

Global Firm Enters Beantown, Grabbing Life Sciences Team

Withers will “absolutely” seek to expand by increasing its numbers in Boston and on the West Coast, said corporate partner James Shaw.

By Andrew Maloney
April 19, 2021

The global firm Withers has entered the Boston life sciences scene, hiring a three-attorney group of science and venture capital attorneys. It’s another step in the firm’s expansion in the United States and an indication of the continued legal industry interest in FDA regulatory and life sciences talent.

Three partners from Burns & Levinson, as well as a patent specialist, will join Withers’ capital and technology legal practice in the city, representing clients on the FDA regulatory and approval process, IP advice including patent and trademarks, and litigation and the licensing of technology, among other things, the firm said Monday.

The move expands the UK-based firm’s tech practice to the U.S., in particular in a hub known for its life sciences legal demand. James Shaw, a partner on the firm’s corporate team and a transactional and venture capital lawyer based in the firm’s London office, said Boston is globally renowned for its tech offerings.

“From the European’s perspective—they see Boston as one of the main touch points for trans-

Atlantic tech and life sciences,” Shaw said in an interview Monday afternoon. “It’s also a really great place for wealth, both funds and family wealth. So it’s a really interesting sector.”

He added that the move is “a real signal to our client base that we’re actively involved in tech and innovation around the world.”

Withers launched its global venture capital and technology legal practice after joining with the boutique UK tech firm [JAG Shaw Baker in 2018](#). And after [expanding](#) into Asia in the last year, the firm will “absolutely” seek to expand its U.S. offering by increasing its numbers in Boston and eventually pushing the expansion on the West Coast,



Courtesy Photo

John Serio of Withers.

Shaw said. The firm has U.S. offices in New York, Connecticut and California.

The new Withers partners—John Serio, Dr. Richard Emmons and Dr. Christopher Cowles—hail from Burns & Levinson, a full-service firm based in Boston, while patent specialist Kristina Scandore joins from Hamilton, Brook, Smith & Reynolds, a Boston-based IP firm.

In a statement, Serio said he looked forward to “getting closer to colleagues we have worked with for many years on major projects.” He added that the move underscores “the significance of extending the Withers tech team to one of the U.S.’s life sciences hubs.”

Life sciences was one of the areas where Big Law strove to make lateral partner **gains during the pandemic**, with a noticeable uptick in moves in 2020. That’s due to a combination of increased investment in biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, the U.S. government’s emergence as a regulator in the sector on a global scale and an increased number of attorneys trained in the life sciences.

For Withers, the move follows pickups earlier this year on both coasts. The firm added Christine Brown, a wealth planning adviser from Fiduciary



Boston Harbor and Financial District in Boston.

Trust International in San Francisco last week, and Laura Watanabe, a partner on the litigation and arbitration team in New York who previously had her own practice, The Watanabe Law Firm.

I’m a Chicago-based reporter covering the business of law, focusing on national and global law firms for The American Lawyer, Law.com and other ALM publications. Reach out: amaloney@alm.com.