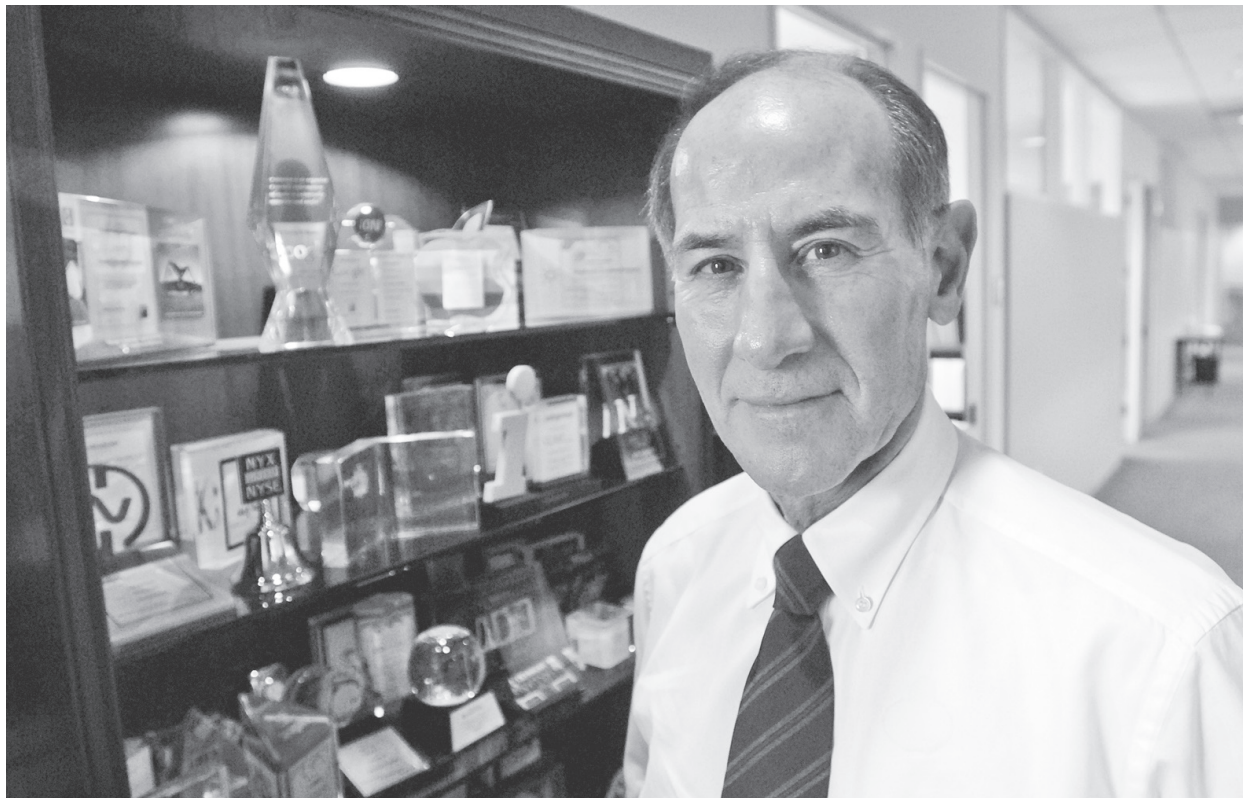


# Daily Journal

SEPTEMBER 22, 2010

## TOP 100

### 2010 | *Lawyers Who Helped to Shape a Decade*



S. Todd Rogers / Daily Journal

#### LARRY W. SONSINI

69

Wilson Sonsini  
Goodrich & Rosati

Palo Alto

Corporate and  
securities/corporate  
governance

## The Kingmaker

***His work on Google's IPO gave rise to Web 2.0 just as his work for Apple and Netscape helped to define earlier decades. Next question: Can his work on behalf of Tesla Motors reshape the auto industry?***

#### ► BY CRAIG ANDERSON

During a 10-year period with many other highlights — as well as challenges — Larry Sonsini's representation of Google Inc. in its initial public offering in 2004 stands out as, in his words, "the offering of that decade."

"As I looked at it, it was one of the major IPOs in the technology industry," Sonsini said.

The 69-year-old chairman of Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati places the Google IPO in the context of past initial public offerings he has handled, comparing it to those of Apple Inc. in 1980, which launched the age of the personal computer, and Netscape Communications Corp. in 1995, which popularized the Internet with its browser.

"If you look at each one of those, both the timing of them and the state of technology... they were major inflection points," Sonsini said.

The Google IPO raised \$1.7 billion for the company, which has grown rapidly from its origins as a search engine to a technology juggernaut.

The company has acquired companies and agreed to partnerships that allow users to get a three-dimensional look at the earth, to watch videos on YouTube, and to communicate on a mobile operating system. "Google is unique because it really demonstrated the power of what was happening in the Internet," Sonsini said during an interview at the firm's Page Mill Road

headquarters in Palo Alto.

But while it was his biggest deal, Sonsini believes it is simply one in a long line of companies to transform the world that he hopes will include Tesla Motors Inc., the electric car company he represented in its \$226 million IPO in June.

The Tesla offering was the first IPO of an American automobile company since 1956, and served as one of many reminders during the past year that Sonsini is still the pre-eminent player on the Silicon Valley legal scene.

Michael Ringler, a San Francisco-based Wilson Sonsini partner who worked with him on several recent mergers and acquisitions, said Sonsini "had a great year for anybody in their prime."

Mitchell Gaynor, the general counsel at Juniper Networks Inc., said Sonsini still responds to calls and e-mails very quickly despite his other responsibilities.

"He's almost superhuman in his ability to juggle all these things," Gaynor said. "The extent of his experience is such that he's a unique resource."

Sonsini endured several controversies during the decade. One involved his advice to the Hewlett-Packard Co. board about the legality of techniques used to spy on directors and journalists. He and the firm also were caught up in the options backdating scandal, which ensnared scores of companies that misdated option grants to employees and executives, allowing them to get a lower price than was permitted under accounting rules.

Sonsini is unapologetic about both dust-ups, saying he is "proud" of the work he did for Hewlett-Packard. As for options backdating, he said the record shows he "didn't have much to do with it."

Since then, Sonsini has removed himself from the boards of public companies, with one exception — Echelon Corp. — citing the time commitment and scrutiny directors face. He stepped down from Tesla's board of directors once the company was gearing up to go public, a decision he said was his idea.

"No matter how many low blows were thrown his way, clients and lawyers have continued to seek him out for the biggest, toughest problems," said Robert Feldman, a longtime Wilson Sonsini partner who now works at Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan. "And he's never missed a beat, either internally at the firm or with clients."

Sonsini has managed a tricky transition out of his longtime role as chief executive officer while remaining as chairman. He says that was the firm's biggest challenge at the beginning of the decade, and is satisfied with the outcome, which frees him up to focus on the firm's overall direction as well as his work with corporate clients on big deals.

"It's been wonderful for me," Sonsini said. "First of all, I am still driving a lot of the revenue of the firm and working very hard on the direction and the strategy and the culture of the firm. And that is satisfying to me because that's what I love to do."