

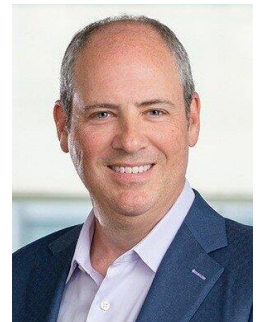
New Morgan Lewis Litigation Head Aims To 'Move The Needle'

By Jake Maher

Law360 (November 7, 2024, 3:03 PM EST) -- When Troy Brown moved to Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP as an associate in 2000, one of his first assignments at the firm called on him to work under partner J. Gordon Cooney.

Cooney tapped Brown to help him manage litigation around the gray-market importation of LASIK surgery lasers, and the two worked on multiple cases on the issue together for years until Brown moved up to partner, securing "great results," Brown said.

Nearly 25 years later, Cooney is passing the baton to Brown again. Brown succeeded Cooney as global leader of Morgan Lewis' 1000-plus-attorney litigation practice group in October.



Troy Brown

"I'm pretty energized," said Brown, who works out of the firm's Philadelphia and New York offices.

Under Cooney's leadership, the group has expanded regionally in the United States and globally in other countries, and if it stood on its own would likely be an AmLaw100 firm in its own right, Brown said. The group has also established its crisis management practice and pulled ahead of other firms in that field as a go-to adviser in high-stakes litigation, according to Brown.

Brown himself has already been part of the group's development over the years. He held various leadership positions in the department, including financial operations partner, leader of the business disputes practice within the litigation group, and member of the Morgan Lewis' global advisory board.

As he takes the reins of the litigation group, Brown acknowledged that there are big shoes to fill, but stayed focused on the opportunities that will come from the new role.

"It's always a little daunting, taking over a group that is performing so well," Brown said. "You think to yourself, are there ways that I can move the needle and double down on some of the great things we've done to drive new initiatives, new practice and practice generation more broadly?"

"I'm excited for it," Brown said.

Brown joined Law360 Pulse for a conversation about the litigation group's culture of optimism, the group's emphasis on crisis management for clients and its plans for growth and succession. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

What do you think your strengths as a leader are?

I think a lot of the strengths that our management has commented about when they were tapping me for this role are similar to what I see in myself as a mentor and leader of trial teams.

I've been able to empower and energize younger litigators, whether they're partners or associates, to take on opportunities and step out of comfort zones to really grow as trial lawyers. And I think the same concept applies to any leadership role at our firm and law firms generally: You are only as good as your team. And if you empower and resource your team to step into those opportunities, I think you get excitement and energy. I've seen that early on with the partners in our group with my leadership. It's really just doubling down on what we've been successful in the past.

I also think positivism and optimism about the future is really key. People, whether it's in law firms or otherwise, want to work with teams that have good energy, good, positive enthusiasm for what we do and try to look at the positive aspects of what we do and what we can do in the future. That's another element of what I hope will make me a good leader.

What projects or initiatives is the practice group working on right now?

I think probably our number one priority right now is really reinvesting and continually investing in our top-of-market crisis management practice.

We have represented clients in most of the biggest crisis management matters facing industry in the last 10 years, and I think making sure that our current clients and prospective clients in the market get more enhanced profile updates and thought leadership pieces on that practice in advance of crises is really important to us.

We've represented Teva and a separate team represented Rite Aid in connection with the opioid crisis litigations. We've represented SoCalGas and Sempra Energy in connection with the methane gas leak in Southern California for many years in the Aliso Canyon matter. We've represented Philips in the CPAP recall.

Right now, we're representing Google in the social media addiction litigation, primarily centered in California, which is kind of the next stage of social harms litigation. Big Tech has been in focus, and emerging tech will be in focus going forward, so I think that's a really high priority for us.

AI-driven initiatives, data privacy and incident response issues, whether they are ransomware attacks or data hacks — we have a really strong and growing team across the country and in Europe, and we're investing a lot in that, and frankly in cutting-edge issues like data center litigation.

There's really an incredible life cycle of potential litigation coming out of data centers, whether it's the investors and the builders and the dealmakers on data centers, or the vendors and customers who have enormous AI-driven and other data stored in these data centers that are proliferating around the world.

We have a working group and a team that's focused, and it's cross-practice — not just litigation but labor issues, real estate, deal work, finance — to focus on what our clients in tech and manufacturing and energy and otherwise are going to need in connection with the full life cycle of data center work.

Our securities enforcement defense and our white collar investigations groups are hitting on all cylinders. We've been adding lateral talent from the [U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission], from the [U.S. Department of Justice] for several years and really growing out our strengths, particularly in the Northeast.

What is your practice?

My practice has developed into an any-trial practice. I've tried cases across the spectrum from merger and acquisition disputes, postclosing earnout disputes to things like employment discrimination cases, False Claims Act retaliation cases, complex arbitrations on distributorship agreements globally. I have certain client relationships where I really handle the full gamut from securities fraud actions to investigations and government investigation, as well as class action defense for certain clients and certain industries.

How do you want to leave your mark on the group?

I think continuing to build out our practices that we just talked about and making sure that we are front of market and front of clients, prospective clients, the media, and otherwise on making sure our folks are getting the type of market penetration on that expertise in what is a really competitive landscape in BigLaw for this type of work.

I am continuing to think creatively about staffing and pricing models. I've been involved in a lot of our review of plaintiff-side contingency work that we've considered, alternative fee arrangements, large pricing and fee cap deals with clients, and continuing to make sure that we're refreshing our look on those matters is really critical to us being successful.

And I think continuing to have targeted strategic lateral growth. We have various markets we're focused on now in litigation like Northern California, Texas, London, New York and our growth in the Middle East, which I think is really explosive and important as we have capacity in Dubai and Abu Dhabi currently and we'll soon have an office in capacity in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. So I think growing, but growing not for growth's sake, but growing strategically and smartly, is really critical to the success of our group.

What we really need to do, and what I'm hoping we'll continue to do, is resource and empower the next generation of our litigation practice group leaders — the folks who are going to take over this group in five years, the folks who are succeeding to important, longstanding institutional client relationships, making sure that they are leaning into these opportunities to step into the spotlight as first chair trial lawyers, as first chair investigators and as first chair client relationship managers, so that we continue to do what we've done in the past 30, 40 years, which is make sure that we have continuity in our culture and our growth and succession plan.

--Editing by Nicole Bleier.