



ATTORNEY SEARCH

MORGAN LEWIS & BOCKIUS

One of the ten largest law firms in the country, Morgan Lewis & Bockius mainly built its highly reputed name on the East Coast. The firm was the only one to have over 300 attorneys in the major marketplaces of Washington, DC, Philadelphia and New York City. Plans for a broader national presence (and eventually, a stronger international presence) were imminent, but were sped up recently when Brobeck, Phleger, and Harrison, one of the largest presences in California, suddenly decided to cease operations. Noticing the potential that all of these Brobeck attorneys could have in developing more of a West Coast presence (their Los Angeles office, the only Morgan Lewis office in California, had less than 75 attorneys), Morgan Lewis quickly responded, taking on 150 new attorneys, including 60 partners, as well as many staff members from the recently unemployed Brobeck ranks. This comes on the heels of much-publicized merger talks that fell through when Morgan Lewis got cold feet about taking on Brobeck's debts, which dashed Brobeck's hopes of somehow surviving their financial woes. Despite not following through on the merger, new offices are about to spring up with Brobeck attorneys wearing new Morgan Lewis nametags in Palo Alto, Irvine and San Francisco, and the current Los Angeles office is going to experience major growth with 75 new Brobeck attorneys coming on board.

On the East Coast, Morgan Lewis is highly renowned for its business and finance department, but it is a full service firm that prides itself on being able to handle any and all legal matters internally. Brobeck, on the other hand, was a firm that focused the majority of its work on litigation, with less than a quarter of its practice dedicated to business and finance. Morgan Lewis's West Coast practice will most likely continue along Brobeck's path and remain heavy in the litigation practice in the new offices, while strengthening the litigation practice of the Los Angeles office.

In adding to their West Coast practice, Morgan Lewis has effectively increased its profile with a ton of media exposure due to its positive involvement with picking up the pieces of what was once one of the most highly-reputed firms in the country. Additionally, it does so without having gone through a merger, and therefore is only absorbing the business, and not the crippling debts, of Brobeck. It is unlikely that the business problems that led to Brobeck's decreasing profits per partner of almost \$500,000 over the last two years of its existence will follow these attorneys to Morgan Lewis, but with many of the rainmaker Brobeck partners leaving before the ship went down, what Morgan Lewis is left with may not be the most highly desirable pieces of the Brobeck dynasty. Still, the business these partners do bring to a new, more stable environment will most likely provide a better foundation than the new economy clients with which Brobeck was able to inflate its profits.

This sudden and drastic growth's effect on the stability of Morgan Lewis is going to be very interesting to watch. In the mid 90's, the firm tried expansion on the West Coast and, after subsequently deciding that this was a mistake, had to pare down their Los Angeles numbers considerably. Again, in 2001, layoffs were necessary. However, with 60 new partners most likely bringing some of the client base from Brobeck, expansion will probably prove much less risky this time around. How these new California attorneys adjust to working under the rule of an old school East Coast firm is probably going to be the only significant roadblock in the path to success. Considering that Morgan

Lewis gains high marks, even on the East Coast, for collegiality and is becoming more and more modern, this, too, might just be an initial blip on the radar. All in all, this firm's commitment to growth could one day push it to the top of the American legal market.

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