

## Former IP Leader at Herrick, Feinstein Launches Own Boutique

BY MEGHAN TRIBE

NANCY MERTZEL, chair of the intellectual property practice at Herrick, Feinstein, is leaving Big Law and setting up her own solo shop in Manhattan.

“I really felt like starting my own firm would enable me to really take better care of my clients, to really focus on what they need without having to deal with [the] things that go along with being a part of a big firm,” Mertzel said. “So I just felt that now is the time.”

Mertzel Law officially opened for business earlier this month, providing IP and regulatory counseling to Mertzel’s long-time clients that range from startups to Fortune 100 companies. She joined Herrick in late 2015 after three years as a partner at women-owned Schoeman Updike Kaufman & Stern, now called Schoemman Updike Kaufman & Gerber after former name partner Mindy Stern left last year to join New York’s Schwartz Sladkus Reich Greenberg Atlas.

At Herrick, where Mertzel led the IP practice, she focused her efforts on protecting brand names, content, products and technology. Earlier this year, Herrick and Crowell & Moring called off merger talks, and Boston-based Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo swooped in to pick off two top Herrick partners in New York.

Mertzel said she had already been ruminating for some time about leaving Big Law to open her own boutique.

“I’ve seen friends of mine do it and admired them,” Mertzel said. “I’ve always

had a feeling that lawyers who are in practice for themselves are happier in terms of quality of life and enjoying the practice of law.”

So in May she decided to put the plans into motion, consulting with those who had already taken the plunge and researching all that was needed to start her own shop, down to the project management software and billing system that she would use. Internet registration records show that Mertzel staked out her new firm’s web domain name on May 31.

Although Mertzel Law has only been open for less than a month, the firm’s namesake said she has been able to do legal work for clients in addition to working out the kinks in setting up programs and promoting her business.

“It’s been seamless,” said Mertzel of her new boutique, noting that she has no immediate plans to grow the firm beyond herself but will bring on help as her clients’ matters dictate. “Ultimately, I would hope that I can affiliate with a few other people of like-mind and grow the practice like that.”

Mertzel is the latest female partner to leave large firm life behind to start her own shop.

Roberta Kaplan recently left Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison to start her own New York-based litigation boutique, a move that came a little more than a year after fellow high-powered, female litigators Beth Wilkinson and Alexandra Walsh left the firm to start their own outfit.

In June, Terry Mutchler left Pepper Hamilton to form Mutchler Lyons. Step-



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Nancy Mertzel

toe & Johnson partner Sharon Larkin and Bradley Arant Boult Cummings partner Elizabeth Ferrell and Steptoe & Johnson partner Sharon Larkin also left their respective firms last month to start Larkin Ferrell, a female-owned government contracts boutique in Washington, D.C.

“I’m excited about being back in women-owned in law firm space,” Mertzel said. “I really sort of appreciated the interest that clients would show toward sending work in the direction of women-owned and diverse owned law firms.”

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