

LAWDRAGON

The Practical Aspects of Creative Success, with M&A Lawyer Jeff Davis

By Alison Preece



Jeff Davis is always searching for novel solutions. A child of immigrants and one of the first in his family to attend college, he has built a career for himself by crafting smart solutions for clients working in industries that are undergoing rapid change and innovation.

Davis' practice focuses primarily on sell-side M&A, with a concentration in marketing services businesses, including advertising agencies, PR firms and governmental relations agencies. Additionally, his practice involves corporate governance, corporate finance, general corporate services as well as related employment agreement negotiation and incentive compensation arrangements. He is also actively involved in the negotiation of hotel management agreements.

A partner at Moses Singer, Davis also serves as co-chair of the firm's Corporate

practice group and as leader of the Hospitality Industry practice. He is a member of the 2025 Lawdragon 500 Leading Dealmakers in America.

Lawdragon: What brought you the world of corporate law?

Jeff Davis: I was a political science major and subsequently obtained a master's degree in International Affairs and Law, which guided me towards a legal career. I was among the first generation in my family to attend college – and then graduate and law school – which was

a source of pride for my immigrant parents who were unable to receive an advanced education and spurred me into seeking a professional career.

I first became interested in corporate law through a combination of academic curiosity and practical exposure. Early in my career, my practice entailed corporate and securities law matters, which laid a solid foundation in corporate law and has greatly assisted me in my M&A practice.

At the start of my career, in Texas, then in New Jersey, and for the past 20 years in New York, I find myself drawn to the idea of helping businesses navigate significant transitions and the complex challenges that come with growth, consolidation or change. Focusing on mergers and acquisitions offers a unique mix of strategy, finance, and legal nuance, all of which I find incredibly engaging.

I began working with advertising and other marketing services agencies over 20 years ago and found myself intrigued by the intersection of creativity and business strategy. These agencies operate in an innovation-driven space where media, technology and content are evolving rapidly. The M&A transactions involve not only traditional corporate elements, but also address intellectual property rights, brand reputation, data privacy and other issues. This allows me to work closely with members of my firm in those specialties and constantly work to solve novel issues.

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Professionally, it has been exciting for me to work with the creative personalities in these agencies, assisting them in the business and practical aspects of their success. Working together as a team to help achieve their goals has been incredibly satisfying for me.

LD: What are some aspects about this work that you find professionally satisfying? What keeps you excited about it?

JD: I greatly enjoy the business aspects of my practice and the negotiations involved in successfully closing a transaction. In particular, I often work with founders of businesses who have never previously sold a business, and I enjoy providing business-related advice to guide my clients through the sales process.

LD: Out of all the work you've done in your career, what would you say are the most interesting matters you've handled?

JD: I genuinely enjoy working with all of my clients. Two of my most memorable matters include the following. I have enjoyed becoming knowledgeable in the marketing services

industry and in structuring transactions involving complex earnout mechanisms and protecting my clients through the entire sales and earnout periods. In one recent transaction, I led the team serving as legal advisor to GUT's founders and certain senior management in connection with the sale of GUT Agency to Globant. GUT Agency is a cutting-edge advertising agency known for empowering brands by crafting creative campaigns that react quickly to changes in the culture. GUT was named by Adweek in 2023 as the Breakthrough Agency of the Year, and GUT Buenos Aires offices was named as the International Agency of the Year. Globant is a global IT and software development firm.

Following the acquisition, GUT's leadership team remained in place with a continued focus on building culture and driving growth. I am excited and honored that our firm continues to advise Gut in advertising matters following the sale.

In addition, the sale of 72andSunny, a prominent independent advertising agency, was one of my favorite matters. The founders of the agency were incredibly talented and bright, and their clients were always fascinating. The transaction involved a complicated earn-out structure, which was subsequently renegotiated on favorable terms as the agency continued to exceed expectations.

I also recently successfully completed the sale of Qualified Digital, a digital advertising agency. The agency had relocated from California to Nevada in the past couple of years and the structural and tax aspects of completing that transaction, including with respect to the required F reorg for this transaction, were quite involved and I worked closely with our tax partner for a successful result for our client. The client will now be able to grow its business based on a larger platform and with greater resources.

LD: How would you describe your style as a lawyer?

JD: I believe my greatest strength is thinking like a businessman, which I believe is how my clients see me. I take pride in assessing the most important issues for my clients and helping to guide them through the intricacies of a transaction, explaining in layman's terms what they are signing and what they should consider important, and, most importantly, doing all that I can to help them close on a successful transaction for them.

LD: What do you like about Moses Singer in terms of culture or other characteristics?

JD: I work at a mid-size firm with a more traditional firm mentality, meaning that I know my partners well and enjoy working with them. As noted, I did not have anyone in my family who had become a lawyer (other than my older brother who became one a few years before I did), so I had to learn how to become a lawyer and what to appreciate in a firm on my own. When I joined my current firm, I worked with Sol Friedman, who was a fantastic mentor, particularly in marketing services transactions. Being happy at work has enabled me to become a more effective advisor to my clients.

LD: How would you “pitch” Moses Singer to potential recruits who might be interested in a similar career?

JD: We approach our practice as entrepreneurs ourselves, which helps us connect with our clients. We are able to efficiently handle our matters with smaller teams and more cost-effective approaches. Particularly in the New York market, we can provide valuable advice and assistance in closing matters, in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Our firm is large enough to handle almost any type of corporate matter, but not so large that we cannot handle a mid-market transaction without excessive costs to our clients. We therefore provide a unique cost-effective approach for our clients and frequently negotiate against some of the largest firms in the country.

LD: What do you do for fun when you’re outside the office?

JD: Play golf, enjoy my grandchildren, and promote my children’s careers and family lives.



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