

Orrick Opens in Boston With Ropes & Gray Hires

The new office, focused on a cybersecurity and data practice, is the latest of several launched by Am Law firms in the past year.

By Meghan Tribe
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There's a new Big Law player in Boston as Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe has announced it's opening an office there with several key hires from Ropes & Gray's cybersecurity and data practice.

Joining Orrick in its new home in Boston are Doug Meal and Heather Egan Sussman, co-leads of Ropes & Gray's privacy and data security practice. At Orrick, Meal will head the cyber and privacy litigation and enforcement practice while Sussman will co-lead the cyber and privacy advisory practice along with Aravind Swaminathan, who joined Orrick in 2015 from DLA Piper.

Also joining the duo in Orrick's new Boston office is longtime Ropes & Gray partner Seth Harrington, while partner Michelle Visser will join the firm in its San Francisco office.

With its newest additions, Orrick now has an 11-partner team dedicated to all aspects of the cyber and privacy work essential for clients' data protection and innovation strategies, said Orrick chair Mitch Zuklie.

"Cyber was the thing that most drove us to Boston," Zuklie said. "[And] it's entirely client driven."

In conversations with clients, the firm found their legal needs weren't adequately being met in the areas of data privacy and cybersecurity, Zuklie said. And while he noted that the firm already has a strong team working on the advisory side of matters, Meal and his



Doug Meal, Michelle Visser, Heather Egan Sussman and Seth Harrington

team bring experience on the enforcement litigation front critical to clients.

"Orrick really gets what clients are looking for, and we're really excited to build that and build around that in Boston," said Sussman, who will serve as leader of Orrick's new office. "Boston is a growing tech market and Orrick is a really important tech firm."

Over the years, Meal and Sussman, who joined Ropes & Gray in 2015 after 15 years at McDermott Will & Emery, built a core team, and the two work closely on data, privacy and cybersecurity matters for a variety of high-profile clients. But as Meal approached Ropes & Gray's mandatory retirement age, the team began looking for a new home.

“As the process unwound, what became really important was to look for a firm that would be a good place, not just for me personally, but a good place for the practice that [Sussman] and I lead,” said Meal, who was **named litigator of the week by The American Lawyer** in 2018 for his representation of LabMD in its petition to the U.S. Court of Appeals that resulted in the first-ever court decision overturning an FTC cybersecurity action.

Despite having conversations with some of Big Law’s newest entrants into the Boston legal market, the duo agreed the best place for them was Orrick, Meal added.

“It was an opportunity to combine our practice with their already substantial practice and build ... the pre-eminent privacy and cybersecurity practice, not just in the United States, but globally,” Meal said.

Over the last several years, Boston has become a hub of innovation, with entrepreneurs capitalizing on the city’s budding life sciences, health care, biotechnology and technology sectors. But Zuklie maintains that Orrick’s move to Boston was not geographic, but rather sector driven.

“We always think about a new market with a question of where we can build top-tier destination practices in areas that are critical to tech, energy and infrastructure, and finance,” Zuklie said. “So Boston is clearly a market that makes sense for Orrick in terms of our strength in tech and innovation.”

The firm plans to add several partners in the coming months, Zuklie said, noting that there will be six additional attorneys joining Meal and his team from Ropes & Gray.

Orrick is just the latest top Am Law firm to set up shop in Boston over the last year. Kirkland & Ellis, Hogan Lovells, Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan and, **most recently, Arent Fox** have all moved to Boston looking to snatch up not only the legal work from its budding industries but also its top legal talent.

“The real competition is over the legal talent in the city and who attracts the legal talent,” said Meal. “If you attract the legal talent, the work will flow.”

In an increasingly competitive marketplace, Meal is confident about Orrick’s chances of success in Boston.

“Everything about Orrick, at least as it applied to us, was head and shoulders above the other firms, frankly,” Meal said. “So the fact that Orrick was able to recruit us makes me feel good about Orrick winning way more than its fair share of those talent competitions going forward.”

Meghan Tribe is a reporter covering the changing face of Big Law, from lateral moves and work-from-home programs to diversity initiatives. Contact her at mtribe@alm.com. On Twitter: @TribeMeghan

