WELCOME
FROM THE
CHAIRMEN

Welcome to your 2016 yearbook, our first as co-chairmen of the Allen & Overy Alumni Network. We’d like to start by expressing our thanks and gratitude to Alex Pease. Alex was the first chairman of our Alumni Network and for ten years played an instrumental role in establishing and growing what is now a network of more than 9,500 people across 70 countries. We’re excited to have the opportunity to build on those strong foundations and continue to develop the network.

As the two of us have sat down to consider the future for the network and discussed our own experiences at A&O, a consistent theme emerged: since the high quality and challenging work the firm does is taken as read, what’s really defined our experiences of A&O is the people with whom we worked and the relationships that we built. For us, the core purpose of the Alumni Network is to ensure that the relationship with our people extends beyond the period of employment and that our alumni continue to be part of what we consider to be a very special firm and community of people.

Our theme for this, our first yearbook as editors-in-chief, is therefore aptly a celebration of the longevity of A&O’s relationships with our people. We hear from some of them, past and present, on how the relationships and experiences at A&O have shaped their careers and equipped them for the future, whether with A&O or elsewhere.

On the subject of maintaining relationships, our largest Global Alumni Reunion to date took place this year in 14 locations around the world and was attended by more than 1,400 people (see the photographs on our recently launched Instagram page: AllenOveryAlumni). In addition, you can read on pages 58 and 59 about the continuing success of our mentoring programme which is part of our commitment to facilitate continuing learning and collaboration with alumni.

This year has been a time of change for A&O. Our senior partner, David Morley, retired from the firm after almost 36 years. He was an inspirational leader for many years and we want to thank him and wish him a long and happy retirement.

Wim Dejonghe and Andrew Ballheimer have been elected as senior partner and managing partner, respectively. Read about their aspirations and plans for the future of A&O on pages 4 to 11. In meeting some of the challenges Wim and Andrew discuss, you can also read about A&O’s Advanced delivery project, an example of the way in which A&O is innovating in the way it delivers services to clients, on pages 45 to 49.

Finally, in early 2017 we will be inviting you to participate in our global alumni survey. Your feedback and suggestions will help us invest in the Alumni Network in ways that are most useful to you. Please take a moment to share your thoughts.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of the yearbook and look forward to meeting more of you over the coming year.

Best regards

BOYAN WELLS AND MAHMOOD LONE
CO-CHAIRMEN, ALUMNI NETWORK
RELATIONSHIPS THAT GROW AND LAST A LIFETIME

LESS REVOLUTION, MORE EVOLUTION
Wim Dejonghe and Andrew Ballheimer discuss their vision for A&O: the current situation, the challenges ahead, the competition and the importance of a strong alumni network.

LIFE IN THE PUBLIC EYE
Alumna Nicky Morgan believes lawyers have much to contribute in public life. For proof, look no further than her own career as an MP.

SUCCESS OUTSIDE THE LAW
Former senior partner Guy Biringer has built a second career outside law. Now he wants to share his experience with others.

AN EDUCATION IN AFRICA
A&O’s engagement with Amref Health Africa has been its most successful global charity partnership to date – and an uplifting story of hope.

OUR AUSTRALIA PRACTICE: ON TOP DOWN UNDER
On top down under reflections on six successful years of A&O’s Sydney and Perth offices and what the future may hold.

ADVANCED DELIVERY
Working with our clients, we design solutions that solve their challenges through the right combination of expertise, resourcing and technology.

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’
Ten people from A&O’s past, present and future talk about their expectations and reflections of careers at the firm and beyond.

MADE TO MEASURE
Clients increasingly need combinations of resourcing and technology to address specific needs. Our Advanced delivery suite is designed to give them just that.

BUILDING ON FIRM FOUNDATIONS
A&O connections run deep – just ask alumna Rob Fireett, head of New Zealand’s financial authority. At times he’s felt as if he never left the firm.

THE A&O MENTORING PROGRAMME
An opportunity to talk confidentially about issues and explore solutions with someone with the experience to make a real difference.

IN MEMORIAM

CONTACT US
Remembering Nima Elmi took a six-month sabbatical in 2014 to travel to Somaliland – and stayed. Now she’s advising the republic’s government.
In May 2016, Wim Dejonghe was elected senior partner of A&O and Andrew Ballheimer was elected managing partner. Here, they discuss their vision for A&O, the challenges that lie ahead after the Brexit vote, the current situation for global businesses, what the competition looks like in 2016, and how important it is to have a strong alumni network.
THIS YEAR MARKS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA FOR THE LEADERSHIP OF A&O. WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

Andrew: We’ve inherited a fantastic platform from the previous leadership. Obviously it’s a real privilege to lead A&O, but it’s not going to be smooth sailing, so much as an evolution. We already have many of the building blocks of success, but now we can build on those achievements.

We’ve set five key priorities. The first is a real focus and push on clients. We’ve been inspired by the fact that A&O as a firm is seen as the most client-centric firm out there. It’s all about our clients, not our vision to set up new agendas and help them achieve their business objectives.

The second is to focus investment on those parts of our offering that aren’t quite complete but need a little more support. In particular, we’re pushing development in the U.S. and China, and keeping an eye on India, if the market there opens up. We’re also looking to invest more in Russia, Germany and Spain.

The third is to have a big push in revenue. We want to eat into our competitors’ market share and be ahead of the market as new opportunities appear.

Our fourth priority is diversity. We’re a people business and want to be able to promote our most talented people. That requires an expansive talent pool, which means we need to be as inclusive as possible. It makes business sense, and is the right thing to do morally.

Lastly, we aim to innovate constantly. When you look at the FT Innovative Lawyers Awards, A&O has come in the top three for innovation since the awards were started.

Andrew: We had eight weeks to draw up our strategy. In that time, however, we also had to do our previous jobs; we had to draw up a financial forecast for the firm and we both took a short break. So in terms of actual preparation time, we had two to three days!

Wim: Andrew came to my house in Belgium and we spent a whole day and a half just talking until we arrived at those five key priorities. We wouldn’t have been able to do that if we’d stayed in the office.

Andrew: Clearly each of us had thought about our vision for A&O during the election process. Even among the candidates, there was a minimum amount of divergence in terms of what we wanted to focus on, so it wasn’t as if we were poles apart to begin with.

Wim: On the election topics, we were 80-90% the same. In fact, the partnership was very much aligned behind the five key priorities, so now we’re able to get on with implementing them.

THAT’S GOOD NEWS. HOW DID THE ELECTION PROCESS GO?

Andrew: It’s the most intense professional thing I’ve ever done. You have to try to speak to every partner on a one-to-one basis, sometimes on the phone but also by flying to the international offices and meeting people personally. Even in a firm that’s actually not very political – there are no schisms or voting blocks in the partnership – for people who aren’t natural politicians, it’s odd going through a political process. I certainly felt a bit outside of my comfort zone. However, the engagement with the partners was fantastic. They all made time for me.

Wim: It’s definitely stressful but it’s also energising. There are a lot of good people out there with good ideas. Canvassing was really interesting – you get to see the pride in A&O, the ownership of it and people’s interest in how we’re going to move forward. It was very powerful.

LOOKING FORWARD, THEN, DO YOU HAVE PLANS TO OPEN ANY MORE OFFICES?

Andrew: We’re not looking at opening any more offices at the moment (although if India opens up to foreign law firms, we will look at that) but we are looking at focusing greater investment in our U.S. capabilities. Our U.S. team is extremely high quality with great clients, but we lack depth in certain practice areas and we need to build that up to grow our share of the U.S. market. We’ve recently recruited five leveraged finance partners. Hopefully we can continue doing that.

Wim: Will any expansion be through lateral hires or are you looking for a merger?

Andrew: There’s no merger out there that’s right for us in every respect. In this age, what you need is local law capability, which we have. You then need to have English law capability, where we are second to none.

Wim: Innovation is an evolving opportunity, so maintaining that competitive advantage through our innovation is vital.

HAVE YOU HAD TIME TO FORM A JOINT VISION?

Wim: Yes. Very shortly after the election process had finished, our bi-annual partnership conference took place in Dubai, which gave us the perfect opportunity to set out our vision to our fellow partners.

Andrew: Clearly each of us had thought about our vision for A&O during the election process. Even among the candidates, there was a minimum amount of divergence in terms of what we wanted to focus on, so it wasn’t as if we were poles apart to begin with.

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– Wim Dejonghe
none. Then you need U.S./New York law capability across your network, as a parallel offering to English law.

Andrew: To put it into context, 50% of the global legal industry is based on U.S. law. Unlike any other jurisdiction, the U.S. regulatory regime is extra-territorial; if an act has any nexus into the U.S., even if the act happened outside of the U.S., both the U.S. prosecutor and the U.S. Courts can claim jurisdiction over it.

For a global firm, having that extra-territorial impact on our business means we have to have a robust offering across all practice areas. We aim for A&O to be at the forefront of the global elite. We currently practice in over 100 jurisdictions, so we need to extend our U.S. offering.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING A&O AT THE MOMENT?

Wim: There’s increasing uncertainty around the world, not just in the financial markets but also because of political instability and terrorism. Our challenge is to navigate that uncertainty without overreacting, but also to be alert to long-term changes to the market.

Andrew: We’re a well hedged business and we can take changes on the chin, but sometimes these things come out of the blue, which creates an even bigger challenge.

Wim: Brexit was all about; you can also see traces of nationalism – is being challenged. Over the next ten years, I believe we’ll see the tension between globalisation and exclusion leading to more nationalism. For all businesses, this will have an effect on their strategic decisions.

Wim: If you’re at a local firm without an overseas presence, then you’re far more exposed to the local environment. Something like Brexit will have a far greater impact on you if you don’t have an international footprint which provides a hedge.

