

## Global 20: K&L Gates

By **Matthew Guarnaccia**

*Law360 (August 14, 2019, 3:30 PM EDT)* -- K&L Gates LLP once again solidified its status as a titan of the global legal industry, representing major names like Microsoft on important international investments and scoring a key victory in a trade secrets dispute before the U.S. International Trade Commission to earn a spot on Law360's Global 20.

While the majority of its approximately 1,800 attorneys are based in the firm's U.S. offices — more than 60% — K&L Gates still has a significant presence around the globe. K&L Gates boasts 44 offices in 15 countries, and 21 of those are outside the U.S.

K&L Gates' global reach allows it to regularly take the lead on matters from a cross-border perspective, but the firm also has the ability to represent clients on matters in their home jurisdictions. K&L Gates believes this combination is one of the keys to its success, as it can provide a wider range of services for its clients, wherever they may be.

"We want to deliver what clients need," K&L Gates global managing partner Jim Segerdahl said. "Typically it's a mix of cross-border expertise, domestic expertise, practice area expertise and various industry insights. That's what clients generally are seeking out, and that's what we've built our firm to deliver."

K&L Gates' strategy of providing clients with a full slate of options is apparent from the firm's combination with Singapore firm Straits Law Practice LLC. The tie-up with Straits allowed K&L Gates to not only solidify its global and regional presence by entering a major Asian economic hub, but also open doors to work on the ground, including on various disputes and regulatory and compliance matters.

"Most global law firms in Singapore are there to handle regional work," K&L Gates Asia managing partner David Tang said. "And we want to handle the regional work as well, but we want to provide a fully integrated service to the client because they inevitably will come upon Singapore law issues."



**K&L Gates**

**Global headcount:** 1,819  
**Total offices:** 44

**Offices by Region:**  
**North America:** 23  
**Europe:** 7  
**Asia-Pacific:** 11  
**Middle East:** 2  
**South America:** 1

The combination with Straits brought K&L Gates' Asia Pacific presence — including Australia — to 11 offices and 400 lawyers.

Across all its offices, K&L Gates is prepared to take on any challenge posed by its clients, demonstrating exceptional skill across a number of practice areas and subject matters. From mergers and acquisitions of all shapes and sizes to private equity, investment management, aircraft leasing, energy and disputes, the firm regularly demonstrates its ability to tackle any issue a client may have.

In the deals space in particular, an example of K&L Gates' prowess across multiple jurisdictions is its representation of fiber optic supplier II-VI Inc. during the company's \$3.2 billion cash-and-stock acquisition of peer Finisar Corp. While both companies were located in the U.S., the tie-up required K&L Gates to tackle due diligence, regulatory and compliance issues across multiple jurisdictions, since Finisar had a presence across Asia and Europe.

K&L Gates is no stranger to representing some of the biggest global names either, and Microsoft is no exception. The firm in October 2018 steered the technology giant on an investment in Southeast Asian on-demand transportation and mobile payments business Grab. K&L Gates in April 2018 also closed Microsoft's participation — alongside eBay Inc. and Tencent Holdings Ltd. — in a \$1.6 billion fundraising for Indian e-commerce firm Flipkart Group.

Another area where K&L Gates has experienced success is aircraft finance. The firm led Vietjet on a deal that saw the Vietnamese low-cost airline order 100 Boeing aircraft and 50 Airbus aircraft. The total value of the aircraft totaled \$20 billion.

K&L Gates also steered Mauritius-based aircraft leasing company Veling Ltd. on the \$320 million financing of an Airbus A380 from China Development Bank to Emirates Airlines. The agreement required the negotiation of multiple finance leases and an operating lease, and it was the first ever Middle East deal undertaken by China Development Bank.

Tony Griffiths, K&L Gates' managing partner for Europe and the Middle East, said the firm's success across these areas depends heavily on the firm's integrated approach and the ability of its attorneys and offices to work together as a cohesive unit.

"In providing multidisciplinary solutions to clients, we have to deliver synchronized, seamless services across a range of jurisdictions and a range of skill sets," Griffiths said. "The feedback from clients is we do it well, and that we do it better than most. I think that is a testament to who we are as a firm."

K&L Gates experienced noticeable success on deals in the European market this past year. One such transaction involved fund manager Federated Investors Inc., which paid £246 million (\$350 million) to buy a 60% stake in London's Hermes Fund Managers Ltd. The deal required input from attorneys in four regions, namely the U.K., Hong Kong, Australia and the U.S.

K&L Gates proved to be a global leader on the disputes side as well, highlighted by the successful representation of Chinese metal ribbon manufacturer Qingdao Yunlu in a trade secrets case before the U.S. International Trade Commission. Before the conclusion of discovery, K&L Gates convinced the complainant that the case was without merit, which led to a withdrawal of the action.

The type of dispute — brought under Section 337 of the Tariff Act of 1930 — is not often brought before

the ITC, meaning the attorneys working on the case faced a difficult yet exciting task by representing Qingdao.

“Our lawyers really enjoy digging in and coming up with the arguments and making the arguments on behalf of the clients,” Tang said. “These are very challenging cases. They are complex with complex issues.”

Despite being one of the most prominent players in the global legal space, K&L Gates' total headcount is actually lower now than it was a year ago. But the leaner workforce is a deliberate effort by the firm to meet client needs head on and to be smarter about their work and provide better service, Segerdahl said.

“We did not embrace growth for the sake of growth mentality and haven’t gone down that road,” Segerdahl said. “We’ve really embraced the growth for the sake of client service mentality, which can take you in different directions and different places.”

With its eyes to the future, K&L Gates knows there’s no resting on its laurels. The firm’s mix of global and local capabilities means it is ready to adapt to market changes quickly and effectively.

K&L Gates’ global strategic growth partner Craig Budner said the firm must continually “sharpen its swords” and look ahead to what will be most beneficial to those it serves.

“We’re always trying to get out to the clients, listening to what they need from us, asking them to speak to us about how they think about their legal solutions providers, and hopefully giving them the confidence that if they have a problem for which they need a solution, that we can provide the best one,” Budner said.

*Methodology: Law360 surveyed law firms about their global attorney headcounts, office locations and cross-border and international work between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019. Headcount and office information is as of March 31, 2019, except where noted for individual firms.*

--Editing by Haylee Pearl.