

EXTRA

Bryan Cave Ensnares Nine Katten Muchin Attorneys

By Tina Spee



Nicole Simonian, left, David Stepp, Katherine McDaniel and Evan Chuck left Los Angeles' Katten Muchin Zavis Rosenman to join the Santa Monica office of Bryan Cave.

In a move to beef up its expertise in international trade, intellectual property and banking regulation, Bryan Cave lured nine attorneys from Katten Muchin Zavis Rosenman this month

On March 1, the Santa Monica office of Bryan Cave added trade and customs partner David Stepp; international transactions partner Evan Chuck; and of-counsels Katherine McDaniel, who specializes in copyrights and trademarks, and Nicole Janigian Simonian, who focuses on international transactions.

In an independent move, Bryan Cave also recruited Katten Muchin banking partner Carol Van Cleef, two of-counsels and one associate for its Washington, D.C., office, while banking partner Judith Rinearson began working in the firm's New York office.

Bryan Cave has 800 lawyers in 15 offices worldwide, including offices in London; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Hong Kong; and Shanghai, China. All of 600-attorney Katten Muchin's seven offices are all in the United States.

"[Bryan Cave's] worldwide reach and its breadth of expertise and its first-rate quality are really the key factors that drew me to the firm," says Chuck, a former Los Angeles Katten Muchin partner who says he represents domestic and foreign clients in deals, particularly in Asia.

Gail Migdal Title, the managing partner of Katten Muchin's 75-attorney Los Angeles office, says she wishes the departing attorneys well. "I think that the firm and these lawyers had a different approach to the practice of law and particularly the business issues involved," Title says, declining to elaborate.

In response, Chuck says his group operates with an "international philosophy" because of the scope of its practice. "We have global business issues, and we're on a truly international platform, where it's all about being one firm," he says of Bryan Cave.

While Chuck says he advises companies like a foreign manufacturer of bath fixtures and faucets on making deals with U.S. distributors, Stepp's practice creates an overlap with Chuck's when the client needs international trade and customs counseling.

Though he declines to identify the manufacturer by name, the partners also share domestic clients involved in international matters, such as the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, which is constructing one of the largest classical Chinese gardens outside of China.

Now that Chuck has completed negotiations for the San Marino-based institution's contract with a Chinese design firm for the layout of the garden, Stepp will manage importing authentic Chinese materials to be used in construction.

Stepp, a former partner at Katten Muchin's Los Angeles office, says that he and Bryan Cave share clients like aerospace giant Boeing Co., for whom Stepp handles trade compliance issues relating to the building of its 787 Dreamliner. "Bryan Cave has done all of [Boeing's] export compliance work for years," Stepp says. "I had heard about Bryan Cave through my Boeing work. That's kind of the way I became interested in the firm."

Jeff Modisett, the managing partner of Bryan Cave's 60-lawyer Santa Monica office, says the hire of the Katten Muchin group ties in to the office's goal of targeting practice areas like international trade and intellectual property. "This is part of our strategic plan," Modisett says. "This group here hit our sweet spot."

Before the arrival of the Katten Muchin attorneys, Bryan Cave's Santa Monica office housed four transactional intellectual property attorneys, three international trade specialists and two attorneys with expertise in international deals.

Firmwide, Bryan Cave has 39 intellectual property attorneys, 15 attorneys who spend at least half their time handling international trade matters and 38 international transaction attorneys.

Sandy Lechtick, president of Esquire Inc., a Los Angeles-based recruiting firm, brokered the move to Santa Monica.

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