SO, ON 24 JUNE, DID YOU FIND A LOT OF CLIENTS TURNING TO YOU FOR GUIDANCE?

Andrew: Yes. We had scheduled a briefing call for 2,000 clients which ended up being hugely oversubscribed, so we shared the recording with a further 4,000. Because there were only a finite number of lines, we invited employees who wanted to listen in to join us in the auditorium. When I came down, the auditorium was packed with more than 500 people. They were standing, sitting on the floor or packed into the lobby outside where there must have been 100 people. I couldn’t actually get in – it took me half an hour to get to the front!

Wim: During the call, it was like the images from the Second World War where people were listening around the radio. I’ll never forget that day. After the call, I spent the whole day driving around London on the back of a scooter from one media interview to another. It was surreal.

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MAIN CONCERNS BOTH FOR A&O AND FOR BUSINESS IN GENERAL FOLLOWING BREXIT AND HOW HAS A&O BEEN ADDRESSING THOSE CONCERNS?

Wim: Businesses in general face the same issues as law firms. They’re also dealing with uncertainty for them and their clients. Globalisation – the philosophy of inclusion – is being challenged. Over the next ten years, I believe we’ll see the tension between globalisation and exclusion leading to more nationalism. For all businesses, this will have an effect on their strategic decisions.

Andrew: We’re a secondary business: we follow our clients, so whatever happens to them has an effect on their strategic decisions. If you’re at a local firm without an overseas presence, then you’re far more exposed to the local environment. Something like Brexit will have a far greater impact on you if you don’t have an international footprint which provides a hedge.

For us, the longer-term possible risk is that English law might lose some market share to New York law, but it won’t happen overnight, if it happens at all. Otherwise, we’re in a good place because we’re among the leading firms in all the leading centres of commerce across Europe – basically anywhere the financial institutions could move to. We might need to increase our English law capability in those places. However, I’m confident London will continue to play a major role in the global legal industry.

Andrew: The world continues to change. Spain has another election on Christmas Day. France and Germany have elections in 2017. In politics, things seem to be moving. There’s revolutionary change; there’s a disconnect between the things that happen in the EU in Brussels, and how the general populace is feeling. Brexit was a wake-up call, and I’m not sure it was heard.

LOOKING BACK TO LAW, DO YOU REGARD THE CONCEPT OF THE ‘MAGIC CIRCLE’ AS OUTDATED?

Wim: It’s been outdated for a long time. It was coined 20 years ago when 80% of our revenues were in London; now that figure is around 50% with similar statistics for Clifford Chance, Freshfields, Linklaters.

Andrew: The main global firms now, apart from us, are Latham & Watkins, Skadden, Freshfields, Linklaters, and Clifford Chance.

WHO DO YOU NOW REGARD AS A&O’S MAIN COMPETITORS?

Andrew: The main global firms now, apart from us, are Latham & Watkins, Skadden, Freshfields, Linklaters, and Clifford Chance.

Wim: We all have the same challenges. I think the two American firms need to grow their English and local law capabilities, and the others need to grow their U.S. law capability. That’s basically it.

HOW ARE YOU PREPARING A&O TO FACE NON-TRADITIONAL COMPETITORS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE?

Wim: We’ve built an alternative delivery capacity which allows us to work more efficiently at lower cost for our clients. We have five initiatives: asphere; the Project

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PROFILE: WIM DEJONGHE & ANDREW BALLHEIMER

MANAGEMENT OFFICE; PEERPOINT; THE LEGAL SERVICES CENTRE IN BELFAST; AND DIGITAL AND ONLINE SERVICES, WHICH, TOGETHER, MEAN WE CAN GO TO CLIENTS AND SAY: “WE CAN DEAL WITH ALL OF IT FOR YOU.”

Andrew: Clients are very interested in having the integrated package. It’s important that we can offer it because we’re being challenged, not only by other law firms but, more recently, by the big four accountancy firms. They may lack a deep, quality legal knowledge, but they’re very good at systems. They’re also building a huge legal capacity. For example, in Spain alone, EY has 600 lawyers.

Wim: PwC is certainly one of the largest, if not the largest, law firm in the world now. They have more than 3,500 lawyers, doing mostly compliance work on models where they have one partner and around 40 lawyers working on a standard product which is process driven.

Andrew: We’re always working on our processes and delivery models, and in that sense we’re better placed than anyone else in the traditional legal industry, but we need to move on to the next level. However, when clients have a complex, multi-jurisdictional issue, they recognise that they need our global capability, project management and alternative delivery models.

Wim: I was at a conference recently with our global relationship firms which cover jurisdictions where we don’t have an office. Our keynote speaker was a high performance expert and author named Rasmus Ankersen. His latest book, Hunger in Paradise, is about the risk of success in business; he says the hardest thing is not to achieve success, but to maintain it.

Andrew: I have mentors who were ahead of me in the firm and who I can talk to and know they will give me completely unbiased, very informed advice. They know me, they know A&O and can empathise. It’s a fantastic resource to have.

Wim: It’s a community, in a way. I think the personal relationships are the most gratifying. I have a lot of friends from A&O who I go on holiday with and have dinner with. These are relationships based on trust, with people you’ve spent an important or seminal part of your life with, and who you can call on anytime.

Wim: It’s part of the direction of travel for a career. We aim to create a community rather than an employer/employee relationship, which has easy exits and returns where the line between being in and out is grey and smudged, and with more and different ways of staying connected with the organisation. The Alumni Network plays a big role in helping us do that.

Wim: For most of my last years of full-time practice, a very large chunk of my work came from my old associates who’d moved on and become general counsel. Possibly the most fascinating deal I’ve ever done was from an ex-associate of mine who was going through the only real hostile takeover bid that ever happened in Belgium. The board was in a panic saying: “What do we do?” and he said: “I’ll call Wim!”

Each time he’s changed jobs since, he’s given me his legal work. It’s great to see the guy I recruited 20 years ago do so amazingly well. On a personal level, it’s a lot of fun to stay in touch, and that’s also good for the business, as you know them so well.

Andrew: I think for almost all of us here, our time at A&O is a key point in our career. It’s like having a badge that’s recognised around the world as a stamp of quality, of values and a certain type of culture. We’re all very proud of that.

HOW USEFUL DO YOU FIND HAVING AN EXTENSIVE ALUMNI NETWORK AT A&O?

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PROFILE: NICKY MORGAN

LIFE IN THE PUBLIC EYE

The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan is the Conservative MP for Loughborough. She entered parliament in 2010 and served as Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities until July 2016. She is also an A&O alumnus, having been an associate in the Corporate team from 1998-2002. However, despite the business and pressures of life in government, she is still using lessons learned from her time at A&O.

BEING A WOMAN AT THE TOP IN POLITICS IS A SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT. WHAT’S BEEN YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGE SO FAR, LOOKING PARTICULARLY AT WOMEN IN POLITICS?

The greatest challenge has been getting used to being in the public eye. The negative language used about women, the casual misogyny, the emphasis on what you look like, rather than what you say – that all takes some getting used to. We still live in a world where those covering politics tend to be male and they expect you to behave in a male way. That’s something this generation of female members of parliament is challenging – commentators need to realise women are not going to do that anymore.

LOOKING BACK, AND PLOTTING YOUR JOURNEY, HOW DID YOU FIND YOUR TIME AT A&O SHAPE YOUR CAREER?

I was always interested in politics. At Oxford I was treasurer of the Union and involved in the University Conservatives. At the back of
my mind I knew I would pursue a legal career, but politics was always there in parallel. At A&O, I got on the Conservative Party-approved candidate list, so I was running two jobs, which was part of the reason for leaving. However, my time at A&O was hugely influential. Negotiation skills, interpreting law, being able to process lots of complicated bits of information very quickly – I picked up all those skills at A&O.

Thomas commenting with his red pen on my drafting. Now I do it to others and realise how invaluable his guidance was. The other thing A&O taught me was resilience. You’re working at a top law firm, you’re working long hours; you have to be resilient. There are times when you’re thrown into the deep end, and that’s exactly what politics is like.

I think it’s important to add, as well, that I don’t think we take enough advantage in this country of lawyers in public life. I think lawyers have an enormous amount to contribute, both in terms of standing for public office and filling political appointments, and also in how they lead the rest of the country on policy. Taking the gender pay gap and flexible working as two examples, A&O is at the forefront of both these issues and I think they should not underestimate how influential they can be. If they set the tone positively, other employers will follow their lead.

SO WERE YOU LOOKING FOR A SPECIFIC NEW OPPORTUNITY WHEN YOU MOVED FROM A&O?

I needed to make the decision as to whether I was going to carry on being a frontline lawyer, or whether I was going to take a step back and pursue my political ambitions. As you can tell, I went for the latter! While at A&O, I fought for Islington South in the General Election of 2001. That worked well as it was ten minutes from the office and there was no pressure on me to win the seat. However, I knew if I was going to go for a seat in the future which I stood a chance of winning, I needed more time than being a corporate lawyer would allow, while that in mind, in 2002 I moved to be a professional support lawyer (PSL) at Travers Smith, where I stayed until I was elected in 2010.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE ANYONE CONSIDERING A CAREER IN POLITICS?

My big piece of advice would be “Do something else first”. Having a professional career to fall back on, and being experienced in other areas is essential. For example, when I was Treasury Minister, the fact that I’d worked in the City as a corporate lawyer was invaluable.

SO WHAT’S AT THE TOP OF YOUR AGENDA AT THE MOMENT?

When I was Secretary of State for Education, we published a white paper in March 2016 with the aim of continuing to build a really strong, consistent education system across the country for every child. I want to continue to support the new team in providing that system. Then, like all MPs, I have local constituency issues which range from getting roads resurfaced to getting dog fouling signs put up in the local parks, to sorting our football grounds!
When Guy Beringer left A&O in 2008, he knew he wanted a second career. He knew it would be outside law as his lifelong connection to the firm – 30 years in all and eight as senior partner – meant it would be impossible to contemplate a role as a lawyer in any other institution.

