

Citi Reorganizes Law Firm Banking Business as Legal Industry Leans on Finance

By Dan Packel
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Citi Private Bank's law firm group, which serves the vast majority of the Am Law 100 and over 700 law firms in total, is set to become its own segment within the bank, in a sign of the growing sophistication of law firm clients.

Effective June 3, law firm group leader Naz Vahid will report directly to Citi Private Bank global head Peter Charrington. Vahid, who has been in her current role since 2009, had previously reported to Tracey Warson, the head of Citi Private Bank's North American operations.

Vahid said that the restructuring was an illustration of the law firm group's role as an engine of

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growth within the wider private bank, noting that revenues had increased between 12 and 14 percent annually since 2009.



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Vahid explained that while financing has become more important for clients, the growth has gone beyond the lending side of the operation.

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She pointed to better use of capital markets, increased attention to foreign exchange issues as firms have become more global, and a greater focus on investment management to address pension liabilities and ensure a cash balance.

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In addition to servicing hundreds of law firms in the U.S. and the U.K., including each of the top 10 firms in the U.K. market, Citi’s law firm group is building relationships with firms in China, Hong Kong, India and Latin America. That’s currently limited to advisory work, Vahid said.

In total, the unit serves roughly 50,000 individual lawyers.

“Under Naz’s leadership, we have become the trusted advisor and first private banking call for the world’s most important law firms, their partners, and associates, and built a franchise that is the envy of our competitors,” Charrington said in a statement. “I am committed to continuing to grow our dominant position, and I believe that having the law firm group become its own segment recognizes how important this business has become to the private bank—but also the significant opportunity that we have to make it an even more meaningful contributor globally.”

Dan Packel covers law firms’ global strategy and economics. He is based in Philadelphia. Contact him at dpackel@alm.com. On twitter at @packeld

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