

Rising Star: Latham & Watkins' Julie Crisp

By Kellie Mejdrich

Law360 (June 27, 2023, 1:14 PM EDT) -- Julie Crisp of Latham & Watkins LLP has advised media and technology companies on benefits and compensation matters in several multibillion-dollar acquisitions, including MGM Studios' \$8.45 billion acquisition by Amazon and T-Mobile's \$146 billion combination with Sprint, earning her a spot among benefits attorneys under 40 honored by Law360 Rising Stars.

THE BIGGEST DEAL SHE'S WORKED ON LATELY:

Crisp said Intuit's \$7 billion acquisition of Credit Karma in 2020 immediately came to mind as one of the most interesting recent deals, given that work on the transaction occurred in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

It's among a growing list of large transactions where Crisp has advised on benefits and executive compensation, with a particular focus across her practice on large media and technology companies. Crisp forged strong ties with companies in San Francisco, where she was previously based. Now in Century City, California, she's close to where many media and entertainment companies are headquartered.

Work on the Intuit-Credit Karma deal was particularly memorable, Crisp said.

"It actually signed a week before the stay-at-home orders went into place, and then it closed, kind of mid-pandemic, and we all thought we'd be back in the office in just a couple of weeks. And months later, we're working through the closing stuff while we're all sitting at home," said Crisp, who has since moved to Los Angeles.

That deal was also memorable because she had spent roughly a decade working with Intuit — "I think since I was a third-year associate," Crisp said.

Other issues that made it interesting included working on equity compensation agreements and post-closing employment and retention arrangements, with Intuit particularly focused on employee retention post-close, she said.

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STAR**



Julie Crisp
Latham & Watkins

Age: 39

Home base: Century City, Calif.

Position: Partner

Law school: University of Southern California's Gould School of Law

First job after law school: Associate at Latham & Watkins LLP

"When you're working on a deal with a client that you've known that long, and you have those relationships, it feels a lot more like you're all part of the same team," Crisp said.

WHY SHE IS A BENEFITS ATTORNEY:

Crisp, who before her second year of law school spent time working with the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office prosecuting gang-related cases in Compton, California — she served as a law clerk in the Hardcore Gang Division — said the route to benefits law wasn't direct.

Crisp said that she, "probably like a lot of people out there," didn't know she could have a practice focused on executive compensation and employee benefits.

But after she joined as an associate at Latham & Watkins out of law school and took advantage of the firm's unassigned associate program, Crisp described how benefits clicked for her.

After trying out litigation, corporate and finance work, she wound up working with members of the benefits practice group as a junior associate and recalled how a partner said to her, "You might not know it yet, but you're a benefits attorney." She recalled being skeptical of his response at first.

"But here I am, over a decade later, and I am. So clearly he knew something I didn't," Crisp said, who was one of the firm's youngest individuals to make partner in 2018, at 34 years old.

HOW SHE THINKS HER PRACTICE IS GOING TO CHANGE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS:

Crisp said that when it comes to trends in the benefits industry, she's keeping an eye on how the law develops around remote work arrangements, which are on the rise in the U.S. and globally.

Another area where changes in policy have driven a focus in the practice is executive compensation and clawbacks, with sweeping changes included in the 2017 federal income tax law and more recently a wave of U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission rulemaking.

"We've really had to get up to speed quickly and stay on top of the latest interpretations of those rules, and the latest best practices," Crisp said, noting work on the issue has also prompted collaboration across practice groups including securities, corporate and labor.

"There have been a lot of developments in the noncompete and restrictive covenants space that often overlaps with the employment agreements we're putting together," Crisp said.

WHAT MOTIVATES HER:

Crisp says the combination of analysis, writing, mathematics and variety of issues involved with benefits law keeps her interested.

"For example, I can spend the morning working on a merger agreement, I can do an employment agreement midday," Crisp said, adding that could be followed by advising a "public company on a CEO termination in the afternoon."

"So I'm constantly working on different types of projects," Crisp said.

— *As told to Kellie Mejdrieh.*

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2023 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,350 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of May 1, 2023, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.

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