But, he thought, at the age of 52 and with that wealth of experience as a lawyer and manager, surely there would be plenty of opportunities?

Indeed there have been, and he’s achieved much since then, but along the way he’s also encountered misperceptions and prejudices about the valuable contributions lawyers can make outside the law.

That’s one of the reasons why Guy and a fellow former senior partner, Tim Clark of Slaughter & May, set up a group to provide information and guidance to partners in City law firms looking for external roles. BCKR, whose strapline is ‘Bridging law and the boardroom’, was founded in 2013 and has attracted some 75 members, including 15 law firms. One of them is A&O, and Guy is keen that members of the firm use BCKR to support their own ambitions.

“Our first objective is to help partners think about securing boardroom roles while they’re still working in their law firms,” says Guy. “Mostly, these will be voluntary sector or public service roles, to help avoid issues of conflict.”

“The second objective is to help lawyers learn how best to present themselves when applying for boardroom roles. This is particularly required in the case of listed companies, who often have a somewhat
balkened view of the need for anyone with a legal background in their boardroom. “I have often heard it said, ‘If I need a lawyer, I can hire one’. However, that completely misses the point – you’re not offering yourself as a lawyer but as someone with a range of business skills that can be valuable to a board.”

Such as? “Lawyers understand risk and how to weigh different risks that have a bearing on commercial outcomes. We know about hiring, mentoring and managing people. We understand project management. We live in a client-facing environment so we understand customer-focused businesses and we know how a business needs to market itself to business customers. We’re familiar with the use of digital technology in the delivery of customer service. And, finally, many of us have considerable management experience.

Almost all of us have had some form of management role in global professions services organisations with billion plus turnovers. Why would these attributes not be valuable to any boardroom? That’s what we emphasise in our members.”

ANTICIPATING SECOND CAREERS

On the advice of a headhunter, Guy had secured two roles before leaving A&O. The first was as a non-executive director of a privately owned wealth management firm, Fleming Family & Partners, an advisory business retained director of a privately owned wealth management firm, Fleming Family & Partners, an advisory business retained...

“Almost all of us have had some form of management role in global professions services organisations with billion plus turnovers. Why would these attributes not be valuable to any boardroom? That’s what we emphasise in our members.”

“In the public sector, Guy became a panel member of the Co-operation and Competition Panel and, at the end of 2009, was appointed chairman of UK Export Finance (UKEF), the operating name of the Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD). Initially appointed for a three-year term, he will end up having served nearly seven when he steps down at the end of 2016. He’s found this role stimulating. “I chair the board of a government department that extends cover to the private sector on the back of the government’s balance sheet. This means we’re scrutinised by a range of stakeholders within government, ranging from HM Treasury to the Cabinet Office and the Foreign Office, all of whom are deeply interested in the UK’s exporting capability and take a close interest in UKEF’s activities.”

“At the same time, UKEF is dealing with British companies, both large and small. It deals with banks because much of its support is extended through financial institutions. In other words, we deal with a complex network of interested parties.”

“However, I found my experience of management in A&O, where there’s a complex mix of internal and external stakeholders, was directly relevant to my role at UKEF.

“A&O is a client-focused business and you have to enjoy learning about the cultures of the many different client organisations which the firm serves. You’ve got to have an appetite, if you like, to learn the new language and culture of whatever organisation you’re dealing with. This experience has translated directly into my boardroom career and has proved invaluable.”

In 1999, Guy was appointed chairman of ATC Group, a Netherlands-based trust services company which was being acquired by HgCapital, a private equity company. That was his first private equity board role. The group prospered and was sold in 2013 to Blackstone. “It was fascinating to see the whole process through from private equity buy-out to successful exit,” he says.

And that’s not all. Guy is chairman of the Legal Education Foundation (LEF), previously the College of Law. He maintains his close links with the law centre movement and the advice sector through the work of the LEF. He’s particularly pleased with the success of the Justice First Fellowship Scheme at the LEF which was his brainchild and which he hopes will produce a new generation of motivated and bright young social welfare and civil justice lawyers.

He’s also co-chair of the development board of the Bingham Centre, founded by the late Lord Bingham, which promotes the rule of law on the advisory board of Spencer Stuart, the headhunting firm; and a trustee of the British and Irish Legal Information Institute, which provides the only free access to case law available to members of the public.

Music and singing in particular being close to his heart, Guy is chairman of City Music Services, which provides music and choral support to businesses (including A&O) in the delivery of customer service organisations with billion plus turnovers. Why would these attributes not be valuable to any boardroom? That’s what we emphasise in our members.”

"I went almost overnight from an environment where everyone knew who I was to one where I was an unknown quantity."
AN EDUCATION IN AFRICA

A&O’s two-year engagement with Amref Health Africa has been its most successful global charity partnership to date – and an uplifting story of hope.

Emmanuel Mbwilo is the District and Cultural Youth Officer in Meatu, a remote district in northern Tanzania. Every year, he sees girls – some as young as 12 – expelled permanently from school, not for academic reasons but because they have become pregnant.

It’s a problem across Tanzania. Roughly half its 49 million people are under 18, and the country has one of the highest adolescent pregnancy rates in the world – one in four girls give birth before they turn 18. This means about 5,000 girls every year are derailed an education, perpetuating the cycle of extreme poverty in their communities.

“Education is everything in this world we’re living in right now,” said Emmanuel. If young people – boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 20 – could be educated about sexual and reproductive health, teenage pregnancy rates would drop and thousands of girls would remain in education.

That was the challenge taken on by A&O in its two-year global charity partnership with Amref Health Africa, an international development organization that works across sub-Saharan Africa to strengthen health systems and empower communities.

By all measures, this has been A&O’s most successful partnership to date (see box ‘The successful partnership to date’, and at its conclusion in October 2016, it left an important legacy.

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Programmes like these have very long-term objectives, but we expect to start seeing an impact on teenage pregnancy rates within the near future,” said Dr Florence Temu, Country Director for Amref in Tanzania.

Emmanuel added: “With you [A&O] coming here to focus on education, we think this is the real solution for us.”

BREAKING THE CYCLE

In 2014, nearly 2,500 people across A&O voted and chose Amref, formerly the African Medical and Research Foundation, as the firm’s global charity partner. The central aim of the partnership was to reduce teenage pregnancy and keep thousands of girls in school through education.

With a lack of access to information about sexual and reproductive health, girls are also two times more likely than boys to become HIV positive.

In February 2015, an international team of alumni and current A&O staff visited Meatu District to launch the partnership. They met Dr Temu, who described the task as encouraging, open dialogue about sexuality and health issues.

“We know that what works is training teachers and peer educators in every school in Meatu, as well as to build youth-friendly health facilities across the district.”

Roger Wedderburn-Day, former A&O partner and now Peerpoint consultant, said it was extremely important to see the conditions on the ground. “Before I came out [to Meatu] I couldn’t have imagined what conditions were like, and I go back much more informed and much more appreciative of the project and the work Amref is doing.”

David Morley, A&O’s senior partner from 2008 to 2016, was also part of the first team to visit Tanzania. “I was struck very quickly by what a good choice our people had made in Amref,” remembered David.

“Amref had very clear goals in Meatu – they weren’t interested in creating any form of dependency in the communities – and I felt A&O could bring a lot to the partnership, not only with financial support but also with our professional skills.”

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Teenage pregnancy rates had been cut from 257 to just ten a year in Mtwara, another remote area of Tanzania. Using the model that succeeded there, Amref aimed to train teachers and peer educators in every school in Meatu, as well as to build youth-friendly health facilities across the district.

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Can remain in school, get better jobs and improve their communities. By empowering young people, they are laying the groundwork for lasting changes. If the youth are well educated, the whole community will be well educated.”

The Kijana Wa Leo – Tomorrow’s Youth project was launched in October 2015 and under it, 90 community health workers across 45 villages have been trained so far, while training is underway for teachers and peer educators in all 72 schools targeted in Handeni.
The advocacy toolkit was the largest pro bono project A&O worked on with Amref, but it was just one of 27 projects completed during the partnership.

Another key project was undertaken by Munich partner Joachim Feldges to help Amref understand and manage its intellectual property (IP) rights around the enormous amount of health data it collects in Africa, and to build its commercial relationships with the big pharmaceutical companies. Joachim, with A&O Pro Bono Manager Hayley Jones, travelled to Nairobi in June 2015 to train Amref’s senior management team.

A&O lawyers in London also trained Amref staff in the UK on contract law, negotiating and mediation skills and data protection law, as well as giving advice on issues ranging from anti-bribery, corruption and fraud to EU trademark laws.

A&O’s professional support staff contributed many hours of volunteering time, providing training on networking and pitching, budgeting, health and safety compliance, front of house services and maternity leave mentoring – to name a few.

A&O also provided Amref with GBP16,000 of in-kind support, for example designing its annual report two years in a row.

Less than a year since its launch, the programme has already reached 10,000 young people.

ADVOCACY LEADING TO LONG-TERM CHANGE

The strength of A&O’s partnership lies not only in the financial support for Amref. A team of 30 people from the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, UK and U.S. delivered A&O’s biggest pro bono project for a global charity partner, providing Amref with a comprehensive toolkit and training programme to help it advocate for change in sexual and reproductive health across Tanzania, from community level right up to government.

New York partner Elaine Johnson has been actively involved in the Amref partnership from day one, and led the international project team. “Amref has been involved in a lot of advocacy based on medical needs and best practices, but had less experience using legal advocacy,” Elaine said. “So this was an obvious area for us to use our skills and build a practical toolkit for Amref – particularly for its programme managers in Tanzania.”

