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The Diaz Reus competitive advantage

The market for legal services in China is fast becoming saturated. With so many players, it is often difficult to distinguish one firm from another. In this crowded market, however, Diaz Reus stands out. With a global practice, spanning the United States, Latin America, and now the Far East, Diaz Reus' team of lawyers, solicitors, and professional staff are reshaping the global practice of law. The firm's China Practice Group Leader, Robert Lee, tells *ALB* what separates his firms the rest



Asian Legal Business: Your firm received its license to establish an office in Shanghai in March of this year. How have things progressed? What is your China strategy?
Robert Lee – Diaz Reus: It's been extremely busy for us since we set up our Shanghai office. China has long been in our plans and our lawyers were working around the clock on plenty of cross-border disputes and corporate matters like project finance and M&A, so the granting of a license has allowed us to expand by following our international clients and setting up a physical office. Importantly, the license also gives us access to domestic Chinese clients. Our strategy in this regard is simple: in order to be competitive we have created a law firm that will focus on international practice in emerging markets, of which China is certainly one.

ALB: Your firm has previously stated that it's the BRIC nations, Brazil, Russia, China and India, which are the focus of the firm's strategy globally. How does this work?
RL: Over the past few years, we have witnessed a dramatic increase in patterns of trade relations between BRIC countries and interest from western countries, especially the US and Europe, in the growth story occurring in these countries. This interest spans all

sectors from FDI, M&A, strategic investments, and natural resources such as energy and natural resources. Similarly, the amount of investments we have seen have no limit, ranging from multi-billion to multi-million dollars. The work generated here already for our firm has been enormous and keeping our offices very busy.

ALB: In your opinion, how has the financial crisis affected your clients' BRIC interest? Has there been a decline in interest like elsewhere in the world?

RL: The global financial crisis has slowed things down, but the BRIC countries haven't lost their appeal, especially in terms of activity between BRIC nations. China's interest in Latin America, especially in terms of M&As, JVs and direct investment in mining and minerals, continues as does the two-way interest between Russia and the PRC in respect to sectors like oil & gas and natural resources—the interest of course is spurred on by China's need to find the natural resources to feed its manufacturing and economic engines. For these reasons, China's interests in the Middle East continues and a relatively newer trend is Chinese interest in resources in Africa. Our clients' demand for which may well see us open an office in Africa soon.

ALB: What do you feel are Diaz Reus' competitive strengths? Do you feel your size or niche offering put you at a disadvantage when compared to international firms?

RL: On the contrary, I think our size and our niche focus give us a competitive edge over our rivals. Compare to other firms in China, we may be smaller, but we are certainly more efficient and cost-effective. We are able to make decisions more quickly than larger firms and provide our clients not only high quality service, but round-the-clock attention because of our global coverage. In addition to our offices in Shanghai and our base in Miami, we have a physical presence in Sao Paulo, Bogota, and Caracas. Our size also means our operational costs are lower and this translates to fee savings. We are extremely competitive on rates—and this is something that is vitally important to clients in a global economic downturn, our flexibility here is something that isn't only liked by our Fortune 500 clients but makes us accessible to SMEs as well.



Robert Lee, Diaz Reus