

MONDAY, JULY 2, 2018

Highly Recommended

Women-owned firm Walker Stevens Cannom finds relationship building has led to big clients.

By Melanie Brisbon
Daily Journal Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES — A trio of attorneys left big law and set out to create a boutique law firm. Their creation, Walker Stevens Cannom LLP, had to be up and running within hours of their departures.

The firm already had an important client matter: advising technology giant Cisco Systems Inc. as it was being investigated by the Department of Justice and Securities and Exchange Commission over potential breaches of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

Name partner Amanda N. Walker started working with Cisco when she was with Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP.

“When I decided to leave, I gave the firm ample notice, and I gave my clients ample notice,” Walker said. “The client asked me to continue working, so I continued to work with Wilmer as co-counsel.”

Walker had to ensure that starting her new firm didn’t have a negative impact on her client.

“Shortly after we started, I traveled to Russia for witness interviews and meetings with my Wilmer counterparts,” she said. “I think our biggest challenge was being up and running on day one.”

While Walker worked with Cisco, the other founding partners — Bethany M. Stevens, also formerly with WilmerHale, and Hannah L. Cannom, who departed from Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy LLP — focused on other aspects of starting the firm.

“Amanda being so busy left Bethany and me responsible for how we wanted to form the firm in terms of creating processes and developing client relationships,” Cannom said. “Starting a firm now is probably a lot easier than it was 25 years ago because of the software solutions that are available for firm management, but it was difficult to choose and make sure that we were getting the best, most secure technology.”



Daily Journal Photo

From left, Hannah Cannom, Amanda Walker and Bethany Stevens of Walker Stevens Cannom LLP.

‘We believe in our client’s products and business, and we’ve integrated them into our practice, whether it’s our life practice or our legal practice.’

— Amanda N. Walker

Walker Stevens Cannom LLP launched successfully in 2014 in spite of the challenges. One of its first clients, Cisco, also received a positive result when the DOJ and SEC closed their investigations and decided not to bring enforcement actions.

The attorneys had an idea of what they wanted to accomplish when starting a women-owned boutique law firm.

“While that is unique and provides the value of diversity to many of our tech clients, we still wanted to emphasize that we could offer something more,” Cannom said. “We are building deep relationships, and we are the attorneys doing the work. This really resonates with our clients and has been the primary driver for referrals.”

The three-attorney outfit advises individ-

uals and businesses from startups to very large companies in the technology, finance, art, entertainment, fashion, retail, lifestyle and fitness industries. Intellectual property, brand management and enforcement, commercial litigation, privacy and data security, along with compliance and investigations, are among the firm’s practice areas.

“Some of our matters are similar to what we did at big law firms, and other of our matters probably could not have been done at big law firms because we serve as outside in-house general counsel for some of our clients,” Walker said. “We’ve now had long relationships with a number of our clients where we thoroughly and deeply understand their business and are able to therefore better serve them and help them carry out their goals.”

“We believe in our client’s products and business, and we’ve integrated them into our practice, whether it’s our life practice or our legal practice,” she added.

Starting the firm with a big client matter gave the firm an advantage. It helped relieve some of the pressure to find clients.

“I think we were less worried and anxious because we had this big matter when we started on day one,” Walker said. “That allowed us some flexibility to make sure the matters that we were taking on after that were the kind of work that we wanted to be doing.”

The attorneys have built a global legal practice from offices in the Arts District in downtown Los Angeles. Many of their clients are abroad while others are close by.

The firm represented Zinc Cafe & Market in trademark litigation. Zinc, with a cafe in the Arts District, filed a lawsuit against Zinque LLC for trademark infringement, unfair competition, and related causes of action, which alleged Zinque improperly used Zinc’s federally registered trademark,

court documents said. The company settled the case with help from Walker Stevens Cannom. *Zinc Cafe and Market Inc v. Zinque LLC et al.*, 8:14-cv-02033 (C.D. Cal., filed Dec. 22, 2014).

Apple Inc. also relied on Walker Stevens Cannom for counsel when Dell Inc. served Apple with a subpoena, demanding production of documents in 22 categories and testimony on 19 topics. The subpoena arose from an underlying patent infringement litigation between Dell Inc. and plaintiffs Audio MPEG Inc., U.S. Philips Corp., TDF SAS, and Institut for Rundfunktechnik GmbH. *Audio MPEG Inc. v. HP Inc.*, 16-mc-80271-HRL (N.D. Cal., filed March 10, 2017).

“We represented Apple as a third-party recipient of a subpoena, which was issued to both Apple and an Apple employee,” Cannom said. “We filed a motion to quash both of the subpoenas in the Northern District of California and were successful in getting them quashed in their entirety.”

The firm scales up with contract attorneys

when necessary. It gets many of its clients through referrals.

“If you’ve done excellent work and have a reputation for that, people will think of you as someone they want to give work to — for example, if they have a conflict at a big firm and need to send it elsewhere,” Walker said. “I think we’ve been very fortunate that our former colleagues refer work to us, whether it’s conflicts work or otherwise, because of our reputations at our previous firms and our dedication to our clients at Walker Stevens Cannom.”

Headspace Inc., a meditation app; Joya Communications Inc., developer of the Marco Polo messaging app; and The Epilepsy Foundation of Greater Los Angeles are some of its clients.

Growing is a goal for the firm.

“We are figuring out how to grow responsibly and bring in an associate or two,” Cannom said, “but also stay very true to what our firm ideals are and what we were founded to do.”