Nycteris Jackson, Amref’s Afya Kura Vijena Project Manager, agreed: “The toolkit will help us in how we interact with the district authority, which has responsibility for allocating resources and changing laws that affect sexual and reproductive health issues. With this, we can advocate for positive change.”

The advocacy toolkit consists of a suite of interactive documents designed to help Amref project managers understand the legal rights and instruments relevant to their areas of advocacy, as well as how to develop effective messages and communication strategies.

Crucial to its success was ensuring the toolkit supported Amref’s policy priorities and working culture. The A&O project team of lawyers, professional support staff and alumni visited Tanzania twice during the partnership, first to conduct workshops with Amref staff involved in advocacy at all levels – from strategic leadership to implementation in the field – to fully understand the challenges. They returned, after six months of work on the project, to train all Amref’s project managers on how to use the toolkit, and to visit the Kijana Wa Leo project to see advocacy in action.

“The toolkit was about advocacy leading to targeted, long-term change in Tanzania,” said Legal Project Manager Karen Crosswell, who provided communications and project management input, as well as training on the ground. “Obviously you want any development work to be sustainable, so to go into the schools and medical centres and see the change happen, that’s the ultimate aim.

SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS – THE ULTIMATE AIM

Helping build Amref’s skills in this way boosts its ability to leverage the projects A&O has funded. Amref’s Van Der Pauw, A&O’s Co-Head of Corporate Responsibility, said: “Amref now has a framework that we hope will ensure the long-term impact of these projects. It means Amref can apply these skills to other projects in Tanzania and perhaps even more widely in Africa. That’s the ultimate aim of all our charity partnerships – to build a relationship over the two years that sets the charity up for more success in the future.”

Frances Longley, Chief Executive of Amref Health Africa, thanked Allen & Overy for “this incredible dedication and generosity of spirit” over the past two years.

“Throughout we have shared a determination to create a deep and significant partnership between our two organisations. Through that collaborative approach, we have developed sustainable, scalable, successful projects to improve access to health services for young women in Tanzania,” she said.

“It has been an amazing journey, working side by side to reach one shared goal. This partnership has been a real team effort and we have established a strong bond of trust, respect and understanding along the way.”

COMING NEXT: SUPPORTING CHILD REFUGEES

A&O’s next partnership launched in November 2016 with War Child – an organisation again chosen by A&O in a global staff vote. This two-year partnership will focus on supporting the 2,000 youngest and most severely traumatised children in one of Jordan’s refugee camps.

To find out more, contact daisy.wakefield@allenonvery.com.
ARTICLE: SPOTLIGHT ON AUSTRALIA

IN 2016, ALLEN & OVERY CELEBRATED THE SIXTH ANNIVERSARY OF OPENING ITS AUSTRALIAN OFFICES. YOU’VE BEEN HERE FROM THE START. HOW AND WHY DID YOU JOIN?

GS: The attraction for me was the opportunity to establish an office from the ground up in my home town for one of the world’s leading law firms; and to be able to do so with two other partners I had a high regard for in Peter Wilkie and Meredith Campion. Our expertise in energy and resources and cross-border corporate and financing work was a great fit with A&O’s global brand and growth strategy. I was happy at my previous firm but the opportunity to be a partner of the first of the Magic Circle firms into this market, and to stay in Perth, was too good to pass up.

JD: For me, the timing was also perfect. My background is asset management and regulatory matters and my clients were then looking to expand the range of their investments beyond Australia. They therefore needed a lawyer with expertise who could assist with their international ambitions. By joining A&O, I could offer them an international platform and a true global service.

WHEN A&O OPENED ITS OFFICES IN AUSTRALIA IN 2010, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS HISTORY, IT HAD FIRST-MOVER ADVANTAGE. HAS THAT ADVANTAGE BEEN SUSTAINED?

JD: It certainly has. We caught the market by surprise, but what really made the difference was offering a model that suited our clients – most of whom were global, market-leading organisations. A&O was the first to position itself as a top-tier international firm in the Australian market, thereby being able to advise on international deals from Australia. We started with an international platform and expanded from there. Others have followed, but the fact that we were the first has always been advantageous.

GS: Having the name in the press, with the news that we were the first of what the legal media call the “global elite” to open in Australia, was undoubtedly helpful. While the firm was already well known in the finance community, the media attention was useful in profiling the brand and the offering more widely, including to corporates in Australia. I think what also helped was that we invested, in the widest sense, in integrating into the network in those earlier years, and continue to do so.

NONETHELESS, THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME CHALLENGES WHEN YOU OPENED UP. WHAT WERE THEY?

JD: Being part of something new was exciting. Although it was hard work, we all relished the challenge. We were part of the beginning of a new phase of the Australian market – the transformation from domestic firms to international firms entering the legal market. Many years prior, we’d seen Jason Denisenko and Geoff Simpson, the managing partners of A&O’s Sydney and Perth offices respectively, reflect on six successful years and what the future may hold.
For our Australian clients, it’s also about bringing together the best of A&O’s global knowledge and deal technology to this market. Our firm has a strong focus on cross-border work. Mirroring the A&O network, we’ve continued to deepen our expertise in core advisory and disputes experience focusing on cross-border work. We have a cohesive partner group that is integral to the firm’s global offering. We’ve been successful because we’re part of a global firm, which means that we can capitalise on the inevitable downturn, our litigation group in Perth was well prepared. Our litigation group in Perth was well prepared.

**The longer we’re in the market, the more clients get it – they see the benefits of a joined-up, international approach.**

— Geoff Simpson

For various Australian state-based firms combining to become national Australian firms, it was exhilarating being at the head of the pack. The challenges were similar to those of many of our clients in a ‘start-up’ environment – having to install some of the basic IT infrastructure, recruit staff, deal with the win work – but with the benefit of having the global firm behind us. The support we got was tremendous; it was a real team effort.

**What neither of us – or indeed anyone – felt was that we were stepping into the unknown. We were confident of what we were doing and what we wanted to offer.** It seemed to be us ‘no brainer’ to us and we did have strong support from clients and the firm.

**How do you differentiate yourselves from other law firms, including the international law firms, who have since set up?**

**JD:** Our focus when we opened was to offer advice on cross-border deals and matters, in all our practice areas. So now that includes corporate, finance litigation and arbitration.

**GS:** Our staff are embracing the international platforms that A&O offers. We’ve taken up opportunities in other A&O offices, including my own PA, Pheebee Poon, who relocated to London in 2014. The longer we’re here in the Asia Pacific region, the more we’re able to capitalise on the inevitable downturn, our litigation group in Perth was well prepared.

**What does A&O offer its staff by way of career opportunity and what do you look for in your staff?**

**GS:** We invest in people: it’s one of the most satisfying things about building the business and the practice. A cohesive partner group is important. Generally, our doors are open, and we encourage mentored lawyers to meet senior interim resourcing needs operating from A&O’s offices in Asia Pacific and elsewhere, often requiring Australian, English and U.S. law, which we can support from our offices in Australia. Not many firms of our calibre can do this.

**Jason Denisenko**

Partner, Sydney

A&D: 2010-present

**Geoff Simpson**

Partner, Perth

A&D: 2010-present

**DO YOU HAVE ANY MESSAGES FOR ALUMNI?**

**JD:** We always love to hear from our alumni, so we hope they keep in touch.

**GS:** We’re nimble. We can adapt better than others to changing market conditions. For example, when the mining sector took a downturn, our litigation group in Perth was able to quickly capitalise on the inevitable result – more disputes.

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**Integration sounds good in theory, but what does it mean in practice?**

**JD:** It means being able to allocate experienced people with the right cultural fit to where they’re most needed. One of the key drivers for our opening in Australia was that we’ll be a source of high-quality lawyers for the rest of the network, especially in Asia Pacific. In practice, that means our lawyers will work on matters that may have no Australian dimension, and equally, when we have a surfeit of deals, we can call on resources from outside Australia. Our culture and values mean we have a one-team ethos supported by one integrated profit pool, and that encourages collaboration.

**GS:** And we’re not just talking about lawyers. Our support functions are also a fully integrated team, for example HR, Finance, Business Development and Business Services. All support are supported by other teams based in Asia Pacific or elsewhere.

**Our staff are embracing the international platforms that A&O offers.** Thirty-two of them have been seconded to clients or other offices in FY16 alone.

**WHAT DOES A&O OFFER ITS STAFF BY WAY OF CAREER OPPORTUNITY AND WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN YOUR STAFF?**

**GS:** We invest in people: it’s one of the most satisfying things about building the business and the practice. A cohesive partner group is important. Generally, our doors are open, and we encourage and mentor our lawyers; we appreciate that what lawyers want is partner time and we do try to provide that and enjoy doing so.

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Iain Hardie and Wendy Ko arrived at A&O in Australia by different routes. Iain grabbed the opportunity to venture “anywhere east of London” in the wake of the global financial crisis. Wendy welcomed the prospect of working in her home city, Sydney, for an international firm doing cross-border work.

Wendy was well aware of A&O’s presence in Australia, following the splash made when it opened. It was an easy decision to move firms, which she did in September 2010. She soon found herself working on exactly the sort of deal she had anticipated, including SABMiller’s AUD1.5 billion major acquisition of Foster’s, one of Australia’s largest companies, in 2011.

Iain had initially discussed a role with A&O in Singapore but learned that an opportunity existed in the recently opened Perth office. As a corporate lawyer with a particular interest in the oil and gas industry, this was music to his ears. He joined in early 2011.

“It was a great office, an excellent team,” he recalls. “I’m still in touch with Geoff Simpson and Meredith Campion. It was the period of Australia’s resources boom and we had work coming out of our ears.Added to which, Perth is a fabulous city. I couldn’t believe how lucky I was.”

