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THE 2026 DEALMAKERS  
OF THE YEAR



MAGGIE FLORES AND SARKIS JEBEJIAN  
**KIRKLAND & ELLIS**

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**By Tom Spigolon**

The Kirkland & Ellis partners who helped close a \$55 billion deal to buy and take private game maker Electronic Arts Inc. said a short time frame of just 17 days helped keep the transaction under wraps, despite it being the largest leveraged buyout in Wall Street history.

New York-based Kirkland & Ellis partners Maggie Flores and Sarkis Jebejian led the team that worked to bring about the deal on behalf of an investor consortium that included Saudi Arabian sovereign wealth fund PIF, private equity firm Silver Lake and investment firm Affinity Partners.

Flores said the agreement took “weeks, not months” to complete before it was announced on Sept. 29, 2025, noting that Kirkland had the debt finance and related expertise necessary to get a deal of its size done relatively quickly.

“There was, obviously, a very focused commercial perspective on having this deal come together without the leaks that sometimes can cause a deal to unravel,” Flores said.

The transaction, which is still awaiting final approval, will be funded by \$36 billion from the consortium and \$20 billion of debt financing by JPMorgan Chase Bank.

Electronic Arts (EA) is known for such brands as EA Sports Madden NFL, EA Sports College Football, Battlefield, Apex Legends, The Sims and more. Final approval for the purchase is likely in the first quarter of fiscal 2027.

Jebejian called the deal a “team effort” that used the expertise of different practices and geographies, including its Riyadh office, within the firm.

Flores said the deal was important for Kirkland because it showed the firm was correct in opening an office in Saudi Arabia, and that its lawyer could work seamlessly across offices on a transaction of its size.

“The coordination between that [Riyadh] office and myself and Sarkis in New York and basically across the rest of the firm is representative of how the firm operates,” she said. “I think that’s pretty important from just an understanding of where we’ve grown strategically over the years.”

Kirkland was among the first foreign-owned firms to open an office in Riyadh after the Saudi Ministry of Justice granted it a license to operate directly in the country following reform to the Saudi legal licensing system in 2023.

Jebejian noted the deal was challenging because the buyer consortium had three different kinds of investors, including the sovereign wealth fund, a mega-cap sponsor and an entity that focused on growth equity and technology deals.

“It was particularly interesting for us to get a deal done for three different kinds of investors that had different priorities and different expectations,” Jebejian said. “To get that all that done on that timetable was challenging and fun.”

Flores said the existence of competing interests that had to be satisfied in a relatively short amount of time also complicated the transaction.

“With any deal, you have this sense of there is immediate chaos where you’re thinking about all the issues that could go wrong that you have to deal with,” she said.

And she added that it was necessary not just to negotiate with counterparties on the other side of the table but also to keep the different elements of the acquiring consortium on the same page.

“These deals are particularly challenging in having to balance all of those different interests and making sure you’re aligning everybody on the same outcome, especially on the time period we’re talking about,” Flores added.