

## Volvo Cars Chief IP Officer Heads to IP Boutique as CEO

The boutique said it named a corporate counsel leader as its new CEO so it can improve its perspective on client challenges and demands.

By Hugo Guzman

### What You Need to Know

- Ray Millien had served as in-house counsel at Volvo and General Electric.
- Former Ford CEO Bill Coughlin, who joined Harness Dickey in early 2020, will stay on-board as CEO emeritus.
- Millien plans to implement more data-driven project management approaches at Harness Dickey.

Volvo Cars Chief IP Officer Ray Millien has returned from frostbitten Sweden to lead Harness Dickey as the intellectual property boutique's latest CEO.

Millien, who has served at Volvo since 2018 and was previously IP counsel for General Electric, took the reins at the 100-attorney firm this week and is now based in Detroit, the boutique announced Tuesday. The firm—one of the largest IP boutiques in the U.S.—is based just outside of Detroit, in Troy, Michigan, and has other offices in Dallas, Washington, D.C., and St. Louis.

The unusual move of bringing in an in-house counsel leader to steer the firm was prompted by an interest in improving perspectives on what challenges clients are facing, said Millien in an interview.

For boutique firms, Millien said, keeping up with client innovations

can often prove difficult, especially where new technologies and delivery of service is concerned. Harness Dickey began to recruit from the in-house sector specifically to prevent such weaknesses from arising, Millien said.

An ability to think outside the box while still understanding every angle of the IP ecosystem was another point in his favor, he said.

"After meeting the folks [at Harness Dickey], I realized this was a great combination of IP experience, [which] I've seen from every angle," Millien said. "I've been at an IP boutique. I've been in-house in four different industries. I've been at an IP brokerage. Being at those different places and managing those, I quickly realized, this was a great landing spot."

Millien plans to implement more data-driven project management approaches at Harness Dickey and maximize the value of billable hours. By embracing technology and new management strategies, Harness Dickey said in a statement that it will reimagine how boutiques deliver legal services.

"At the end of the day, we want to maintain a high quality of work product," Millien said. "We have to look at the technology that we're using to be flexible and to implement that."



Courtesy photo

Volvo's chief IP officer, Raymond Millien.

It's not the first time the firm recruited a legal department leader. The firm named Bill Coughlin, who was an assistant general counsel at Ford Motor Co., as CEO in early 2020.

Coughlin will stay on board as CEO emeritus to assist with transitioning and help direct practice groups, the firm said. Coughlin said his position at Harness Dickey was always meant to last just three years, but when executive reshuffling opened an opportunity to put Millien in the CEO seat, Coughlin jumped at the chance to add him to leadership.

"Our firm is in the ideal position for me to entrust its leadership to someone with the acumen, ideas and energy to catapult us into the next stage of our growth," Coughlin said in a statement. "No one better than Ray can help us continue to harness innovation for the next 100 years."