Did the fact that they were joining a new venture in Australia give them any pause for thought? After all, they were leaving well-established firms with secure jobs.

“It was certainly completely different from working in an established office,” Wendy recalls. “But there was a great atmosphere of rising to the challenge. As associates, we were given a much freer rein than we’d had before and a greater role in business development.”

They were also supported in their career progressions. Iain was offered a secondment with a client, Nexus Energy, in Melbourne. This was great experience for him, even when Nexus found itself in financial difficulties and was eventually sold in a hostile acquisition.

“It was tense,” said Iain. “Nothing really prepared you for working at a company under stress – people’s livelihoods are at stake. What impressed me was how A&O stood by its client and guided it through the constant stream of challenges – right to the end.”

Wendy had mentioned she’d be interested in moving to London. Within a day of telling her boss, Aaron Kenavan, it had all but been arranged. She spent a year in the London office in 2013.

Further help followed when she then expressed an interest in moving in-house. As it happened, SABMiller was looking for an M&A lawyer in the UK, and offered her a job immediately. She started her current role there early in 2014.

“I felt both of these things – my secondment to the London office and my moving in-house to SABMiller – were well supported by the firm and, in particular, Aaron. The firm went out of its way to help me achieve what I wanted to achieve. I’m not sure this would have been the case with other firms.”

For Iain, as his secondment was coming to an end, he was also approached to move in-house but with another energy company, Oil Search. He joined in January 2015.

Both give a thumbs-up to working in-house. “I enjoy the variety,” Iain says. “I’ve worked on everything from acquisitions to setting up the company’s charitable foundation and any number of matters in between. I’ve also enjoyed working with the diversity of disciplines, from the commercial team through to the geologists, and becoming immersed in the business. And now I’m based in another great Australian city, Sydney. The surfing isn’t as good here as it was in Perth, but that’s a minor grumble!”

Wendy echoes that sentiment. “I always enjoyed getting to know my clients and their businesses. That’s exactly what you get as an in-house lawyer. The free beer is also good!”

Iain’s role has included working on a range of issues in relation to the company’s exploration and production activities in Papua New Guinea. Oil Search goes out of its way to be a responsible social and corporate citizen. As the biggest employer in the country, it has paid for hospitals, roads, and schools and is engaged in a programme to supply electricity to every household in its sphere of operation.

“The power projects involve generating electricity from a variety of sources: the company’s uncontracted natural gas, biomass and potentially even local, mobile small-scale LNG. As Iain says: “Electricity is a precursor to good health and education, and we want to make sure that people receive the benefits from our involvement in the country. We’re taking something out, so we want to put something back in a meaningful and long-term way.”

Both are happy to acknowledge the debt they owe A&O for giving them a platform on which they built. Says Wendy: “We learned so much at A&O, the hard skills – which is the technical knowledge – and the soft skills, such as negotiation and relationship management. I put those to good use every day.”

Iain concurs. “My time at A&O was hugely influential. I worked with Angus Jones, a pre-eminent oil and gas lawyer in the region and a stickler for detail. That gave me industry knowledge plus the discipline that I carried forward with me and I’m immensely grateful for that.”

“What I most remember was the collegiality. There were no cabals or cliques: we really operated as one team.” — Iain Hardie
Jamie Palmer was the first associate hired by A&O in Australia, coming to work in early 2010 alongside his long-time mentor, Aaron Kenavan – a founding partner of the Sydney office.

As he and others learned, there was plenty of work from day one, and the office grew quickly. “We were winning mandates even before we had the staff and the precedents to do them,” he recalls. “But A&O is known for finding a way. And we were doing our damned best. We were punching well above our weight.”

The work brought opportunities. In August 2013, after three-and-a-half years with the firm, Jamie left, tempted by the prospect of partnership elsewhere. However, he couldn’t stay away long, returning in 2015, this time as a partner.

Having spent almost a decade working alongside others in the Sydney team, he feels delighted to be in the partnership alongside other partners in the Sydney team, alongside other partners in the Sydney team, 2015, this time as a partner.

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Having spent almost a decade working alongside others in the Sydney team, he feels delighted to be in the partnership alongside others. But it’s not merely familiarity that makes Jamie so enthusiastic. “This firm is helping us find better, faster and more efficient ways of servicing our clients,” he continues. “Technology is us finding new, faster and more efficient ways of servicing our clients.”

But above all, he believes this is the best model for serving the client. “Our clients receive seamless global service. As a client, you know you’ll get ‘gold standard’ advice whether you’re dealing with an A&O lawyer in Sydney or Slovakia, or all the places in between.”

Jamie is optimistic about the future, notwithstanding the wave of change confronting the legal profession. “As I see it, there’s a huge opportunity for an advanced law firm like ours,” he continues. “Technology is us finding better, faster and more efficient ways of servicing our clients.”

He cites as an example MarginMatrix, a digital derivatives compliance system that helps major banks deal with new regulatory requirements. “Products like that have saved our clients literally millions of dollars.”

Clearly, Jamie is buzzing with ideas, so how does he relax in his down time? “I love to surf. Salt, sun and sea: it’s so cleansing,” he says.

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Together with our clients we design solutions that solve any challenges they may face through the right combination of expertise, resourcing and technology.

Clients are responding to the constant pressure to balance cost, quality and risk in innovative ways:

• Agile legal function staffing
• Unbundled legal projects
• Exploiting technology
• Introducing standardised solutions

We are adapting what we offer to create new solutions

Just as we are always shaping A&O to meet our clients’ needs across countries, practice areas and sectors, we are now broadening our range of skills and means of delivery.

FOR ENQUIRIES

Please contact Jonathan Brayne
jonathan.brayne@allenovery.com

TECHNOLOGY & PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Intelligent delivery; client transparency
Managing complex projects and high volumes of documents and data

What sets us apart
• From law firms: leaders in applying technology and specialist project management skills to design smart solutions to client challenges
• From third-party providers: our intimate familiarity with our clients and A&O allows us to deliver precisely tailored solutions at a more modest cost

LEGAL SERVICES CENTRE

High volumes; the highest standards
The Legal Services Centre (LSC) helps clients analyse high volumes of material, often with complex and technical content

What sets us apart
• The only law firm-owned LSC handling document-intensive exercises across all practice areas. Seamless integration with A&O means high quality without the multiple provider risk and hassle associated with legal process outsourcing (LPOs)

AOSPHERE

Global complexity; simple compliance
Complying with complex, dynamic global regulation

What sets us apart
• The consistency, quality and depth of our information
• Our data feeds into software vendors’ automated compliance systems
• Our experts are dedicated 100% to our services – not distracted by traditional lawyer/client work
• Advanced flexible working to attract the best talent

PEERPOINT

Specific needs; flexible talent
Peerpoint helps clients staff a project, interim or secondment role in legal

What sets us apart
• The only flexible resourcing business integrated into a top global law firm:
  • All consultants are A&O partner endorsed
  • Gives access to A&O expertise
  • Established in London and Asia Pacific – commitment to deliver globally

FOR ENQUIRIES

Please contact Jonathan Brayne
jonathan.brayne@allenovery.com
Sounds simple, and for some it is. Take David Morley, A&O’s recently retired senior partner. An interviewer once asked him how old he was when he knew he wanted to become a lawyer. “When I was 13,” he replied. Sure enough, David spent 35 years— all of them at A&O—in the profession, retiring in 2016.

That’s not unusual in the upper echelons of the legal profession. But the chances are a group of millennials, asked if they saw themselves staying with the same organisation—or even the same profession—for that length of time wouldn’t have that expectation. With a globalised economy and greater flexibility in how, when and where people work, the career lifecycle looks different from what it was 30 years ago.

For many, joining A&O remains a career highlight but it may not be forever. So today’s employee lifecycle is about building relationships that last; being forward-looking and equipping people with skills and experience to set them up for the future, whether they spend it with A&O or move on.

Ten people from A&O’s past, present and future talk about their expectations and reflections on careers at the firm and beyond. 

“Find something you love doing—it’ll feel much less like hard work if you do.”  
— Andrew Rhys Davies
Alexandre received offers of a training contract with several top firms, but chose to join A&O following a positive experience during his summer internship in 2015.

“I chose to study law as I’ve always been intrigued by the notion of justice as a fundamental element of society. While studying and undertaking internships, I became fascinated by corporate and financial law, so decided to pursue a career in this field. Internships helped me become acquainted with different Belgian and global firms, but it was during my summer internship with A&O that my knowledge expanded immensely; I was welcomed by a friendly and enthusiastic team and quickly felt at home. Among the firms I applied to, A&O stood out for its dynamic and enthusiastic approach in responding to changes in the industry. Its modern way of working in general makes me feel my clients good legal services and having a good work-life balance.”

Alexandre Holvoet
Future Trainee, Brussels

Jakub joined A&O as a paralegal in 2008 and began a training contract in 2012.

“I decided I wanted to become a lawyer during elementary school while watching the U.S. TV show ‘Matlock’. The guy was smart, helped the disadvantaged — and wore amazing white suits! On a more serious note, I liked history, philosophy and political science, so law seemed the most practical and rewarding career path. While studying, I gained experience with Clifford Chance in Prague. When I started to look for longer-term roles, A&O took a chance with me, even though I was younger than most paralegals. I really appreciated it.

“What surprised me about A&O was the level of support and trust I received soon after joining – and the fact that the doors to anyone in the firm are always open. Such a level of collegiality and openness is very unusual for law firms in Prague, whether local or foreign. I hope law will be a challenging and ever-changing field. “I hope to take part in pro bono work to deepen my understanding of human rights. Regardless of how unpredictable a career in law may be, I hope never to stop learning and gaining valuable experiences, both on a professional and a private level.”

