

## Camerons closes US capital office as cutback continues

CMS Cameron McKenna is to close completely its Washington DC office following announcements over the summer that it was further scaling down.

In July partners Greg Williams and Joel Zipo announced they would be leaving (see [2003] *Gazette*, 24 July, 9), and managing partner Dick Tyler said the firm would consider whether to continue with the office.

A spokeswoman for the firm said: 'We were hoping that there would be a way forward, but we've had to make a very difficult decision and close the office completely.'

She said six remaining lawyers in the office would be affected by the closure — which will take effect from the end of this month — and that Camerons would continue to serve the region from its New York-based Bureau Francis Lefebvre, and its Toronto-based association with Power Budd.

Earlier this year Camerons drastically scaled back its Asia practice, closing its Beijing branch and reducing its Hong Kong arm to an insurance capability.

*Jeremy Fleming*

**SERVICES: ex-City lawyer launches call management operation**

## First dedicated outsource company sets up in India

A former City lawyer has launched what he claims is the first outsourcing company in India aimed solely at the legal market, and at least one magic circle firm is already in talks to use its call management service.

The development comes a week after Allen & Overy sealed an outsourcing deal for its document production — also in Chennai (see [2003] *Gazette*, 18 September, 4).

Milan Zala, a six-year-qualified assistant who has worked in the City with Linklaters, Sidley Austin Brown & Wood and Pinsent Curtis (now Pinsents), has established Outcom to offer call management and answering services to the legal profession.

Firms would outsource the role of secretaries and fee-earners listening to voice mails and taking messages that would be processed and delivered instead by the Chennai-based Outcom centre. Mr Zala said: 'On a conservative estimate we believe that a firm with a staff of around 250 could generate additional seven-figure income levels using this technology. We already have one magic circle firm, one top 20 firm and one



India: popular outsource site

large US firm examining the possibilities for piloting.'

Mr Zala — who is Outcom's managing director — said the company would also launch document production outsourcing in due course. 'A lot of law firms are now looking at their practices as 21st century businesses, and seeing how they can reduce costs and best utilise their services. The old structures can't be supported in today's globalised world,' he said.

*Jeremy Fleming*

**Most hospitable deal:** Pinsents acted for the Birmingham and Black Country Strategic Health Authority on what it claims is the first franchise of an NHS trust to be awarded to the private sector. Good Hope Hospital NHS Trust has signed the franchise with Secta group for senior management services for the Warwickshire hospital. Norwich-based Mills & Reeve advised the NHS Trust and Bristol-based Osborne Clark acted for Secta.

**Most cinematic deal:** City firm Salans advised *Trainspotting* director Andrew Macdonald and DNA Films on a \$50 million joint venture with US broadcasting giant Fox. The venture, DNA Films, will produce, finance and distribute new British films. London-based Olswang acted for US studio Twentieth Century Fox and its Fox Searchlight Pictures division on the venture.

**Most powerful deal:** City firm

Linklaters acted for joint bookrunners Credit Suisse First Boston and Deutsche Bank AG London when International Power Jersey issued \$250 million 3.75% guaranteed bonds. International Power guarantees the bonds, which are due in 2023. Clifford Chance represented the guarantor and Jersey-based Mourant du Feu & Jeune acted for the issuer.

**Most driven deal:** North west firm Brabners Chaffe Street acted for Faun Municipal Vehicles on the sale of its temporary roadway division business to Trax Portable Access, which was represented by Foy & Co of Doncaster.

**Most equitable deal:** City-based Travers Smith Braithwaite advised Bridgepoint Capital in its provision of equity finance for a management buy-out of Robina Holdings, a provider of services for people with learning disabilities. Home Counties firm Horsey Lightly Fynn acted for the man-

agement team and Edinburgh-based Dickson Minto represented debt finance provider Bank of Scotland.

**Most analytical deal:** City firms all round as Macfarlanes advised private equity group Alchemy and management on its disposal of its year-long interest in financial markets analysis provider MMS International to the Informa Group for £24 million. Goodman Derrick acted for Informa Group. CMS Cameron McKenna advised Informa on its raising of £26.2 million for the acquisition through a cash and vendor placing, arranged by UBS who were represented by Ashurst Morris Crisp.

**Healthiest deal:** The Carlton Furniture and Engineering Company was represented by London-based Davenport Lyons in the sale of its Phlebotomy Chairs Division to Beaver Medical Supplies, which was represented by Peterborough firm Greenwood's.

## DLA CONVERTS TO LLP

City law firm DLA is the latest practice to convert to limited liability partnership (LLP) status. The firm made the change last week following a 12-month internal review. The new firm structure will take effect from May next year. Meanwhile, DLA partners have voted to extend Nigel Knowles's tenure as managing partner. He will now remain in position until December 2006.

## ASB OFFERS NEW DEALS

South of England-based ASB Law is offering businesses a new package of employment legal advice called 'ASB Employment Protect'. For a fixed price — there are four price categories available — firms can receive services ranging from unlimited use of ASB's employment advice line, contract auditing, health and safety training and management of share option schemes.

LINKS: [www.asb-law.com/protect](http://www.asb-law.com/protect)

## AVOID TRIBUNALS

Sheffield law firm Taylor & Emmet has launched an on-line service for businesses to help them avoid employment tribunals. Complete Human Resources offers human resources training, tribunal representation and on-line human resources policies in a bid to help employers and employees work together more effectively. The initiative provides support for both large and small companies that have less than 15 staff. Elsewhere, City firm Boodle Hatfield has launched an employment law training service, and has appointed former Eversheds human resources solicitor Paula Rome as a dedicated trainer.

## IT TEAM WINS AWARD

Linklaters' IT support team has become the first from a law firm to win a European Call Centre Award, presented by Call Centre Focus Magazine, for 'best customer experience'. The team proved it gave an effective, rewarding, consistently-delivered customer service. Ian Makey — manager of the 24-strong, Colchester-based centre, said: 'This is a great achievement and clearly demonstrates that Linklaters can provide excellent services across the board.'