

## Crowell & Moring Adds Two Former In-House Counsel

By Jack Rodgers

*Law360 (February 11, 2025, 4:28 PM EST)* -- Crowell & Moring LLP has hired two attorneys who most recently worked in-house in leadership roles with the International Association of Privacy Professionals and the global technology investor Naspers, now joining the firm's privacy and cybersecurity group as senior counsel, the firm announced Tuesday.

Rita Heimes, who was general counsel and chief privacy officer at the IAPP, has joined the firm as a senior counsel, alongside Justin B. Weiss, who led the digital and regulatory team at Naspers and the Dutch subsidiary Prosus Group, where he was also an associate general counsel.

Weiss, in addition to his senior counsel role with the firm, will work as a senior director at Crowell Global Advisors, the firm's public policy and government relations consulting firm.

Heimes and Weiss both have experience in leadership with the IAPP, a privacy and AI governance organization, the firm said. Weiss served as the chair of its board of directors in 2020 and as its vice chair and treasurer before that.

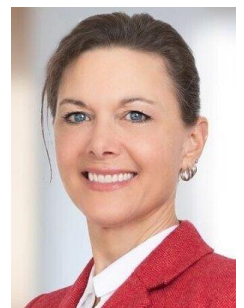
In an interview with Law360 Pulse Tuesday, Weiss said that the first overlap between Heimes and himself was at the University of Maine School of Law, when he was earning his law degree and Heimes had been lecturing on privacy and artificial intelligence law — along with being a senior privacy fellow — for more than 24 years.

Heimes noted that the president and CEO of the IAPP, J. Trevor Hughes, also is a Maine Law School alum. Hughes and Heimes worked together to establish the intellectual privacy program there, she said.

"These are intertwined relationships, but because of their interconnections, they have been very strong and robust and resilient," Heimes said.

Weiss works with the development of digital governance strategies for in-house legal teams, and he was leading the AI, privacy, intellectual property and competition teams on regulatory matters at Prosus, Crowell & Moring said. He also is a member of the faculty at Maine Law School, where he works with its Center for Law and Innovation's Information Privacy Summer Institute, according to his LinkedIn profile.

Some of Weiss' other experience includes serving as assistant general counsel of privacy and international policy at Yahoo Inc., and in other senior legal roles with the Network Advertising Initiative,



Rita Heimes



Justin B. Weiss

where he was a privacy counsel. He was with Yahoo until joining Naspers in 2015, according to his LinkedIn profile.

Weiss told Law360 Pulse that he spent years working from Hong Kong in his role with Naspers, which he described as an "extraordinary experience" and one of many international jobs he's prioritized throughout his career.

But that experience abroad, which included enduring the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions from China to the U.S., catalyzed his decision to focus more on global privacy issues.

"I think coming out of that period, I was motivated for a fresh look, but still an international look at where the world is," Weiss said. "So I decided to do a year of business school at Oxford ... and I think that that experience is a key factor in leading me to Crowell. And Crowell Global Advisors ended up being a perfectly timed geography and a home for somebody with my background that really wanted to invest time for clients on the intersection of geopolitics and digital regulation."

Both Weiss and Heimes served in a myriad of roles concurrently at their previous positions.

A Drake University Law School graduate, Heimes served for years in private practice, including with Holland & Hart LLP and Verrill Dana LLP, according to her LinkedIn profile. From 2013 until this month, she was an adviser at the Future of Privacy Forum, according to her LinkedIn profile.

"I felt like it was a time in my career when I was ready for that challenge," Heimes said. "I had really learned so much working with the world's largest privacy and AI governance organization. I just wanted to take that experience and that knowledge and offer it to a broader client base."

"Crowell's unique cybersecurity practice is the perfect match for someone with privacy experience," she added.

Weiss said there is a large demand for the expertise of multijurisdictional counsel, as clients look to develop privacy programs, AI governance programs and other digital regulatory programs, based on changing political circumstances in global jurisdictions.

"When you're a multinational client, you have to link all of those up, you have to make strategic decisions about where you're going to invest and where you may pull back investments," he said. "And I think in my first 100 days, I am going to plug into those types of decisions that lawyers, technologists [and] C-suite boards of directors are making in light of this changing global landscape."

"That is relevant for both the consulting world but also the private practice of a privacy and cybersecurity practice group that's headquartered in D.C. with global reach," he added.

For Heimes, she's seen a modest complacency when it comes to privacy issues. Plugging into those issues, like with state-specific comprehensive privacy laws, would be important to her practice moving into her new role, she said.

"My mission in the next 100 days is to certainly begin to put together opportunities for my internal clients at Crowell, and their clients externally to understand the importance of maintaining privacy as a focus, as a risk area, as a responsibility, and working toward that goal," she said.

Weiss said he's seeing privacy professionals shift their roles inside of organizations.

"You'll see privacy professionals taking on broader responsibilities in-house ... becoming more digital professionals because they're the ones with the skill sets to build governance programs and manage them and manage auditors looking at them," he said.

Simultaneously, organizations have been making decisions about where to invest, and Weiss said he's seen in-house leaders "considering new modes of client work, whether that's in law firms, in consulting" or other fields.

"One of the things that indicates to me is that things are changing," he said. "We know it's dynamic and we know we're in a cycle of a lot of change, that's also reflected in the mobility of the work force and the types of people that are stepping forward to take these leadership roles, and also the types of folks that are stepping forward to take leadership roles at law firms."

"I think you're seeing a kind of an entrepreneurial spirit of the in-house community in some respects, responding to these shifting sands, which probably bodes very well for those skill sets that are required in those types of roles," he added.

Jeffrey Poston, co-chair of Crowell & Moring's privacy and security group, said in a statement that both Heimes and Weiss "are highly respected leaders in the privacy field who bring a strategic vision of the global privacy landscape and practical experience in leading compliance programs" to the team.

"Clients will value their insight because they have seen the field from many angles and can provide a steady hand in navigating complex privacy and digital regulatory matters," he said in a statement.

--Editing by Adam LoBelia.