Jakub Čech
Trainee, Prague

“Over the past nine years, I’ve learned the importance of job satisfaction and what a difference it can make to your life as a whole. I do believe this contentment plays a massive part in making your career successful. I would love to look back in years to come and know I made a difference to the workplace and to the people I worked with.”

Faye joined A&O as a PA in 2007. She is now a Legal Professional Assistant and transferred to the Dubai office in 2014.

“It’s exciting to see an interesting instruction land on my table, and I savour those occasional moments of epiphany when I finally find a solution to a complex problem.”

— Jakub Čech

Faye Cobb
Legal Professional Assistant, Dubai

“In five years’ time, I hope to have become a reliable member of A&O’s Corporate team – able to contribute to the positive atmosphere surrounding the team. I also hope to take part in pro bono work to deepen my understanding of human rights. Regardless of how unpredictable a career in law may be, I hope never to stop learning and gaining valuable experiences, both on a professional and a private level.”

Faye Cobb
Legal Professional Assistant, Dubai

“The transition from college to a global law firm made me grow up quickly. I knew standards would be high, but I learned that if you’re willing to work hard and focus on your goals, A&O really does give you the opportunity to go far. I’ve seen many colleagues change not only roles but their whole area of work at A&O, and the amount of support they’ve received through those transitions has been amazing. High-quality training for support staff is such an advantage, particularly on softer skills which help in life whatever role you pursue.

“The things I love most at A&O are the people and diversity of my work. Moving to Dubai, I was worried the office and people would be different – less friendly than London – but I couldn’t have been more wrong. Being in a smaller office away from home, you really do feel part of one family. I speak to many partners, associates and support staff around the network and I can honestly say the A&O ‘family’ culture is global.

“I believe you get out what you put into your career, and to work hard in the early stages pays off in the future. I hope to continue progressing at A&O, perhaps supporting more of the management team.

“Being 17 and oblivious to firm status, I chose A&O over the past nine years, I’ve learned the importance of Faye Cobb offered jobs at A&O, Freshfields and Hogan Lovells. Being 17 and oblivious to firm status, I chose A&O because it meant I didn’t need to get the three! It was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.

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Faye Cobb
Legal Professional Assistant, Dubai
ARTICLE: THE EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE

GRAHAM MARTIN
Peerpoint Consultant, London

Graham joined A&O as a trainee in London in 2010 and moved to Peerpoint in 2015.

“I was initially attracted to A&O because of its global presence. I had previously studied and worked in the U.S., Sweden, Geneva and Paris and, when I applied, only a handful of firms could match the breadth of international opportunities available at A&O. It also stood out for the diverse group of approachable, similar-minded people I met at the open day and interview, who clearly genuinely enjoyed working at the firm.

“I decided to move to Peerpoint to allow time to develop my painting practice. Before law, I’d studied art in Edinburgh and continued to paint in my spare time. I began exhibiting work three years ago and decided to pursue painting more seriously then. Becoming a Peerpoint consultant allows me to spend six months of the year in my London studio. I’ve now exhibited work at the Royal Society of British Artists, the New English Art Club, the Royal Scottish Academy and the ING Discerning Eye, as well as being shortlisted for several international art prizes.

“My first Peerpoint assignment was with A&O’s Banking team; my second was with Barclays’ Investment Banking division. The quality of work is the same as when I was an A&O associate; the major difference is that being a consultant gives me the autonomy to choose the type and duration of assignments I undertake.

“A&O has a huge amount to offer junior lawyers, so my advice would be to take advantage of all the opportunities. “

– Graham Martin

CLIFF CHOW
Senior Associate, Hong Kong

Cliff joined A&O as a trainee in 2008 and is now a Litigation senior associate in Hong Kong.

“To my undergraduate days, the importance of the rule of law – especially in a small territory like Hong Kong where it has helped to attract so much wealth, talent and culture from around the world – was instilled in me. While studying for my LLB in London, I applied to A&O because of its reputation as an employer in Hong Kong. A&O really sets itself apart in the summer internship interview – a half-day programme which included a presentation to a Hong Kong partner who had flown in especially. The collegiate culture drew me into the firm: people worked as a team and seemed to enjoy it even when they hit some ungodly hours. I saw a supportive working environment where people helped each other.

“A&O’s international network was another major draw. Even as a student, it was clear to me that A&O was serious about developing an international practice across all areas. That’s not just about opening new offices, it’s about putting in the effort to build a network of people who know each other on a personal level, through programmes like the mandatory international trainee secondment (I went to London), numerous off-sites around the world, and the business skills training where you fly to another location to mix with peers from different offices.

“Joining A&O, I expected to learn from some of the best lawyers in their fields, and to learn from the clients, too. I hoped for high profile work and intellectual challenges. I expected to work hard and to be smart in balancing my personal life with work. But I also expected to share laughter and jokes and to grow professionally. All these expectations have been borne out during my time at the firm.

“The highlights of my career have been working on investigations and litigations with a large team across the globe. These are the cases that showcase A&O’s strengths. I also enjoy doing what I can to help junior members in the team develop their careers and benefit from their time here. I get a lot of satisfaction out of that and it makes work more fun. My overall advice – what I tell the summer students every year – is help each other out. That’s the A&O culture.”

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– Cliff Chow
**ALUMNI**

**ANDREW RHYS DAVIES**
Assistant Solicitor General for the State of New York


“Originally I wanted to become a journalist because I liked writing, but my school guidance counsellor advised me that journalists aren't very popular so I should become a lawyer instead.

“Two years after qualifying, I decided to leave A&O and join a New York firm where I could do more advocacy. But when I was offered a job by the people setting up A&O's U.S. Litigation department — Pamela Chepiga and Michael Feldberg — I accepted. It was an exciting prospect to be back at A&O building a practice group in a new market for the firm.

“There was no way, when I joined A&O, that I thought I'd become a partner in New York a decade later. But I was fortunate to find a practice area that I love and to have a number of mentors who helped shape my career. They gave me opportunities to take on challenging work, encouraged me to stretch myself and deliver on it. I still have a letter from an A&O client whom we helped through a custody proceeding to extract her grandchild from a bad home situation. She wrote that she truly believed we'd been the answer to her prayers. It's not every day we can have that kind of impact, but I still think about that client and her family.

“After being a partner at A&O for eight years, I was offered an exciting opportunity to be an Assistant Solicitor General and represent the State of New York in the appellate courts. This has given me a great opportunity to focus on appellate advocacy, something I enjoyed while at A&O. And that's the best piece of advice I could give somebody starting out today: find something you really love doing. Your career will be much more rewarding and feel much less like hard work if you do.”

**HEAD OF OPERATIONS**

**WINMAMA AYE**
Head of Operations, Myanmar

Win worked for Save the Children in Myanmar and Sri Lanka for six years before joining A&O's newly opened office in Yangon in 2013.

“After being a partner at A&O for eight years, I was offered an exciting opportunity to be an Assistant Solicitor General and represent the State of New York in the appellate courts. This has given me a great opportunity to focus on appellate advocacy, something I enjoyed while at A&O. And that's the best piece of advice I could give somebody starting out today: find something you really love doing. Your career will be much more rewarding and feel much less like hard work if you do.”

**“It's fascinating, stimulating, demanding and occasionally exhausting. But the firm's culture compels everyone to work cooperatively.”**
— Andrew Rhys Davies

“A&O found me through a mutual friend when I returned to Myanmar. I was unsure whether to continue working in the development sector or to try the private sector, but the A&O people in Yangon and Bangkok made such a good impression. They are intelligent, nice people and I had a good feeling I could work with them.

“Being aware of the fast-changing and complex political context of Myanmar, A&O was keen to have a Myanmar national on board, and it was an exciting opportunity for me to set up a new office in my country with such a prestigious firm.

“I wanted a challenging job and this absolutely is. My remit is almost everything: HR, recruitment, government relations, research, pro bono and community investment, knowledge management, tax, finance, business development... the list goes on but the job is extremely satisfying.

“Since A&O opened in Myanmar, there have been so many highlights. We worked with the Supreme Court on the Arbitration Bill which became law in 2016, and were able to ensure the bill is up to international standards, which will boost investors’ confidence. For this, Myanmar received the Global Arbitration Review award for making the most progress as a jurisdiction. I'm so proud! I was part of the team that helped my country achieve this.

“As such a small office, we are very close to each other and have a ‘one office, one team’ spirit. When someone leaves or moves to another office, it’s as if we've lost a family member!”
— WinMaMa Aye
ARTICLE: THE EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE

**ALUMNI**

**MARK ROBITOLLI**  
Managing Director and Deputy General Counsel, TPG Growth, New York and San Francisco

Mark was a senior associate at A&O from 2003 to 2005, then Programme Officer at the U.S. Department of State, before re-joining A&O as Senior Counsel in 2007. He left in 2011 to become Executive Counsel at General Electric (GE) and recently accepted a position as Managing Director and Deputy General Counsel of TPG Growth, the venture capital and growth equity fund of private equity firm TPG.

“I originally joined A&O because the firm had made a strategic decision to build a world-class U.S. Corporate practice to complement its Finance practice in the UK, Europe and Asia. A&O was a big firm but with a small presence in New York – the biggest legal market in the world – so it was an exciting opportunity to help build a practice here.

“The best thing about A&O was the global scale of the client base and the complexity of the work. Of course, that was also the worst thing because the only universal holiday was New Year’s Day – every other holiday was the most uneventful.

“The learning and development at A&O is geared to the partners and the clients’ interests. The global offices were also valuable for bringing lawyers together to share experiences and learning across the network.

“When I decided to spend a few years in government service, A&O was supportive of my decision. And when I left it was time to return to private practice, my first call was to Eric Shube, partner in New York. I never called another law firm. I felt a real sense of loyalty to return to A&O. It was a nice home to come back to.

