



Portfolio Media, Inc. | 860 Broadway, 6th Floor | New York, NY 10003 | www.law360.com
Phone: +1 646 783 7100 | Fax: +1 646 783 7161 | customerservice@law360.com

Global 20: Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe

By Django Gold



Law360, New York (July 18, 2012, 5:59 PM ET) – Though Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP's international profile has grown by leaps and bounds in the last decade, the firm's expansion had been meticulously planned, enabling its successful overseas work with clients ranging from Microsoft Corp. to the French government, and earning it a spot on Law360's Global 20 list for the second straight year.

With more than 40 percent of its 1,262 attorneys working in one of Orrick's 14 foreign offices, the firm's management has certainly been unafraid to go where the action is, though its leaders emphasize that they never rushed into anything the firm wasn't prepared to handle.

"It was a conscious decision made by the leadership here," said Orrick Chairman Ralph Baxter. "The world was changing, the business of our clients was changing, and if we were going to serve them in the way we were accustomed to, we needed to be international and global."

"We tried never to force ourselves into doing something that was in the right place, but not good enough," Baxter added. "We were very deliberate about all of this."

As Walter Brown, head of Orrick's litigation business unit, emphasizes, the firm's aggressive outward push has not been gratuitous, but was designed in response to changes in both the market and in client needs.

"You won't see growth for the sake of growth," Brown said. "Our view has always been that our growth should mirror and capture the growth that is occurring globally with our clients and to grow in a way that allows us to service them wherever their needs may be."

Lately, these needs have become impressively far-flung. Of Orrick's 23 global offices, 14 of them are outside the U.S., with international branches spread throughout Japan, China, Taiwan, Russia, Italy, France, the United Kingdom and Germany. And Orrick's European and Asian offices have certainly drawn their share of business for the firm in the last year.

In China, Orrick's team came to the defense of Microsoft, which faced a lawsuit before the Beijing Municipal First Intermediate People's Court lodged by a patent holder alleging that the software giant's Xbox 360 video game system unlawfully incorporated a Chinese patent. Working on the ground with local intellectual property firm Beijing Unitalen, Orrick's Beijing and Seattle teams worked together to successfully move to invalidate the patent in its entirety before China's Patent Re-examination Board.

On the project finance side, Orrick gave invaluable counsel to the China Development Bank, an infrastructure bank that sought Orrick's guidance in the financing of five solar plants in Italy, a massive project requiring the input of attorneys in the firm's Rome, London, Shanghai and Hong Kong offices.

As Brown explains it, though successfully negotiating the complexities — and potential rewards — of China's burgeoning legal market presents a number of language and cultural challenges, Orrick has been up to the task.

"A lot of law firms have attempted to capture business in China by exporting U.S. lawyers there to try to capture the business," Brown said. "Our philosophy has been to create teams of lawyers from our China and Hong Kong and U.S. offices working together to offer not only the expertise in U.S. law, but also on-the-ground expertise in China. That's the only way to successfully capture that kind of work."

Though Orrick's four China offices have certainly carved out their share of business in the past year, the international firm has also continued to make great strides in Europe, particularly in Germany, which last year saw a new Orrick office in Munich, as well as the Dusseldorf branch's movement into a larger office building in order to accommodate its growing staff.

Mitchell Zuklie, the head of Orrick's corporate business unit, said that the continuing stability of the German economy had kept steady the country's status as an economic and legal hub. "Despite the fact that most of Europe has suffered through the eurozone crisis, Germany has had an excellent year," he said. "It's quite robust. The U.S., Germany and China are the pockets I see the most activity in."

Orrick's other European offices have also managed to thrive despite the continent's ongoing financial uncertainties. In France, Orrick has been enlisted to represent the French government as it seeks to renew contracts for hydroelectric energy production, a five-year commitment for the law firm. And in Italy, Orrick advised J.P. Morgan Securities Ltd., UBS AG and other banks in a \$1.4 billion mortgage loan securitization deal that was only the second of its kind since 2007.

With Orrick's international reach having only extended since the firm first ventured beyond its sole San Francisco office in 1985 — a firm center that been maintained for more than 120 years at the time — the firm's recent taste for expansion shows no sign of dulling anytime soon.

Baxter said that Orrick has identified five areas that it sees as most receptive to growth — intellectual property, finance, litigation, corporate, and energy and infrastructure — and said that the firm will continue to push them.

"We are determined to grow all of those areas," the Orrick chairman asserted. "We're going to grow a lot, and we will do it by whatever means are available."

However, the firm's leaders emphasize that Orrick is not rushing into anything without conducting the proper due diligence, with Brown pointing to the firm's closure 10 years ago of its embryonic branch in Singapore as ample proof of the dangers of overextension.

"A strategy of growth has to involve assessing how you're doing. And being smart — not only about where and how to grow, but where to pare back if you're not succeeding," Brown said. "We're careful that we don't spread ourselves too thin."

To that aim, the firm's leadership is focused on making sure it recruits the right people for the job, which again requires a patient, steady hand, according to Zuklie.

"The way you build a culture is not with an edict from a bunch of managers; you build a culture by working with your partners," he said. "The more that our work is cross-border, cross-disciplinary, the more it's integrated with our partners. We want people who are oriented toward being inclusive and team players, and that's required in any jurisdiction. But by and large, it's vitally important to hire global-thinking people."

--Editing by Katherine Rautenberg.

All Content © 2003-2012, Portfolio Media, Inc.