.

"In one sense the sales pitch is no different than what we were doing at Morgan Miller Blair," Lindgren said. "We just thought the platform could be improved on." Morgan Miller Blair Managing Chairman Bruce Ring said he did have a "work force reduction" of three staff members after the attorneys didn't take their secretaries with them. Vasquez says his firm is opting not to use secretaries.

On the attorney side, Morgan Miller Blair has not lost any other principals to competitors. Principal Cris Carrigan took a job with a division of the attorney general's office, and the firm also saw two associates depart.

Ring added that the firm continues to be active in its business and technology practice, with Steven Harmon at the helm. Morgan Miller Blair is doing fund formation work for real estate clients, unraveling land deals that clients want to get out of and representing clients with long-term land needs.

"Nothing has changed about our core litigation practices. We are still playing in the same arenas," said Ring. "There is not the velocity of the deals in real estate but there are still deals going on and we are picking up new clients."

He added that he wished his former partners well and also thought that their new platform would serve best their goals of creating a patent litigation boutique.



Stephanie Secret | East Bay Business Times

Richard Vasquez and
Jeff Lindgren of
Vasquez Benisek &
Lindgren.

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