



## What the Class 'New Boy' Learned at the ITRA Global Symposium

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**I am in the happy position to have had only one job interview in my 15-year career but to have worked for two radically different law firms. Let me explain. In 1997, I turned up as a green trainee lawyer at the City of London corporate firm, Nicholson Graham & Jones (NGJ).**

NGJ had been a successful and well regarded practice since Victorian times with a highly respectable base of what were known, when I arrived, as “property” clients: those were the days not long after “conveyancing” in the UK had grown up into “property law” and not long before, by a rather mysterious process, “property” transmogrified into “real estate.”

I learned my craft: buying, selling, letting, financing, developing, and managing real estate in England and, less often, Wales (Scotland and Ireland of course have their own legal systems and no need for my services). In the economic boom years of the new millennium, medium-sized London firms found themselves under fire: on one side from rapid consolidation and growth of the magic and silver circle firms; and on the other from sprawling provincial

firms with their significantly lower cost bases.

Gates, with over 2,000 lawyers operating on five continents in 46 offices.



The ITRA Global “Doing Business in the Americas” Corporate Guest Panelists (left to right): Dr. Ronald R. Pollina, President and CEO, ITRA Global / Chicago, and Author of “Top Ten Pro-Business States;” Mr. Lee Utke, Senior Director, Global Corporate Real Estate, Whirlpool; Mr. Mats Johansson, President, Skanska Commercial Development USA; Mr. James Cook, Chief Financial Officer, Mozilla Corporation; Mr. Mark Broadhurst, Director, Public Affairs and Government Relations, Mars, Incorporated; Debra Stracke Anderson, President and CEO, Panel Moderator, ITRA Global / Washington, D.C.

The answer, for us, was a bold and imaginative leap: to combine in 2005 with the U.S. firm of Kirkpatrick & Lockhart and to form an international law firm. To say we’ve never looked back would be a serious understatement! I find myself as a partner in one of the largest global law firms, K&L

The real excitement in this, for me, has been the opportunity to expand my horizons internationally, to see real estate not as a parochial issue, but as a key component of the global business world in which we all now live, and to work with my colleagues to maximise, for our clients, the great knowledge, connections, and resources contained across our global platform.

One of the early transactions, by way of example, upon which I was able to take a lead in London, was the establishment of the European headquarters of a major U.S. charity in London. Originating from my firm’s Seattle office, this job was a fantastic and busy time, building

bonds with my colleagues and the clients in Seattle, learning about the clients' operation, and learning how to explain some of the more obscure corners of English real estate law to overseas clients.

Another exciting strand in this international perspective to my work has been the creation by a number of real estate partners across our offices of our Corporate Real Estate Task Force. Its mission is to grow our practice in acting for corporate occupiers preferably, but not exclusively, for those that operate globally in those jurisdictions where we also have a presence. The chair of the Task Force is Pierce Richardson.

I was delighted therefore when Pierce contacted me to say that he is an active supporter of and occasional speaker for ITRA and that I would be most welcome to attend your seminar in London on the 12th September. When he said that ITRA is a great bunch of people and that he was sure I would have a fun time, I confess that the thought crossed my mind that he might have oversold it to me a little—but he was being completely sincere and he was completely right.

On to the business of the day, we sat

down to listen to a fascinating series of presentations from an impressive array of panelists. The morning session was the "Corporate Executive Panel," with senior people from Mars, Mozilla, Skanska, and Whirlpool giving us their perspectives on the issues facing corporates in the efficient development and management of their real estate.

I was interested to learn of the significance in the U.S. of government incentives in the process of deciding where to locate a new business; and it was good to know that sustainability and green issues are on the corporate radar as much as they are in the UK. Dr. Pollina's presentation on his organisation's research and yearly poll of the top 10 pro-business states was a real eye opener: I had no idea of the rapid growth of western states such as Utah, Wyoming, the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas, or of the extent of California's malaise. There are obviously many factors at play: the extent to which unions are powerful from state-to-state seemed to be especially significant in the poll, in terms of foreign investment location choices.

After a very jolly lunch, we reconvened for the afternoon

session, being the "Economic Development Panel," and here executives from government agencies across both North and South America spoke very well on the challenges and opportunities which their regions face and meet. From the USA, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Utah were represented; from Latin America, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico; and from Canada, Ontario.

As head of our "London Brazilian Business Development Group," I was particularly interested to learn about the similarities and differences in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico in terms of the importance of political stability, rationalising out-dated legal systems, and rising to the challenge of operating globally.

I left the day feeling that it had been extremely worthwhile, both in terms of the new friends I had met and in terms of what I had learned. I look forward to attending future ITRA Global events.

*This article appeared in the Spring 2013 Issue of ITRA Global's Newsletter, Corporate Real Estate Strategies.*