

## Pinheiro Neto partner moves to disputes boutique after 40 years

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*Juliana Marçal and Sérgio Pinheiro Marçal*

In a rare lateral move from Pinheiro Neto Advogados, partner Sérgio Pinheiro Marçal has left the Brazilian [Elite](#) firm after 40 years to join litigation boutique Almeida & Marçal Advogados, while an associate from fellow Elite firm Lefosse has also joined as partner.

Almeida & Marçal announced the arrival of Pinheiro Marçal and Lefosse's Juliana Marçal on 6 February.

Juliana Marçal is the daughter of Pinheiro Marçal and one of the firm's founding partners, Liliana Almeida de Marçal. The firm's other founder and managing partner is Thiago Marçal, their son.

"Our arrival allows us to add expertise in private law to the firm's existing public law focus," says Juliana Marçal.

"We plan to remain compact to be as close as possible to our clients, eventually growing to a medium-size boutique without losing focus on our two core offerings," she adds, noting that the firm is currently looking for a small number of specialised associates to join the ranks.

Despite leaving the partnerships of two of the largest firms in Brazil – Pinheiro Neto has 117 partners while Lefosse has 67 – Pinheiro Marçal says that the strong relationship he retains with his former colleagues will help keep his workload full and diverse.

"Pinheiro Neto has strong non-compete agreements [for departing lawyers] but as I am moving to a small firm [the managing partner, Fernando Meira, and I] don't think that there is a problem with competition . . . so I believe I will be referred to act in cases when they have conflicts of interest," explains Pinheiro Marçal.

Conflicts of interest often limit the range of clients that partners at large firms have access to. Opening boutiques – the number of which has grown significantly in Brazil in recent years – is often motivated by a desire to broaden the scope of their legal work.

For both partners, this will mean building on consumer and civil law matters, particularly for pharmaceutical companies – a contentious market due to numerous regulatory challenges, accessibility and pricing of medicine and defective products.

Pinheiro Marçal notes that despite the challenges of this sector, its heavy regulation provides a strong framework for companies to work within. Disputes are also on the rise as consumers are seeking alternative platforms in Brazil for faster and cost-effective dispute resolution, alleviating the country's overburdened judiciary.

The partner says that companies must take a proactive approach to combat an increasingly litigious market.

“For clients, this should not be a concern – the first way to avoid conflict is to build good communication, hear the consumer and to try to solve the claims before you have litigation,” says Pinheiro Marçal.

Pinheiro Marçal was appointed to partner at Pinheiro Neto in 1996 after joining the firm as an intern 11 years earlier. He is recognised for his deep knowledge of consumer law disputes and product liability in the life sciences sector. His clients include major players such as Bayer and covid-19 vaccine producer Johnson & Johnson.

Other notable work includes representing German certification body TÜV during a case where French company Poly Implant Prothèse was found to have provided breast implants containing industrial-grade silicone to over 300,000 patients. Following a scandal in 2021, a French court ruled that TÜV had been negligent in issuing safety certificates for the implants.

Juliana Marçal joins the firm after a near decade serving in Lefosse’s disputes group. While she is experienced in complex civil disputes in infrastructure projects, more recently she has led pharmaceutical work. She intends to focus more on this area at Almeida & Marçal and bring “the excellence of big law firms and the way that Lefosse lawyers defend their clients” to Almeida & Marçal’s boutique structure.

She credits partner Pedro Maciel, a partner in Lefosse’s disputes resolution group, as setting an example for this standard of legal work.

Almeida & Marçal was founded in 2019 and until now largely focused on disputes in the public sphere. Its managing partner, Thiago Marçal specialises in commercial litigation, corporate law and compliance. He is also qualified to practise in New York. Lílíana de Almeida Marçal was a prosecutor for the São Paulo municipal government for nearly 30 years before she opened Almeida & Marçal with her son.

Pinheiro Neto is recognised as one of the finest law firms in Latin America. At the end of last year, it [elevated](#) four associates across its M&A, capital markets, tax and restructuring groups to the senior rank.

Partners rarely leave Pinheiro Neto to work at another law firm. In fact, Latin Lawyer understands that Pinheiro Marçal may be the first partner in the firm’s 83-year history to make this move. Partners that do leave to continue their careers often pursue different professions. Disputes partner Luiz Fernando Valente de Paiva, for example, left two years ago to launch his own stressed assets investment firm.

Pinheiro Marçal says that he believes Pinheiro Neto’s “strong” culture and ability to retain partners for most of their careers means that those who do leave tend to want to pursue different projects in their professional or personal lives – or retire by the age of 65, according to the firm’s policy.

“I still have the energy to remain in private practice and the desire to bring the excellence of a big law firm to a small structure,” says Pinheiro Marçal, who is 60 years old.

Lefosse is also prominent in the Brazilian market across a broad spectrum of areas. Earlier this year, two of its data and technology partners [moved](#) to Berardo, Lilla, Becker, Segala e Daniel Advogados, which former Lefosse partner José Carlos Berardo founded last year. The firm has recently hired [IP](#) and [finance](#) partners to strengthen its offerings in those areas.

Latin Lawyer contacted both Lefosse and Pinheiro Neto for comment but did not hear back before publishing.

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