

August 26, 2021 4:19 PM EDT Last Updated 19 hours ago



Legal Industry

Data Privacy



Benesch joins growing list of firms with data-focused practice group

By Sara Merken

3 minute read



- Practice addresses privacy, tech, data and cybersecurity
- 25-lawyer group looking to grow

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(Reuters) - Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff is bringing together lawyers from several practice areas to launch a data protection practice group, a move that comes as law firms of all sizes think about how to best advise clients on their increasingly complex data, privacy and technology issues.

The effort is meant to "break down some of the traditional law firm silos" and offer clients multi-disciplinary advice, said Chicago-based partner Ryan Sulkin, who heads up the new data protection group unveiled this week.

Cleveland-founded Benesch, a 290-lawyer firm, has grown through lateral hires over the past few years, and has added more than 50 attorneys this year. The firm has seven offices, including relatively new outposts launched in Chicago in 2015 and San Francisco in 2019.

Sulkin joined Benesch's innovations, information and intellectual property (3iP) practice group in February from Michael Best & Friedrich. He said his move was in part to spearhead Benesch's new group, which focuses on privacy, technology, data and cybersecurity.

The team comprises about 25 lawyers from the firm's existing 3iP, healthcare, labor and employment and litigation practices. Pulling those lawyers together allows them to share knowledge and come up with "consistent strategies," Sulkin said, adding that collaboration is something the firm is "really looking to grow and improve on" with the new group.

"This approach simply brings together the experience and insights of attorneys across different areas of practice and organizes them into a team that reflects the way our forward-thinking, entrepreneurial clients think about data and technology – as a central pillar of their enterprise," Gregg Eisenberg, managing partner of the firm, said in a statement on Wednesday.

Benesch's move comes as law firms look to boost their privacy and data security offerings, particularly through increased lateral hiring to expand existing groups - some of which have been around for decades - and revamp practices to signal a commitment to the practice area.

Last year, for example, Baker & Hostetler united several teams, including cybersecurity, privacy litigation and advertising, to create what is now a more than 80-lawyer practice group. The restructuring has paid off in the form of increased revenue and demand, and has helped recruitment efforts.

BakerHostetler isn't the only firm whose data-related practice group involves lawyers with varied backgrounds, from healthcare to litigation to regulatory compliance.

On bringing together lawyers in data practices with these different backgrounds, Sulkin said he thinks the legal industry "has to head in this direction."

"I think the traditional law firm silos don't work because of their inefficiency, and because of their inability to weave together the advice that's needed and issue spot in an efficient way," he said.

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