

Desmarais Unveils San Francisco Office as Firm Goes Bicoastal

By Xiumei Dong



The Desmarais team in San Francisco at 101 California, (L to R) John Desmarais, Peter Magic, Venice Salvacruz, Ameet Modi, Kaitlyn Houston, Emily Chen, Michael Rhodes and Josh Montgomery. (Photo: Jason Doiy/ALM)

As it looks to grow on the West Coast, New York intellectual property firm Desmarais has officially planted its flag in San Francisco, opening its second office at 101 California St., as announced last year.

Desmarais, now a 55-lawyer firm, was **founded in 2010** by John Desmarais, who had been head of the intellectual property

litigation practice at Kirkland & Ellis, where he practiced for a decade. Since **announcing in October** that the firm planned to open a San Francisco office, Desmarais has spent much of his time flying from coast to coast.

“I was originally thinking that we’ll just stay in New York, but over time, the logic of opening in San Francisco became

inescapable, in light of our client base and the great legal talent out here,” Desmarais said.

The firm’s Silicon Valley clients include Apple Inc., Cisco Systems Inc. and Intel Corp.

Partner Peter Magic, who is in charge of the firm’s California growth, said having a San Francisco office takes the firm’s “ability to service clients to the next level.”

(Photo: Jason Doiy/ALM)



“It’s an extra level of service to be able to be right in their backyard and next door to their office, and be able to see them more frequently,” Magic said. He said it is also beneficial “to be able to recruit from the same talent pool that they are familiar with and respect, coming from Berkeley and Stanford, schools out here.”

Magic, who joined Desmarais’ firm from Kirkland in 2014, will work closely with Desmarais to help the firm build out its practices in California. They have already recruited three other associates in San Francisco, and New York-based partner Ameet Modi is also expected to join the West Coast group by the end of this year.

“I am excited to be a part of the process of growing our presence here,” said Modi, a University of California, Berkeley graduate who also joined Desmarais from Kirkland in 2010. “A lot of talent is out there that we’ll have more access to and more connections with.”

(Both Magic and Desmarais have passed the California bar

exam, and Modi is taking the exam this July.)

As of now, the San Francisco office can hold about 15 lawyers and five staff members. However, the lease at 101 California allows the firm to further expand its office space if needed in the future, Desmarais said.

“The hard part is finding the talent, even in the Bay Area where there are a lot of talented people,” Magic said. “What we look for is people who are really interested in patent litigation, really interested in being trial lawyers, and who just have the enthusiasm and the drive to work on any technology that our clients may bring to us for cases.”

Plotting Growth in California

California is one of the top jurisdictions for patent litigation, Desmarais said. With a high concentration of companies located here needing patent services, it makes the state an attractive market for the firms seeking to expand their IP practices.

When asked how the firm plans to compete with the abundance of bigger and smaller firms in California, Desmarais responded: “We are very different from everybody else here, literally everybody else.”

Unlike most traditional law firms, Desmarais does not bill



(Photo: Jason Doiy/ALM)

by the hour. Instead, the firm arranges a monthly bill or flat fee with clients in advance, according to Desmarais.

“We don’t give them a large team of people just running up the billable hour,” he said. “From the start of the matter [we] put on a trial team, and we run the case like an efficient trial team from the beginning to the end.”

As a trial firm, Desmarais puts significant effort into training its attorneys as trial lawyers, including offering mock trial training for associates, as well as lectures on depositions, arguments and other aspects of litigation.

“When you hire us, you get a team of lawyers, whether they are partners or associates, that have been battle tested many times on trials. We have a very impressive record of success in those trials, so people feel comfortable hiring us for that type of work,” Desmarais said.

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