

Laura M. Vogel

Position: Special Counsel
Continental Corporation



Size of legal department:
10 attorneys

Years with company: 10



Laura M. Vogel's near decade-long role as special counsel with Siemens Corporation was put into overdrive with Continental AG's recent acquisition of Siemens VDO Automotive.

As a case in point, she's now handling the NAFTA intellectual property (IP) portfolio for all former Siemens VDO businesses acquired by Continental — and it's "about 12 times the size" of what Continental's U.S. division had been handling prior to the deal.

But that workload seems to be no sweat for this IP law veteran, who specializes in patents, trademarks, copyrights, trade secrets, mergers and acquisitions, and related litigation.

After all, she recalls watching the patent portfolio of then-Siemens Automotive grow from about 30 new inventions annually to more than 400.

"[IP is] not glamorous, like winning a major lawsuit," said Vogel, who also has stints with Meritor and United Technologies Automotive

under her belt. "But a technology company can't call itself a technology company if it's not acting to strategically protect its ideas."

It's a sector she fights for outside of the office, too.

She's currently chair of the State Bar of Michigan Intellectual Property Law Council, and served as president of the Michigan Intellectual Property Law Association.

Vogel believes the role of in-house counsel has grown "in both importance and depth," she said. "There are simply too many types of matters that require intimate knowledge of the company and its people and practices.

"What I enjoy about being in-house, as opposed to private practice, is the ability to roll up your sleeves and solve problems with and for the business," Vogel said. "At the end of the day, you are here because the company is here, and the company is in business to be successful."

— DOUGLAS J. LEVY