

BakerHostetler Reshuffles Practice Groups, Signaling Data's Dominance

By Dan Packel
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BakerHostetler is revamping how it handles clients' digital assets and data needs by creating a new practice group—the firm's sixth—folding in specialties like e-commerce, cybersecurity and consumer privacy.

The new Digital Assets and Data Management group combines six existing service delivery teams and places data and digital issues on equal footing with the firm's five other core practices: litigation, business, labor and employment, intellectual property and tax.

Ted Kobus, the chair of the new practice, said that since arriving at BakerHostetler in 2011 with a focus on cybersecurity incident response and privacy, his time assisting clients on-site drove home two realities.



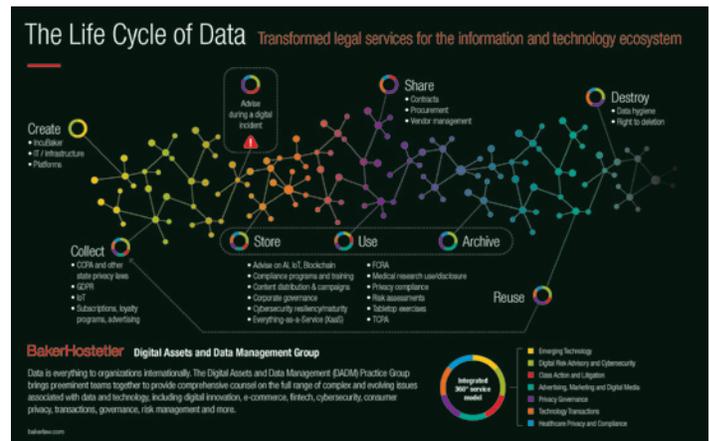
Theodore Kobus,
BakerHostetler

“Data was gold in an organization, and everybody touched it across the enterprise. But, when we would work with these companies, we found they were hiring multiple law firms, where each one would take one piece,” he said. “It just made sense that if we were counseling our clients on taking an enterprise-wide approach to data, why aren't we taking that approach too?”

The new practice group incorporates six discrete teams: digital risk advisory and cybersecurity; advertising, marketing and digital media; privacy governance and technology transactions; healthcare privacy and compliance; privacy and digital risk class action and litigation; and emerging technology.

Over 60 core attorneys are assigned to the group. If subject matter experts who handle these issues on a part-time basis are included, the number swells to over 130 attorneys, plus technologists.

Of the six teams, four—healthcare privacy, digital media, privacy governance and emerging technology—have



women in their leadership, with a total of six female leaders.

Kobus said that while the firm is always looking to grow practices as clients demand more support, he currently does not see any gaps in coverage.

“Are we going to be able to go to market and be able to offer a complete solution?” he mused. “We feel we’re in a really good spot.”

The firm's existing clients for data-related matters include Marriott International, Forever 21, McDonald's, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, MD Anderson Cancer Center, Chipotle, Aramco and Chevron.

Kobus noted that some of the teams could eventually be split into smaller units, pointing privacy governance and technology transactions as one example.

“It's a practice that is ready to serve our clients on day one,” he said. “But it's also going to evolve as our clients evolve.”

Dan Packel covers law firms' global strategy and economics. Based in Philadelphia, he writes a weekly briefing for Law.com, "The Law Firm Disrupted," exploring change and innovation in the legal services market. Contact him at dpackel@alm.com. On Twitter at @packeld