

The Legal Intelligencer

THE OLDEST LAW JOURNAL IN THE UNITED STATES 1843-2012

PHILADELPHIA, MONDAY, JANUARY 30, 2012

VOL 245 • NO. 19

An **ALM** Publication

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Of the Legal Staff

When Dechert Chairman Andrew J. Levander isn't busy representing former New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine or handling issues related to the Madoff scandal as counsel for Ezra Merkin, he is focused on bringing in high-level lateral partners across the firm's global offices.



LEVANDER

Most law firm consultants would tell their clients that putting one of the firm's biggest rainmakers in a leadership role that could distract from making rain is a mistake. They would typically also advise that a chairman of a global organization should spend 100 percent of his time on management and cede any role as a practicing attorney.

Levander, who took over as chairman in July 2011, has ignored both of those suggestions, handling major cases and overseeing the firm's strategic initiatives. He is of course helped in large part by the firm's new management structure, which gives much of the day-to-day management duties to Chief Executive Officer Dan O'Donnell. For Levander, and many of the firm's recent hires, his case load profile was something that helped attract the partners the firm was trying to woo, or in many instances had those attorneys calling Dechert. The bulk of the hires lately have been in the white-collar and securities litigation group and many of the hires led their respective practices at their former firms.

Levander, a former assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York in

the securities and commodities fraud unit, got calls from securities litigators interested in making lateral moves long before he took over as chairman. But in his new role, Levander said, he gets calls from a broader array of litigators and corporate attorneys.

"We're focused on cross-board global stuff," Levander said.

It doesn't matter where the attorney is located, as long as the practice has cross-border capabilities that can take advantage of the firm's network of offices, he said.

New York recruiter Jerome Kowalski said Levander is "an outstanding lawyer in every respect" and the firm has earned a strong reputation in the New York market and beyond.

Because Philadelphia is such an "over-lawyered" market, Kowalski said, firms based in the city have to look elsewhere to grow and the ones that do that the most have better profitability than other firms in the city that don't. Dechert has the highest profits of any Philadelphia-based firm.

One of the hottest practice areas right now is internal investigations, Kowalski said. Firms have not been shy about saying that

clients are making up for the years of rate pressure by letting "the spigots go" when it comes to paying for quality work in this area. It's a "very smart move on Dechert's part" to grow the practice, he said, adding that many of the laterals brought on recently are a "very worthwhile investment."

While Dechert may not have as well known of a reputation as some of the firms it is hiring from, Kowalski said, having a global presence is essential for corporate investigations practices, and Dechert has a larger reach and bench strength in that area than many of the firms from which it has taken partners.

Although Levander said geography doesn't dictate hiring decisions, the firm has focused on certain markets.

London has been a growth target because of the work expected from the U.K. Bribery Act's passage, Levander said. To that end, the firm hired partners Neil Gerrard and Jonathan Pickworth from DLA Piper. Gerrard was DLA Piper's global co-head of litigation and regulation.

Antony Dutton, the head of Norton Rose's dispute resolution practice, joined Dechert's London office earlier this month. He focuses

on international dispute resolution.

New York has also been a growth area as of late. Most recently, the firm hired Jonathan Streeter from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. He is perhaps most well known for his role as lead prosecutor in the Galleon insider trading case and will officially join the firm next month.

"I was looking for a place where litigation was the focus and Dechert certainly fit that bill," Streeter said in an interview earlier this month. "I wanted an established practice in litigation and white-collar but one that also really encouraged and was serious about me being entrepreneurial and me developing my own practice."

Streeter added later that "Dechert is also a place that tries cases and that wants to try cases, and I wanted to go some place where I can try cases."

There have been a number of other lateral hires in New York.

Hector Gonzalez left Mayer Brown to join Dechert's white-collar and securities litigation group in New York. James M. McGuire, a former New York appellate court justice, left the bench for the firm. And Linda C. Goldstein left Covington & Burling in New York to bring her securities fraud litigation practice to Dechert.

In a world of convergence, where clients are increasingly giving their work to a smaller number of firms, Goldstein said it was important to join a firm that had a larger group already handling litigation work, and specifically securities litigation.

Being able to leverage Dechert's financial services practice on the corporate advisory side with her litigation practice was also a plus for her. Covington's securities litigation practice wasn't as robust as its enforcement

group, Goldstein said. And the firm's insurance practice also made it difficult to grow her securities litigation practice, she said.

Beyond New York and London, Dechert has added in the last year attorneys in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Beijing and Paris. Glenn A. Fine joined the firm's white-collar and securities group in Washington from the U.S. Department of Justice. Jingzhou Tao, a partner with an international arbitration practice, joined in Beijing from Jones Day. Edwin V. Woodsome Jr. led a group of four commercial litigators to Dechert from Orrick in order to open Dechert's Los Angeles office. Marianne Schaffner, the former head of the intellectual property practice at Linklaters, led a team of three associates to Dechert's Paris office earlier this month.

Woodsome, who had previously headed up Orrick's litigation group a few years before leaving the firm, said he knew Levander for several years and was attracted to the quality of the firm's litigation group.

"I know the fact that he is a full-time, practicing lawyer and trial lawyer ... has been a plus for us," Woodsome said of Levander. "Our clients have said that."

"When you're talking to people about representing them in high-stakes securities or white-collar matters, it doesn't hurt to have somebody with his visibility involved," Woodsome added. "There's no question that's had an impact to our attractiveness to laterals."

When asked whether it was important for Dechert to hire from large law firms, Levander said he used to work at a small firm and knew he was very well trusted by some major clients but would still have trouble getting that "A plus" work. Instead he was handling the "B" cases, he said. While his

clients told him he was just as good or better than lawyers at large firms, Levander said, they told him they needed to go with major, household name firms in matters that were on the board's radar.

"It's hard to have a relationship at the highest levels of a company where you're going to get the work you really want to do, and that the clients are willing to pay for true expertise and results, at a smaller firm," Levander said.

So when firms are looking to bring on laterals with books of business, they are more likely to find the type of high-end work they want in a lawyer at a larger firm, he said.

Dechert's growth initiatives aren't over. Levander said the goal is to round out the firm's talent in all of its offices with attorneys who add something to the teams already in place. Germany, where the firm just opened a second office, is another growth target, albeit on the corporate side.

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