

From Big Tech To BigLaw: Microsoft Atty Joins Morgan Lewis

By Michele Gorman

Law360 (January 11, 2023, 2:41 PM EST) -- A Microsoft litigation and compliance attorney who was with the tech giant for more than a decade has rejoined private practice, this time becoming a partner at Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP, the law firm announced Wednesday.

David Howard, who was a federal prosecutor and an attorney at Dechert LLP before joining Microsoft in 2010, is the newest addition to Morgan Lewis' Seattle office. The BigLaw firm opened its outpost there in June as part of its first foray into the Pacific Northwest.



David Howard

"I have tremendous respect for the lawyers at Morgan Lewis, some of whom I've known and worked with in different capacities for decades," Howard said in a statement to Law360 Pulse.

When Morgan Lewis opened its 34-member Seattle office, it said the location was meant to expand the firm's reach on the West Coast and capability to serve the technology, life sciences, health care, retail, financial services and energy industries. Howard, who joined the firm Monday, said being part of the Seattle office "seemed like an easy and natural choice for me to join this extraordinary team."

He wasn't immediately available for further comment Wednesday.

At Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft, Howard was corporate vice president and deputy general counsel for litigation, competition law and compliance, according to Morgan Lewis. His purview included leading the litigation team in cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.

In an interview with Law360 in 2014, he shared advice about the jump to in-house legal work.

"Take the time to understand the business, including the competitive landscape and strategic priorities," he said at the time. "Don't be afraid to drive both the strategy and tactics in your cases and don't take a backseat to outside counsel. Finally, don't be afraid to take risks — there are times when you need to be bold, and there's nothing more rewarding than plotting a bold course and succeeding."

He also said his first priority when choosing outside counsel is finding trial lawyers "who can build compelling themes and simplify complex issues," while also seeking those who "get the notion of partnership and value the leadership role that our in-house team plays in our cases."

A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School, Howard was an associate at Dechert for almost two years before he joined the White House counsel's Iran-Contra task force in 1987, according to his LinkedIn profile.

For the next seven years, Howard was an assistant U.S. attorney at the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. In 1995 he returned to Dechert, working in the white collar and securities litigation practice and representing businesses and individuals in civil and criminal matters until he moved to Microsoft, according to his LinkedIn profile.

Howard's "experience positions him to navigate a company, executive suite and board of directors through its biggest legal challenges and crises," Morgan Lewis Chair Jami McKeon said in a statement. "He is keenly aware of the array of legal and regulatory issues that specifically confront the operations of the global technology industry."

Howard isn't the only in-house lawyer to recently make the move from a high-profile technology company to private practice.

On Monday, Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP said it had hired Jane Horvath, former chief privacy officer at Apple Inc., as a partner and co-chair in the firm's privacy, cybersecurity and data innovation practice group. Also this week, Covington & Burling LLP brought on Kate Patchen, the former assistant general counsel of competition at Meta Platforms Inc., as a partner in its antitrust practice.

--Additional reporting by Anna Sanders, Chris Kudialis and Christine DeRosa. Editing by Alanna Weissman.