“Looking at A&O from the client side, I believe it has become one of the few firms with true global scale, which appeals to clients with complex, multinational operations instead of top-quality legal services. The relationships I built at A&O, both within the firm and with its clients, have had a big impact on my career and have helped me grow professionally and personally through the global network of talented individuals who all have a connection to the firm.”

**SALLY ONIONS**  
Partner, London

Sally joined A&O as an associate in 2001 and was promoted to partner in 2009. She appeared in the top 20 in our 2014 survey when we asked alumni who was the most inspirational person during their time at A&O.

“When I joined A&O, I was looking for a change, but didn’t know exactly what I wanted to do. I had a friend at A&O and, when I heard they were looking for associates to join the Securitisation team, I thought what a great opportunity. Although I didn’t have much experience confidential, I had no expectation of making partner early on in my career. Initially I went to the Bar, but found it wasn’t for me. When I came to A&O, I was more focused on bringing lawyers together to share experiences and knowledge.

“It’s exciting to see the growth that’s happened here. A&O has changed quite a bit since I joined in 2001. I also felt it was time to return to private practice, my first call was to Eric Shube, partner in New York. I never called another law firm. I felt a real sense of loyalty to return to A&O. It was a nice home to come back to.

“I do think there are more demands on our time now than 15 or 20 years ago. It can be difficult to juggle things and still maintain some kind of balance and sanity. I often feel I fail at both! However, being a partner at A&O is like being part of a supportive family. You can contact any partner and they will give you their time and assistance, which is very reassuring. When I heard they were looking for associates, I thought what a great opportunity. Although I didn’t have much experience confidential, I had no expectation of making partner early on in my career. Initially I went to the Bar, but found it wasn’t for me. When I came to A&O, I was more focused on bringing lawyers together to share experiences and knowledge.

“I’m also fortunate to have fantastic clients. Of course the work can be demanding, but it’s much easier and more enjoyable when you’re all pulling in the same direction. The spirit, hard-working ethic and close-knit relationships in the Securitisation group are special. I enjoy watching colleagues develop and grow, even if their paths change and they decide to pursue a career outside of A&O.”

When you work so closely with each other, you develop lasting friendships.

“My advice to someone starting a career today is... relax. So many young lawyers think they have only one shot at being successful, but it’s okay to change your mind about what you want to do. Your career lasts a long time, so the most important thing is to be happy in your job and ensure you’re working with people you like and respect.

“For me, a successful career means no regrets. I know not everything will be perfect but, looking back, I’ll know I gave it my best.”

**Sally Onions**
CONSIDERING YOUR NEXT CAREER MOVE?

Are you thinking about your next career move? Come back to us and we’ll offer you challenging and rewarding work, collaborating with a global network of talented colleagues and, crucially, we will help you to grow and equip you for the future – wherever that may take you. Go to allenovery.com/alumni to search our career portal for current opportunities available across A&O’s global network.

“IT’S A FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD A NEW PRODUCT WITHIN A REALLY INNOVATIVE TEAM.”
– Jenny Ljunghammar

 clients increasingly need combinations of resourcing and technology to address specific needs. Our Advanced delivery suite is designed to give them just that.

“WE’RE THE ONLY MAJOR LAW FIRM TO HAVE WHOLEDALLY EMBRACED THIS WAY OF WORKING AND WORKED OUT HOW TO FIT THE PIECES TOGETHER.”
– Jonathan Brayne

In recent years, A&O has significantly expanded the ways in which it delivers services to clients – because that’s what our clients tell us they want. They face unrelenting pressure to deliver the legal function into their companies for lower cost and less risk, but ever-higher quality. This pressure has increased since the financial crisis and with a changing regulatory landscape. Their response has been to become much more imaginative in shaping solutions, which has taken them into more agile resourcing and greater use of technology.

A&O has also responded, with initiatives such as Peerpoint, our Legal Services Centre (LSC) in Belfast, our Project Management Office (PMO), aosphere and our Online Services. They enable us to design combinations of resourcing and technology unique to clients’ specific needs – and on occasion lead the world in dealing with a new challenge (see page 49).

In 2016, the Advanced delivery project brought these five services under a single banner and gave A&O a unique proposition and, in essence, a new way of working.

Jonathan Brayne, partner and head of A&O’s Innovation Panel, said Advanced delivery addresses the ‘unbundling’ of tasks that has become a dominant feature of client work: breaking up a deal, dispute or project into its constituent parts and working out the most efficient, balanced way of completing them.

He said Advanced delivery enables us to tell clients we have a toolkit of different types of resourcing and technology matched to their needs. As important, “we can pick and choose from that menu of options to create solutions tailored to a specific challenge they bring us”.

“This is an exciting area,” he said. “We’re the only major law firm to have wholeheartedly embraced this way of working and worked out how to fit the pieces together.”
– Jonathan Brayne
BEYOND PROVIDING SERVICES

Jonathan said it goes beyond simply providing services. With the Advanced delivery toolkit, A&O has professionalised every task, applied technology in smart ways, and brought our expertise and standards to every challenge.

Take project management: though not a new paradigm, the demand for ever-tighter control of deals that themselves are increasingly complex, it has evolved to a distinctly different discipline, said Ranjit Nahal, head of Legal Project Management.

="Both clients and our own firm face fluctuations in demand..." - Richard Punt

"Both clients and our own firm face fluctuations in demand..." - Richard Punt

"Underlying challenges include the difficulty of predicting demand accurately..." - Jane Townsend

Underlying Challenges

Variable demand is an underlying challenge identified by Richard Punt, CEO of Peerpoint. Some variability is seasonal and, therefore, can be planned for, whereas others are more related to individual deals, investigations or situations – and therefore more challenging to add or remove capability. Richard said an attraction of variable resourcing was the ability to “drive growth when it comes, and manage costs on the downside when the business is quieter”.

For Richard, Peerpoint is not just about delivering services, but about giving clients the tools to help them manage their own lives. For example, when data is presented as a map, the colours represent different risk levels, which can be set to highlight important data points. This can make it easier to see trends and patterns, which can help clients make more informed decisions.

Richard said an attraction of variable capacity is the ability to “drive growth when it comes, and manage costs on the downside when the business is quieter”. In 2015, Peerpoint helped A&O grow parts of its IP business in ways it could not otherwise have managed when consultants worked alongside members of a small but focused litigation team.

“We provided a significant number of people into that team of consultants,” Richard said. “We also identified a number of barristers positioned to work with that team.” Those additional people enabled the litigation team to expand its business significantly.

“Very often consultants come with different sets of skills. They often have project and stakeholder management experience that tends to be greater than that of the associates they sit beside. That balance of skills with experience has proven extremely valuable in a number of transactions,” he added.

Ranjit agreed. PLMs in her department are tasked with “complementing the lawyers, bringing different skills to the table. “We’re there to make their lives easier. In that respect project management has really worked,” she added.

Building Capabilities

The different capabilities in the Advanced delivery toolkit have been built up mainly over the last four to five years, but some – such as for example – have been in development and use for ten years or more.
PMO, on the other hand, was set up as a separate department only in May 2015. “The starting point for all of us is the clients,” said Jonathan. “Our Advanced delivery tools were very much a response to the challenges our clients face. What’s clear is that the capability has real resonance with clients.”

Advanced delivery is contributing significantly to A&O’s top and bottom line giving us a competitive advantage in winning work – often work we wouldn’t previously have won. It will also take us places that our traditional practice doesn’t necessarily engage with.

Recognising a need for cost-effective small and medium-scale M&A, A&O has worked with the LSC to develop a ‘tool on package. The LSC carries out due diligence, document drafting and post-completion work, and A&O handles term sheet documentation and negotiation, resulting in a process that can deliver A&O quality at a competitive price.

**OPENING NEW MARKETS**

Advanced delivery also gave the ability to open up new markets. One such is U.S. asset management, where aosphere’s products are in demand. CEO Marc-Henri Chamay said signing up clients who are new to A&O “allows us to develop and refresh the client base of the firm and create new relationships.”

Marc-Henri explained that the software helps solve a problem involving 60 countries by replacing the client’s inefficient proprietary legal survey with an incredibly sophisticated and comprehensive resource.”

Jonathan said the least susceptible of the tools to wholesale integration into what A&O does generally. “It works for some clients, but isn’t on the whole a tool that you typically deploy as part of the deal and disputes we routinely work on.”

**BENEFITS OF EXPERIENCE**

Marc-Henri has about 30 people on his team, including 21 lawyers – all of them women, all working flexibly, many from home. Included in this number are lawyers with 15-16 years of experience who might have been lost to A&O had this option not been available, and whose expertise greatly enhances the client benefit of the service.

Similarly, Peerpoint trades on the standard of its consultants. Richard said the service’s competitive advantage over other in-sourcing providers is the high level of skill, experience and quality of its consultants. This is attractive to the big financial institutions, where Peerpoint has so far made the majority of its placements. Ranjit said the PMO is made up of skilled project managers who have each worked in the legal industry for a number of years, both within A&O and elsewhere. They understand managing a legal project is not akin to, for example, managing an IT project.

“They apply proportionate, ‘just enough’ project management to guide the work effectively and efficiently to conclusion, without being overly bureaucratic.”

Jane said the LSC’s current strength of about 75 includes two levels of lawyer associates with 6-10 years of post-qualified experience (PQE) and legal professionals who have at least a year’s experience but not necessarily qualified.

Another LSC resource is its pool of free PhD-qualified scientists whose knowledge of physics and molecular biology is invaluable in IP litigation, in industries such as pharmaceuticals. “Some claims revolve around disputes in relation to the science,” said Jane. “We understand documents and fight these claims, you need people who can follow the literature.”

