

In-House Tech Leaders On Joining Forces At Gibson Dunn

By Jack Rodgers

Law360 (October 3, 2024, 1:41 PM EDT) -- Keith Enright, the former chief privacy officer for Google who recently joined Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP, has worked in-house to help corporations navigate challenging data privacy issues for the majority of his legal career. It is work he's always found extremely important, he told Law360 Pulse in a recent interview.

"I do think that those of us who have had the privilege and the opportunity to lead and to engage with organizations that are deploying these technologies at scale to billions of people around the world, have a moral obligation to recognize the profound responsibility we have to help innovation proceed responsibly," Enright said.

Enright joined Gibson Dunn in September after some 13 and a half years helping Google achieve its data protection and privacy goals, and is teaming up with S. Ashlie Beringer and Jane Horvath as co-leaders of the firm's tech and innovation industry group. Enright will also serve as a co-leader of the firm's AI practice.

It's a trio with formidable in-house experience.

Beringer spent nearly four years with Gibson Dunn before leaving in 2013 for a role as deputy general counsel at Facebook, where she helped oversee litigation, regulatory and product development matters for the company. She returned to the firm in 2021 as a co-leader of the firm's privacy, cybersecurity and data innovation group.

Horvath, meanwhile, is the former chief privacy officer at Apple, where she spent more than 11 years.

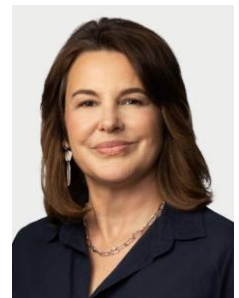
Beringer told Law360 Pulse the trio's combined in-house experience would be a major asset for clients navigating novel regulatory and legal challenges.

"We understand the cadence of our clients' businesses and are able to invoke the muscle memory we gained in the roles that we've had to help navigate the PR aspects of the crisis, the policy outreach, the customer communications, the interface changes, ... And to empower our clients to be able to navigate these incredibly complex, high-stakes scenarios with confidence and those who have been in their shoes," Beringer said.

Here, Law360 Pulse talks to Enright and Beringer about their goals for their practices, their in-house



Keith Enright



Ashlie Beringer

backgrounds and more. Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Why was now the right time to bring this team together and specifically at Gibson Dunn?

Keith Enright: I had an incredible ride with Google, and I'm profoundly grateful for what they let me do there and for the privilege I had to be there for as long as I was. It was time for a change after about 13 and half years. I was ready to scale up, as crazy as that sounds when you're talking relative to Google. I wanted to take the lessons and experiences from all my time there and use them to the benefit of more organizations, more leaders, more innovators.

I had taken a good bit of time, surveyed the entire landscape of opportunities, and Gibson became the obvious choice for me for a host of reasons.

The reputation of the firm, the unique strength that they bring to bear across all their different practice areas, and, perhaps more than anything, the privilege of getting to work with Ashlie and Jane, really is, I think, a historic opportunity to combine three of the most relevant in-house experts in some of the key domains and disciplines that are going to be essential in helping businesses navigate the challenges that are going to come to the fore in the next five years.

Ashlie Beringer: I have had the pleasure of working with Keith over the years when we were in-house, we worked also with Jane and other industry leaders who were facing common challenges with new regulations that we had to figure out how to navigate.

Keith brings incredible depth, has navigated almost any issue that any of our clients has faced or will face by virtue of working at a company that had such a broad portfolio and that brought him into constant contact with regulators around the globe.

What I know from having served in-house is that you gain really unique experience that very few outside lawyers have, and we're now in a position to deploy that to the benefit of clients who may not have large legal teams with the ability to navigate regulatory inquiries around the globe. Many clients need that skill set, but most don't have that in-house.

What are some of the goals you both have for this practice?

AB: We are really intentionally positioning our platform to be able to provide a holistic solution to global companies that are facing business, regulatory and government enforcement threats all over the world.

We've each had to navigate crisis moments when we were getting hit by investigative demands and letters from every corner of the world. What you want in that moment is one firm that can be with you to help navigate every dimension of the crisis and that has the relationships and the awareness of the laws and the cultural dynamics in different regions, but that firm didn't exist when I was in-house.

When I made the choice to return to Gibson, I was very intentional about building strong talent in all our major regions. We are working very actively now with our global clients, on regulatory matters in Europe and leveraging the knowledge of the technology and the business practices we've gained by working with those clients in the U.S.

Because we are handling so many nonpublic regulatory matters around the world, we have a very keen understanding of what regulators are focusing on and how we can mitigate and get ahead of those

concerns in the product launch cycle itself.

Many of those efforts are focused on the implementation of AI and generative AI — that's an incredibly active area for us.

KE: What I think is really interesting when we talk about goals for the firm and the practice now is that, if you look at the next five years, the next 10 years, the rate of technological shift being triggered by artificial intelligence and so many adjacent technologies is going to move faster, is going to be more disruptive, and both the risks and opportunities facing our clients are going to be greater than anything they have ever seen before.

AI is going to be faster, bigger and more impactful and existential for a lot of organizations, but we have amassed the core skills that are going to be invaluable in helping organizations compete and win in that next set of challenges.

How much of what you're doing to build the practice comes from what you're hearing from clients about needing more attorneys with experience with data privacy and AI?

AB: I don't know that there are any firms that have built a platform with this much in-house talent. I'll tell you it was readily apparent when I returned to Gibson Dunn how much value I was able to add because of the time that I had spent in-house. Very quickly there was a lot of demand, and I think clients were appreciative that when I was working with them on a litigation matter or a regulatory investigation, I understood their internal challenges.

Being able to support our clients in navigating their internal company dynamics to empower them, and to show up in a way where our work product is setting them up to be strong, strategic partners to their internal clients, is something that I think clients have found incredibly attractive, and so we are seeing more and more demand for that.

Why did you both want to focus your practices on these issues?

KE: I have always been a firm believer and an optimist about the capacity of technology to make people's lives better, to make them more productive, to bring them together and to allow them to experience more joy in their lives.

Having lived through the last 20 years of innovation, we've seen the highs and the lows in terms of the way technological innovation can impact society.

I do think that those of us who have had the privilege and the opportunity to lead and to engage with organizations that are deploying these technologies at scale to billions of people around the world have a moral obligation to help innovation proceed responsibly.

And so we need sophisticated, thoughtful advisers to make sure we're staying on the right side of history and that we're proceeding responsibly. I'm not sure that I've ever seen a team of people that is better equipped to have a positive impact on a vast array of clients and, by extension, the most impactful technologies that are going to touch people around the world in the next decade.

AB: For me, I genuinely love the technical subject matter. I find it deeply creative and intellectually satisfying to learn and understand a new technology and then to translate that into advocacy that can

resonate for policymakers, regulators and those who don't have a technical background.

I thrive on really sticky, challenging problems in an undefined landscape, and this practice gives me access to that — constantly. I look for solutions that bring all the stakeholders along and get them pulling in the same direction so that we can deploy our expertise on issues that shape our society and the future of our world, as Keith said, from a place of responsibility and efficacy.

--Additional reporting by Hannah Albarazi. Editing by Nicole Bleier.

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