

blog

Six degrees from Ocean Tomo – the broad reach of a patent pioneer

It's not unusual in a sector that is still relatively young and adding new entrants, that one pioneering organisation can produce an alumni network that remains particularly prominent within the sector. In the patent space that organisation is arguably [Ocean Tomo](#). From public companies to PIPCOs to investors and advisers, the alumnus of OT, which pitches itself as the 'first intellectual capital merchant bank,' populate just about every facet of the IP business.

Take RPX co-founder [John Amster](#) who built the M&A advisory business at Ocean Tomo before leaving to create the patent aggregator in 2008 (Reza Mashouf VP of acquisitions and David Ruder VP of corporate development at RPX are also alumni). Or there's [Elvir Causevic](#) now the CEO of boutique investment bank Black Stone IP and previously the head of Ocean Tomo's strategic advisory service practice.

And then there's [Phil Hartstein](#) a director specializing in acquisitions and analytics at Ocean Tomo from 2004 to 2007 and now the President of PIPCO Finjan. Also in the PIPCO space, Mohamad Zeidan spent a little under two years at Ocean Tomo and is now a senior director focused on IP evaluation and acquisition at Tessera.

On the advisory side [Michael Lasinski and Kevin Arst](#) at IP consulting, litigation strategy and valuation firm 284 Partners are both Ocean Tomo old boys (Arst is also the current treasurer of LES). [Ragnar Olson](#), previously the Director of Ocean Tomo's patent advisory group, is now a partner at Global IP Law Group, the firm that advised on the auction and eventual sale of Nortel's IP portfolio to the Rockstar consortium. Fellow lawyer [Adam Clifford](#) who did a six-year stint at Ocean Tomo from 2004 to 2010 is now an associate in the Chicago office of Kirkland & Ellis while former General Counsel Raymond Millien is now senior IP counsel at GE Healthcare.

Ocean Tomo's position as an early mover in the patent space meant that it was an excellent breeding ground for IP specialists. Plus the breadth of its offering from valuations to analysis to transactions, including its launching of an auction business, has given its staff a breadth of experience that few organisations still struggle to match.

"The people recruited by Ocean Tomo knew they were joining a very new and untested model, so that attracted people who were intellectually inclined to get in this field and not just another job," points out Diapanjan Nag a director at Ocean Tomo between 2007 and 2009 and now the head of [IP Shakti](#). Timing also played a crucial role. "We were at the cusp of changing the IP field due to the natural acceptance of IP as an asset class," Nag adds.

As people have left they have in turn become useful contacts for each other. "Many of us developed a great deal of respect and appreciation for one another during our time at OT, and we continue to do business with and refer business to one another," highlights Wendy Chou, director of marketing and communications at Ocean Tomo from 2005 to 2009 and now the head of [CHOUmedia](#). "I've definitely signed on clients because of my OT connections, and likewise have helped others," she adds.

Not everyone has left under friendly circumstances. PatentRatings head Jonathan Barney, for instance, quit in 2011 [before entering into litigation with Ocean Tomo over the relationship between it and PatentRatings](#). As this blog wrote at the time of his departure, Barney's exit came in [a spell of a number of heavy hitters leaving](#).

One area that Ocean Tomo definitely pioneered was the [auctioning of IP assets between 2006 and 2009](#) before ICAP [acquired the acquisitions business](#). The former head of the auctions business [Andrew Ramer](#) remains active in the patent space currently helping to grow the IP business at Cantor Fitzgerald (where another OT alumnus Nicole Booms is also based). “Whether people like it or not, OT auctions did bring in a change in the world of IP in that they created liquidity,” Nag insists.

As for the view from within Ocean Tomo itself, [Chairman and CEO James Malackowski](#) points to a number of reasons for the alumni network being so extensive. “The market for IP financial services remains strong and others seek out our junior professionals for their training,” he says. “We have also purposefully incubated new ideas capturing a continued interest as they mature to become independent operations.”

He then adds, “The recent recession uniquely resulted in certain professionals seeking larger platforms in line with their personal risk tolerance and then, finally, some folks are just not the right fit and it is mutually beneficial for them to find the organisation that suits them.” Whatever their reasons for leaving, they’re instantly part of one of the largest networks in the patent business.

Sectors