

# Daily Journal

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Clean technology

Morrison & Foerster  
SAN FRANCISCO

Tessa Schwartz grew up in a house where lively debate was considered a sport.

"I knew I would end up doing something with words," Schwartz said. "I thought I would become a journalist."

Instead, she followed her father and grandfather, who had put their debating skills to use in another profession: the law.

"Nobody ever pushed it. Some things are just in your personality," said Schwartz, a petite woman with a halo of dark curly hair. "I already see it in my son, who is 5 years old. He negotiates everything."

Now co-chair of Morrison & Foerster's "cleantech" practice, Schwartz is putting her negotiating and word skills to use for her clients.

Drawing on her background as a transactional attorney with a focus on intellectual property, Schwartz advises a range of clients — including Palo Alto-based Ausra Inc., the solar thermal power plant manufacturer — on numerous issues, from patent licensing and

technology procurement agreements to joint venture and distribution deals.

Expanding her practice to include cleantech, she said, has been an opportunity to "really focus on an area I care deeply about and has legs."

Throughout her life, Schwartz has pursued her intellectual interests and the things she cares deeply about.

Her grandfather, Harry Schwartz, was an attorney in South Africa. Her father, Lester Schwartz, immigrated to the United States as a young man and became a trial attorney in the Bay Area. Schwartz herself had no plans of becoming a lawyer. But after earning a degree in social studies from Harvard College in 1991 and spending a year at a consulting company focusing on legal issues, she changed course and enrolled in law school. She graduated from UCLA School of Law in 1996.

Schwartz, who had taken classes at the environmental law clinic, was undecided about whether to pursue public interest law or join a firm. Swayed by Morrison & Foerster's reputation as a "stellar firm where you could focus on things you care about," she joined MoFo's litigation department.

Schwartz came to learn, however, that she didn't want to be a trial attorney — a fact, that didn't seem to add up with being a litigator. She moved over to the firm's technology transactions practice at the height of the dot-com boom.

"There was so much work and excitement," Schwartz said. "It was a great time to join this practice."

In 2001, she landed Nextel Communications as a client, representing the wireless provider in a complicated licensing arrangement with Qualcomm. Schwartz spent years working on the deal that allowed Nextel to offer its popular "push-to-talk" feature on its wireless network.

In 2006, while Schwartz was out on maternity leave with her second child, she received two important phone calls from the firm: one telling her she'd made partner and the second asking her to join the firm's cleantech practice group, put together by MoFo partner Susan Mac Cormac.

Schwartz remains loyal to her former clients, but enjoys the new intellectual challenge of working with cleantech companies. In addition to Ausra, she also represents Agilewaves Inc., a company that recently developed a monitor that allows homes and businesses track their energy usage, and Altair Nanotechnologies Inc., a maker of advanced fuel cell and battery technology.

Schwartz, a committed recycler who shares a hybrid car with her husband, would like to put together a cleantech deal at home: Installing solar panels on her East Bay house.

— AMELIA HANSEN