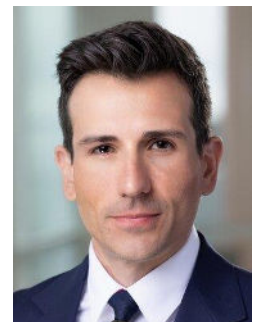


## Tech Partner Takes Reins Of New AI Team At Phillips Lytle

By **Law360 Staff**

*Law360 (March 20, 2024, 2:25 PM EDT)* -- Phillips Lytle this week became one of the latest firms to unveil a dedicated team focused on artificial intelligence, with a partner experienced in technology and business matters poised to lead that group of seven attorneys overall.

Based in the firm's Buffalo, New York office, Richard J. Marinaccio takes the reins of Phillips Lytle's AI practice team after more than 12 years with the firm overall. In his latest role, Marinaccio will focus on helping clients navigate the legal issues that arise as they look to adopt AI to assist with their operations.



Richard J. Marinaccio

Other firms that have recently announced AI teams include Husch Blackwell, Hanson Bridgett LLP and Winston & Strawn LLP. In September, Baker Botts LLP and Mayer Brown LLP separately formed 60-person cross-practice teams, joining other firms such as Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP, Womble Bond Dickinson and Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz PC.

In announcing the team on Tuesday, Phillips Lytle pointed to several matters ranging from corporate policies and intellectual property to cybersecurity and litigation as some of the areas where they are currently advising companies with respect to AI.

"As we witness the rapid evolution of AI, we recognize the profound impact it's having on businesses across industries," Marinaccio said in a statement. "Our newly established AI Practice Team is not just a response to the current state of AI, it is a proactive step to accelerate legal innovation and keep Phillips Lytle at the forefront of this ever-evolving landscape."

The initiative grew out of the existing technology industry team at Phillips Lytle as AI and its potential uses have raised new questions for businesses and governments across the globe.

According to Phillips Lytle Managing Partner Douglas W. Dimitroff, the new team is an example of his firm "innovating and expanding our services to help companies harness the transformative power of emerging technology."

"This ability to adapt to market needs and strategically develop new client-centered solutions have fueled the remarkable growth our firm has experienced recently," Dimitroff said in a statement. "As we look to spark more growth in the months to come, we are analyzing industries and economic trends to identify more practice areas to build or expand, while actively exploring opportunities to add talent

through new hiring as well as acquiring boutique firms or practice teams."

Speaking with Law360 Pulse on Wednesday, Marinaccio suggested that the firm is hoping to help clients cut through the noise surrounding AI as they look to adopt aspects of the technology and eventually respond to the laws and policies that arise to regulate it. The firm and its attorneys have developed an understanding of AI based not only on research but their hands-on use of the technology for tasks such as contract review, according to Marinaccio.

"We're not looking to 'over lawyer' any of these matters," Marinaccio said. "We're trying to take a pragmatic approach and give practical advice that helps (clients) do what's necessary right now."

Part of that is helping clients understand that a lot of AI usage at the moment boils down to contract law, according to Marinaccio. Clients want to know what they can do with the technology, and often that means examining the services agreement at issue, he said.

"We have to look at the contract. You entered into an agreement with a third party and they are providing a service," Marinaccio said. "For some reason, AI has made people look past the obvious that it's still a service."

Marinaccio also issued a word of caution to businesses that think they can simply ban the use of AI.

"The fact is that it's too widespread now and whether you are permitting it or not, your employees are probably using it," he said.

The wiser move? Understand how the technology is being used and put a policy in place that addresses that use, along with the associated risks, according to Marinaccio.

"It's better to be out in front of it," he said.

Besides Marinaccio, the AI team at Phillips Lytle also includes partners Anna Mercado Clark and James R. O'Connor, the firm said. Clark is the firm's chief information security officer while O'Connor specializes in labor and employment law.

They are joined by special counsel David Principe, who specializes in intellectual property matters, as well as associates Michael R. Staszkiw, Adelyn G. Burns and Dorothy E. Shuldman, according to the firm.

The AI team is part of more than 340 attorneys and staff spread across nine offices. According to the most recent Law360 400, Phillips Lytle has 174 attorneys in the U.S., including 69 partners.