

## Rising Star: Goodwin's Alessandra Simons

By Emma Cueto

*Law360 (August 11, 2020, 2:56 PM EDT)* -- Goodwin Procter's Alessandra Simons has guided some major tech industry deals, including an \$8 billion acquisition by software giant SAP, the \$618 million sale of a cybersecurity company, and a majority investment in a digital experience company, earning her a place among the technology law practitioners under 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

### **THE BIGGEST DEAL OF HER CAREER:**

Simons said the most major deal of her career was the \$8 billion acquisition of the technology platform Qualtrics by German software company SAP, which closed in January 2019. Simons and her team were able to secure the sale shortly before Qualtrics was scheduled to go public, she said, managing a very tight turnaround.

"Qualtrics was on the verge of going public [in what would have been] a very, very successful offering," she said. "I think there had been some historical discussions ongoing with SAP, and they knew that Qualtrics was getting very close and put in an offer. I think we turned around the whole thing in a matter of two weeks."

She said the team also had to contend with new regulations from the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.


"It was the very first transaction of that size that was done shortly after there were new governing rules regarding foreign investments in the United States through CFIUS that placed greater restrictions on the ability to do a transaction where a foreign national company was acquiring a U.S. company. And SAP is based in Germany. ... So there was a lot going on," she said.


"It was a fun deal, and that kind of time crunch [was only possible] because we had a fantastic team," she added.

### **HER PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENT:**

Simons said that while she is proud to have worked on some significant deals — especially the Qualtrics acquisition and the March 2019 sale of cyber security company Webroot for \$618 million — one of the things she's most proud of is building up successful teams.

"I love building teams and developing teams and developing associates, and seeing them grow and be successful," she said. "I don't think I have one associate to point to and say, 'My proudest moment is helping that associate excel,' but in general over time [I enjoy] building those teams. I feel like every deal





**Alessandra Simons**  
Goodwin Procter

Age: 39  
Home base: San Francisco  
Position: Partner  
Law school: Villanova University,  
Charles Widger School of Law  
First job after law  
school: Associate at Hogan &  
Hartson (now Hogan Lovells)

that gets done is a success in that respect. It's a reflection of having a great team that comes together and does a really great job."

#### ***HER DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WORK:***

Simons is the co-chair of the San Francisco chapter of Women@Goodwin, a group that works to recruit and develop female talent at the firm. She also works with the firm's LGBT group, Pride@Goodwin, and is involved with HimForHer, a nonprofit that works for gender parity on corporate boards.

When she first came to Goodwin, however, she was hesitant to get involved, she said.

"Over the course of my career, I've been invited to and involved in professional women's groups in many different contexts, and it starts to become repetitive," she explained. "And in most cases, I find that the people in the room are not the ones who need to be in the room. It's usually women, and it's women who know what the issues are and know what needs to be done. But the people in the room are not the ones who either are in any position of power to make any kind of meaningful change, or [who] don't know what the issues are [and] need to be educated. So over time I found that these groups were just not effective."

However, she said, she eventually came around on the idea that things could be different at Goodwin.

"When the firm asked me to co-chair the SF group, I was hesitant at first. I think I actually said no. But I talked to more leaders at the firm, and what I realized — and what I incredibly appreciate about this place that I work — is that Goodwin is committed. And the people who need to be involved to make change, they are in the room. And they are making the effort. ... This is really a place where they walk the walk, they don't just talk the talk. I see that more and more, and it gives me hope."

#### ***WHY SHE WORKS IN TECH:***

Prior to coming to Goodwin, Simons did a lot of mergers and acquisitions work at Hogan & Lovells, she said. When she came to Goodwin, she started doing that work for tech companies and quickly grew to appreciate the industry.

"Getting into tech was in part just living in the Bay Area. You can't live here and not be involved in tech in some way or other, and Goodwin happens to be a place that is deeply entrenched in tech. But one of the reasons I stay ... is that it's constantly changing. And the venture capital community is a fascinating one, and honestly it's one that I feel is really driving innovation around the world."

She also enjoys being part of the "life cycle" of tech startups, with companies constantly launching, growing, and — if they do well — being bought up.

"You have a bunch of people who are taking chances," she said. "They're going out in the world, they're coming up with an idea, they're taking a huge chance. ... These folks work incredibly hard, they underpay themselves, they don't see their family, they don't see their friends. And I get interjected into that life cycle at the very end when they are seeing the fruits of their labor for the very first time. And it's emotional. It's a life event. ... And I get to hold their hand through that."

#### ***WHAT KEEPS HER MOTIVATED:***

Simons said she stays motivated both by the work and the people she works with.

"I really do work in a place where I'm surrounded by tremendous people of incredible integrity. They're

fun. They make the job fun," she said. "You need to work with people you want to talk to at midnight. ... That makes all the difference."

Since COVID-19, she's also been getting motivation from a very different type of "co-worker," she added.

"For the first time really, my kids get to see me work," she said. "I have a 7- and a 9-year-old, and until now I go to work every day and I come home, and maybe they hear my husband and I talking about my work, but they don't really know what that means. ... Over the last three or four months, they've really seen that and they appreciate it in a way they didn't before, and that's motivating."

— *As told to Emma Cueto*

*Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2020 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,300 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2020, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.*