



LEGALINK
INTERNATIONAL BUT PERSONAL

THE INTERVIEWS
SERIES

#14

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Andrew Demetriou

— IOANNIDES DEMETRIOU LLC



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“From Tokyo to Texas”

What is new with your firm? Is there any recent significant news you would like to mention?

We moved to new offices in August of last year, that are owned by the firm and that serve our current needs and also for expansion for the next possibly ten years. They are located in the center of Nicosia, they are fully equipped and modern up to date facilities and it is very pleasant working environment, which I believe is very important both for the well-being and happiness of the work first and for the productivity as well. We have just concluded the tender process for the health insurance scheme for the whole of Cyprus. It is a major project, it is for the infrastructure of the scheme and the computerized programs that will manage the payments of patients when they visit hospitals and doctors for health purposes. The tender process took over ten years from the inception until now and we were very happy to be the firm who brought it to satisfactory conclusion.

Additionally our corporate department has just concluded Cyprus largest ever refinancing transaction in Cyprus for a major touristic enterprise.

What are you personally working on currently?

I am at the moment personally working on an ICC arbitrations, local litigation involving both local parties and foreign governments and institutions. On the advisory side I am working on the establishment of two photovoltaic power plants in Cyprus and a number of high value construction claims against the government. I am also appointed as arbitrator in a number of arbitrations with both foreign and local parties including the Government of Cyprus.

Which practice areas are the most in demand in your firm?

Litigation, mergers and acquisitions, corporate law and public law.

Can you share an example of cross-border work with another Legalink member?

Yes, we got a referral from our firm in Madrid, which we gave an initial quotation for few months ago, and the client came back yesterday and said that they would appoint us but they want their report in next four days. It is in the tourism sector. We were happy to receive this referral from Madrid and we will be happy to cater for his client. We have also had referrals from London for a tax matter and from Australia on a litigation related matter.

In terms of referrals, which jurisdictions are the most important for your firm?

The European jurisdictions are the most relevant. Our work is centered in Europe and more particularly in Eastern Europe, Ukraine and Soviet Union.

How long have you been a member of Legalink and what has changed since then?

It is over 12 years now. I am very pleased to note that in recent years Legalink has become much more business focused and members have increasing demands of the network to provide them with the facilities for cooperating together with a view to conducting business on an international scale. Also, we have had the admission of some very high quality firms in Legalink in recent years, which has significantly enhanced the status of the network and the relevance of the network for its members.

One thing that hasn't changed however is the enduring friendship between members and their dedication to the network. As chairman and a committee member before then my most rewarding task has been getting to know the host firms in all the places where we have had conferences. Their warmth and hospitality, their pride to be hosting the network and their friendship are truly humbling and represent an oasis of humanity in our increasingly global and digitized world which I will personally treasure for ever.

Another feature of Legalink which has been a constant and is often overlooked or taken for granted is the excellent work carried out by our administrators our Chief Administrative Officer Maria de Sá Nogueira who is based in Lisbon and Tereza Dovicova who is

based in Prague. They are both totally dedicated to the network and nothing is too much trouble for them, be it preparing an App and website in record time or in researching possible new members and arranging international phone calls between busy lawyers in different parts of the world.

What do you think about Legalink, where do you think it should be heading? What challenges are we facing?

I think in the last two years one of the greatest challenges facing Legalink is the fact that due to the quality of our member firms they are being approached by international law firms, which are expanding at very fast pace and asking Legalink firms to join with them as local offices. This has first happened in the USA in Washington, but then also in Nairobi, in Stockholm, in Warsaw and in Lima. So the significant challenge that Legalink faces is the replacement of these member firms with independent firms of equally high standing and equally high quality, something that we are undertaking with success.

The other challenge that the network faces is to increase the number of members with the introduction of quality firms in business centers where we currently do not have members. I have referred to this as external growth, this is the lifeblood of any network. To this end, there is a major expansion drive in the USA, in Latin America and in Africa. We have added recently two new USA firms, one firm in Africa in Angola, and we have added several firms in Europe - in Malta, in Romania, in the Baltic states and in Netherlands, we added a new firm replacing an old firm in Israel and we added new firms in Mexico and in Japan. All these firms are top quality firms, which further enhance

the status of the network and the relevance of the network to its existing members. In terms of internal growth the network has also made great efforts to make the biannual general meetings more relevant, more business focused and we are now seeing increase involvement and activity in the major practice groups. This activity either in the form of knowledge transfer or networking extends beyond the meetings and enhances cooperation between member firms in the period between the meetings. It is also very pleasing to note that certain initiatives, such as IP and Fin-tech are being launched as a result of interest or market sector expertise of member firms and these are being done in parallel with the practice groups.

This year we will see also the first **Legalink Academy**, which was commenced by the European group of Legalink on the instigation of one of our newer members, **Ekelmans & Meijer Advocaten** from The Hague who will also be the hosts.

In truth this is already a resounding success and we are guilty of thinking too small. I say this because although initially this was a European Group initiative it has been embraced by members throughout the world. We have members from as far Tokyo to Texas. It will be a truly multicultural gathering which will be not only professionally but also culturally enriching for the young delegates. I have no doubt that in future the academy by other regions because it is a wonderful way of introduc-

ing the younger lawyers in the network firms to the network and therefore enhancing the profile of the network within its member firms beyond the elder lawyers , who regularly attend the meetings. The programme of the Academy meeting is an inspiring mix of knowledge transfer and soft skills training which will keep the delegates interested, to say nothing of the beach barbecue.

The very fact that the network embraced the suggestion of a new member with such vigour and effectiveness shows that Legalink is an active and forward looking network which is very well equipped to meet the challenges that lay ahead.

What is your favorite thing to do in your spare time?

My great hobby is football. I watch football games. Also I enjoy travelling, which is just as well as there is never a month when I am not abroad for work. I also read, my kindle is a constant companion. I read everything except law.

Thank you very much!
Andrew Demetriou