



Fairchild Morgan Law

Big Law Expats Find Their Niche Catering to the Corporate Law Needs of Midsize Companies

In November 2018, two Big Law expatriates who left their top-tier law firms years ago to hang their own shingles [joined forces to create Fairchild Morgan Law](#), an eight-lawyer boutique firm with offices in Chicago and Milwaukee.

The firm was created by a merger between Fairchild Law Offices, LLC and Morgan Legal Group, LLC. Jessica Fairchild launched her eponymous law firm in 2010 after leaving her post as a corporate attorney in Sidley Austin's Chicago office, and as in-house counsel at Chicago 2016, the nonprofit that attempted to bring the 2016 Summer Olympics to Chicago. Geoff Morgan launched his firm after serving as a partner in the Chicago office of Schiff Hardin and as chair of the business division at Michael Best in Milwaukee.

Unsurprisingly, based on the legal practices of the firm's founders, Fairchild Morgan provides a range of corporate legal services, concentrating on mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, private offerings, commercial real estate, contract review and outside general counsel services. The firm serves private and publicly held companies and nonprofits operating both inside the United States and abroad.

Fairchild and Morgan staffed their firm with two senior counsel, two counsel and one of counsel, many of whom had Big Law backgrounds similar to theirs. Fairchild Morgan's ranks include expats from Skadden Arps; Kirkland & Ellis; Latham & Watkins; and Foley & Lardner. The firm also has two paralegals and an executive director of governmental affairs.

THE NEW NORMAL OF BOUTIQUE FIRMS

The firm and its name partners are following the trend of Big Law attorneys leaving their big-name firms—and high hourly rates—behind so they can cater to a large market of small and midsize clients who require a measure of Big Law expertise, but who are unable to pay Big Law fees. Morgan observed that there are many clients for which his old law firms are not good fits because those clients are fee-sensitive, while the law firms are not.

According to Fairchild, clients within the niche the firm is aiming to fill are already taking notice. Fairchild told *The American Lawyer*[®] that soon after the firm launched, it received a call from a private equity firm that has portfolio companies in need of legal services. The private equity firm had been using a Big Law firm but wanted to meet with Fairchild Morgan to discuss what the firm could do for those portfolio companies.



While it has been said before, it is worth noting again that the Great Recession played a large role in helping corporate clients realize that firms like Fairchild Morgan—small firms with attorneys who have experience working with sophisticated clients facing complex legal issues—could provide them with the same high-quality legal counsel they expect from large law firms, but at a fraction of the price.

But boutique law firms like Fairchild Morgan are not just providing clients with an alternative to Big Law. Associates—typically Millennials—are looking at boutique law firms as alternatives to Big Law thanks to the benefits and amenities boutiques tend to offer associates that are more in line with expectations of employer benefits in today's business market.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Both Fairchild and Morgan have made clear that while they have said goodbye to practicing law at Big Law firms, they are not saying goodbye to the world of Big Law. Both attorneys maintain relationships with attorneys at large law firms and expect to get many referrals from those firms for client matters those firms are unable or unwilling to handle.

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