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Tessera's Public Face on IP Reform Starts Own Practice

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SAN FRANCISCO — Taraneh Maghame, the in-house lawyer who has become a leading Silicon Valley voice against patent reform, is leaving Tessera Inc. to start her own law practice in Cupertino.

Maghame's departure comes after Tessera hired a new general counsel, Bernard "Barney" Cassidy, who has been reorganizing the legal department.

"It was time for me to take on a new challenge," said Maghame, an IP and corporate lawyer who filled many roles during nearly five years at Tessera.

Cassidy said her departure is amicable. "It's something she wanted to do for a while, and we fully support her."

The San Jose company doesn't make any products, getting most of its revenue from licensing its patents, which often means filing lawsuits. As a patent reform bill percolated in Congress, Maghame became a voice in Washington, D.C., for Tessera and other IP-focused companies, testifying in front of lawmakers, [going on C-SPAN](#) to debate the issue, and forming the lobbying group Innovation Alliance.

The reform efforts had been long pushed by such tech giants as Cisco Systems and Google Inc., which complain that they are overwhelmed by patent infringement suits. They want Congress to curb the power of patents in the courts by, for instance, limiting damage awards. Pharmaceutical companies opposed such reforms because they invest a lot of money in developing patents. That dynamic created the impression that Silicon Valley's tech companies were uniformly lining up for patent reform, Maghame said.

"We realized that the voices of IP-centric businesses like ours weren't being heard in Washington — it was seen as two groups, it was tech versus pharma," she said. "It was not true that this was a tech-versus-pharma debate, so we decided to start the Alliance to bring to the table the other tech view of companies that are more dependent on their IP

than on products."

While IP-holding "patent trolls" are generally not popular in the Valley, one of Maghame's frequent opponents on the issue praised her. Michelle Lee, head of patents at Google and frequent interlocutor with Maghame on IP panels, said Maghame was an intelligent opponent.

"She brought a different viewpoint than Google brought to the discussion," Lee said. "But it was always well-reasoned and well-grounded, and there was always a high level of discussion."

Maghame started off working on emerging technology when she joined Tessera in 2005. She ascended to interim general counsel last year and was briefly considered for the job, she said. But a new CEO decided that he wanted someone with previous experience as a GC at a public company, Maghame said.

In November, Tessera hired Cassidy, the former GC at Tumbleweed Communications Corp. As Cassidy began to shape his new team, Maghame said, it was hard to step down after having been the company's top lawyer.

"I had been doing the high-level legal work in the company, and that work wasn't around anymore," Maghame said. "After months of working as an interim GC, it's kind of harder to transition back into things you were doing before....I think you always have to move forward, and that's what I'm doing."

Christopher Pickett, a former Tessera GC who's now general counsel at Global Lighting Technologies, originally hired Maghame. He said Tessera is losing a valuable asset.

"She is a very experienced attorney," Pickett said. "She did a lot of things there, especially with respect to the M&A and also working on the Hill with the IP-related legislation — she was a leader in that, and in that respect I think she'll be sorely missed."

Tessera has recently had a number of courtroom successes, winning a \$60 million arbitration against Amkor Technology and a huge ITC case against a number of chip companies.

Maghame will continue to do work for the company on a contract basis. At her new firm she hopes to work for startups that don't have a GC, doing corporate and IP work. She's also looking to work for larger companies.

"We are going to be a client, and we're very proud to be her first client in her new venture as outside counsel," Cassidy said in a voicemail Tuesday. "She's a very talented person, with exceptional skills, and should be able to command a very interesting practice with both government relations and IP matters."

Before joining Tessera, Maghame was an IP lawyer at Hewlett-Packard and also worked at

Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison and Perkins Coie.