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TOP 100 2021

MELINDA L. HAAG

PAUL, WEISS, RIFKIND, WHARTON
& GARRISON LLP
SAN FRANCISCO
LITIGATION, WHITE COLLAR DE-
FENSE, TRADE SECRETS

— TOP 100 —



Haag has more than 30 years' experience handling white-collar criminal matters, corporate investigations and complex commercial litigation — including five years as the U.S. attorney for the Northern District of California.

The major development in her practice this past year, however, was moving with two close colleagues to Paul Weiss. The move was a “monumental change in my professional life,” she said.

Haag stressed that she, Walter F. Brown Jr. and Randy Luskey had been happy at their previous firm and hadn't been looking to leave. “But it was an opportunity we couldn't pass up,” she said. “It has met and exceeded every expectation that we had, and our expectations were already extraordinarily high.”

In the last criminal trial that she, Brown and Luskey defended in the Northern District, the jury brought in a not guilty verdict in less than two hours, finding that former Jawbone executive Katherine Mogal did not steal trade secrets when she moved to rival Fitbit. The February 2020 verdict persuaded federal prosecutors to drop similar charges against five other Jawbone employees. *U.S. v. Mogal*, 5:18-cr-00259 (N.D. Cal., June 14, 2018).

This past January, she, Luskey and Brown settled a civil enforcement action from the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency against James Strother, the former general counsel of Wells

Fargo Bank, related to the bank's 2016 fake accounts scandal. Actions against others from the bank continue, she said. In the Matter of Strother, AA-EC-2019-70 (OCC, filed Jan. 23, 2020)

Haag said that about a quarter of her workload these days involves confidential internal investigations for business or for potential criminal targets. But most of her matters are civil cases.

For instance, she is co-lead counsel for RingCentral Inc. in unfair competition and trademark litigation filed recently by competitor Zoom over termination of the two companies' longstanding strategic alliance agreement. *Zoom Video Communications Inc. v. RingCentral Inc.*, 3:21-cv-01727 (N.D. Cal., filed March 11, 2021).

Haag said she does have one tiny concern about being at Paul Weiss. She worries that when she next sees partner Loretta Lynch in person, she will do what a U.S. attorney is supposed to do when the attorney general enters the room.

“People are going to notice me starting to stand,” she said.

— Don DeBenedictis