

Fintech Group Of The Year: Morrison Foerster

By **Sydney Price**

Law360 (February 9, 2024, 2:02 PM EST) -- Morrison Foerster LLP's fintech team counseled technology startups as well as financial agencies on handling cyberattacks, strategic partnerships and acquisitions, guiding a client's \$220 million digital asset recovery effort and advising Experian on the launch of a full-service digital banking platform, earning the firm a spot among Law360's 2023 Fintech Groups of the Year.

One of the firm's standout achievements last year was a large cryptocurrency recovery for finance group Euler Labs. On March 13, an attacker stole approximately \$200 million in various cryptocurrencies from the group; Euler Labs announced a \$1 million reward for information that would help identify the attackers.

The incident required around-the-clock investigation and negotiations for the return of assets, which Morrison Foerster helped fully recover, partner Jeff Silberman said.

He added that the recovery required a team that deeply understood state and federal securities laws, and because the team is active in the cryptocurrency space and has made several other asset recoveries, it was well-equipped to handle the situation.

"All the client needed at the end of the day was some very sophisticated, very fast-acting counsel that could figure out what happened, how to stop it from happening again and, most importantly, how to advocate on their behalf, negotiate and ultimately get the assets back," Silberman said.

Aside from handling the often distressing aspects of digital currency, Morrison Foerster has also worked with clients like Sonar, a San Francisco-based startup whose social metaverse invites users to listen to music, play games and socialize with personalized NFTs.

Morrison Foerster led the company through its sale to crypto project group Aave Cos., which now operates as Avara. The firm's attorneys were heavily involved in advising on the regulatory issues associated with the sale.

Morrison Foerster's fintech division also has experts who help more mature financial companies meet consumer demand for online money services. For example, Morrison Foerster partner Crystal Kaldjob worked with credit-reporting agency Experian to resolve regulatory issues associated with its full-service digital banking platform.



"Experian is unique in the sense that it already has a pretty successful business being a consumer-reporting agency," she said. "Leveraging its brand to offer this digital banking solution was a natural extension to capture their customer market."

Last year, Morrison Foerster helped Morgan Stanley's wealth-management division begin utilizing artificial intelligence tools via firm client Open AI, the AI company's first client in that space. Morgan Stanley's financial advisers can use OpenAI to ask questions and receive answers in an easy-to-understand format generated from Morgan Stanley's internal content.

Morrison Foerster partner Jeremy Mandell said black-letter law doesn't neatly fit with emerging technology, so attorneys are left to manage regulatory and legal expectations for their clients based on their own interpretations and predictions.

"It's been a really rewarding experience to take our deep understanding of the client, OpenAI, and our deep understanding of the sectors of financial services, wealth management and investment advisory work and create what is new and innovative in the market," Mandell said.

Looking ahead, Silberman said Morrison Foerster is always hoping to expand its already-deep global reach. The heterogeneity of Morrison Foerster's fintech case load requires a breadth of experience, deep knowledge and geographic diversity from its attorneys, he said.

"When we think about the composition of the team to be able to meet all the clients' needs, we spend a lot of time thinking about if we have the right team members and where we need to add depth to constantly expand our capabilities and build on our historical strengths," Silberman said.

--Editing by Caitlin Wolper.