**GLOBAL FOOTPRINT**

And what of the future? Since its launch in 2013, Peerpoint has grown to about 150 London-based lawyers, with another 30 across Asia Pacific in Hong Kong, Tokyo and new offices in Singapore and Sydney. A&O alumni Tony Corcoran now leads Peerpoint in Asia Pacific from his base in Sydney. Richard said expansion into Europe and the U.S., particularly New York, is under active consideration, as is broadening the range of work Peerpoint offers to include other professional capabilities that would complement the legal skills.

Since the PMO, Ranjit said the intention is for it to expand beyond London and take on an international dimension to mirror A&O’s business, with hubs across the globe. That’s for the longer term. In the medium term, the PMO will continue to embed team members into each of A&O’s major practice groups.

Looking ahead, the PMOs is developing a legal knowledge management capability to deliver value to clients. “They face the same problems in the legal departments and it would be a great opportunity for us to add further value to our relationships,” she added.

“This is the natural evolution of the ‘low cost’ provider model and heralds the re-emergence of large law firms handling commoditised/low-cost work where that combines with high-end work.”

For more on advanced delivery, see the article in this issue beginning on page 57. The LSC is made up of skilled project managers who have each worked in the legal industry for a number of years, both within A&O and elsewhere. They understand managing a legal project is not akin to, for example, managing an IT project. They apply proportionate, ‘just enough’ project management to guide the work effectively and efficiently to conclusion, without being overly bureaucratic. Jane said the LSC’s current strength of about 75 includes two levels of lawyer associates with 6-10 years of post-qualified experience (PQE) and legal professionals who have at least a year’s experience but not necessarily qualified.

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Looking ahead, the PMOs is developing a legal knowledge management capability to deliver value to clients. “They face the same problems in the legal departments and it would be a great opportunity for us to add further value to our relationships,” she added.

“This is the natural evolution of the ‘low cost’ provider model and heralds the re-emergence of large law firms handling commoditised/low-cost work where that combines with high-end work.”
In the Horn of Africa, just to the east of Djibouti and north-east of Ethiopia, is the Republic of Somaliland, a self-declared de facto independent state since it declared independence from Somalia on 18 May 1991.

The government of Somaliland, elected peacefully and democratically, faces serious challenges. Like any other government, it wants to encourage economic development for its citizens and ensure security and prosperity for all. However, its most crucial issue is gaining international recognition as a sovereign state, without which Somaliland is cut off from the normal sources of international aid.

Working at the epicentre of the government’s push for recognition is Nima Elmi, an ex-A&O associate. As Special Adviser on International Law and Policy, among other issues, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Nima is helping lead the drive toward recognition and true independence.

It’s an extraordinary role for the young Mogadishu-born Londoner, and has been recognised as such by the World Economic Forum. For her work supporting the government of Somaliland, Nima was named a Young Global Leader in a highly competitive process that culminated with being vetted by a panel chaired by the Queen of Jordan.

“It means a lot to me,” says Nima. “It means some serious and senior people in the international political arena became aware of my activities and felt I was making a significant contribution. The hard work that I’ve been doing is paying off.”
I was ready to take up a greater challenge where I could make an impact and influence change in a developing country.

When Nima found herself in a situation where there was a real need that she herself could address, she found she couldn’t say no. "Working in pro bono, enjoying the feeling of developing a project that was doing good, was something that stemmed out of my experience at A&O," she says, "I was ready to take up a greater challenge where I could make an impact and influence change in a developing country on a more full-time basis.

The DIFFERENCES

The Somaliland Ministry of Foreign Affairs comprises 40 people, around ten of whom provide ministerial advice. For Nima, the move was something of a culture shock. She realises now how fortunate she was at A&O to have a support team of paralegals, trainees, IT technicians and PAs helping in her daily work. "Now, we don't have all the resources we need. Sometimes it's something as little as insufficient printing paper — it runs out and can take a couple of weeks before we get more," Nima says.

"If I need research done before I brief the minister, I have to be the PA, the paralegal, the trainee and the associate all in one for him on that issue. I have to work more efficiently, be more effective, be conscious of my time management and make my delivery powerful so the minister can see the real issue and how we need to address it.

"These are skills that I definitely picked up at A&O which have made my life easier, but I do miss the days of having everything at my fingertips and a team of people to help me with it.

In addition, having a life outside work can be challenging. "Ironically, I think I work harder now than I did at A&O, despite being in the public sector. The job I do now doesn't really have long holidays, whereas with A&O there was a lot more discussion about work-life balance. Here, it's a much harder line to draw: the needs of my country can't wait while I have dinner with friends," she said.

That said, she has been typically creative in finding compromises to get support for the refugees or getting the development assistance we need without offending international laws and the sovereign status of states.

"I was ready to take up a greater challenge where I could make an impact and influence change in a developing country.

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The PROSPECT OF CHANGE

Having international recognition would make life in Somaliland much easier. In 2016, a year in which there will be a new chair of the African Union Commission, the new leadership in the African region under the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a new secretary general at the UN and a change of U.S. president, Nima is hopeful.

"We have to galvanise and take advantage of the changing of the guard at so many different levels, both on the continent and internationally," she says. "We need to make sure any new institution is arrouned to the needs of Somaliland.

She is excited about the future of Somaliland. "Despite the struggles, I am hopeful. As the government and people of Somaliland continue to be positive in their outlook, I believe they will get there sooner rather than later.

For Nima, change may also be on the cards. "One of the lessons I've learned from my time here is how much I enjoy the process of learning. From being an international law specialist with A&O, I'm evolving into international relations and public policy at a global level. That is where I feel my experience is taking me. It's an exciting journey."
or someone who was at A&O for less than four years, the firm has had a fundamental impact at every stage of Rob Everett’s career.

His close connection with A&O seemed predestined. “Quite a few of my college mates were going to A&O, so I ended up arriving at the same time as many friends from university,” Rob says.

But it wasn’t all down to chance. He had targeted A&O particularly, because of its friendly, social reputation and its international practice. Both have stood him in good stead.

After two years of training, Rob qualified into the International Capital Markets (ICM) department. It was 1993 and the heyday of Boyan Wells, Paul Monk, Mark Welling, Richard Sykes and Paul Chedgy — people who were, at the time, shaping London’s capital markets industry.

A year on, Rob took an opportunity to do a secondment in the debt transaction management group at Merrill Lynch. At the end of the secondment, they offered him a job. It was a difficult decision on a couple of fronts. As Rob says: “I enjoyed the ICM team — they were a great bunch of people and the work was good quality. And obviously I was terrified of having to tell Boyan!”

IN AT THE DEEP END

His new role had many differences to working in ICM. “Essentially, a lawyer in an investment bank was on the periphery of what was going on. However, suddenly you'd get catapulted into the middle of a huge deal where everything counted on you. You could never relax.”

A&O connections run deep – just ask alumnus Rob Everett, head of New Zealand’s financial authority. At times he’s felt as if he never left A&O.
His baptism of fire came less than a week after he joined Merrill Lynch. It was 8am, a bond issue was about to be launched via a Dutch special purpose vehicle (SPV) and Rob was brought in at the last minute to confirm all was well. It wasn’t.

“I remember being screamed at by the head of the desk that I must be out of my mind to tell him that they couldn’t sell these particular bonds to Dutch retail investors because it would breach Dutch selling restrictions. Everyone else was doing it – why couldn’t we?”

A quick call to a partner at a Dutch law firm confirmed that Rob’s position was right and he stuck to his guns. “Obviously there was a post-mortem. It turned out that I’d done the right thing to stand my ground. I was forgiven and they moved on one second later.” The guy doing the shouting ended up as global head of Syndicate at Merrill Lynch and one of Rob’s most-valued colleagues. Rob quickly moved up to run the transactions group before spending time in both New York and Hong Kong – where he continued his close association with A&O both professionally and personally. His friends from that era with whom he is still very close include Richard Browne (who was best man at his wedding), Glenn Butt, Chris Andrews, Theo Savvides, Andrew Harrow, Richard Atkinson, Catherine Daly, Jill Heron, a peer from his A&O London days. Siobhan gave my details to a recruiter who had done some hiring for me just before we moved and caught up with her recently. She contacted me and asked if I would be interested in the role. I said: ‘That’s all very interesting – I don’t suppose you’d be interested in doing it?’ To which I replied: ‘No, no – that’s not for me.’”

Unbeknown to Rob, however, the CEO had already received the same advice from his colleagues, many of whom had also recommended he offer Rob the job. It turned out that what Rob thought was just the CEO being polite (he was English, after all) had actually been a serious offer of the biggest job of Rob’s life.

“It was 24 hours later when I found out he’d been a bit surprised that I’d turned the job down,” says Rob. One nervous call to the CEO to explain the misunderstanding, and Rob was COO of Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BAML).

“The attraction for me, having been in big institutions like A&O and BAML, was to go somewhere smaller with 170 people and actually build it: hire the people, get it known out in the market, build the relationship with the industry, and put what I’d learned at Merrill into practice on the other side of the fence. You couldn’t have designed a job I would want to do more.”

The role suited him perfectly. “I was always more about the communication and management of issues. Stitching together what was left of Merrill Lynch in Europe and the BAML operations was a lot of fun.” It also brought him into close contact with a whole range of ex-A&O people. “Most of the senior positions in the new combined legal department were filled with fellow A&O alumni including Sajid Hussein, Richard Atkinson, Catherine Daly, Jill Lodge – it’s a long list,” says Rob.

“In addition, Andrew Berry was in a COO role for BAML in New York. It was great fun still working with a bunch of ex-A&O people. We also used the likes of Boyan and Stephen Miller for a lot of our capital markets work. It was like I’d never left.”

NEW ZEALAND NETWORK

Over time, however, Rob and Katy’s desire to move to New Zealand strengthened. Rob’s plan was to arrive there, spend some time with the family and see what happened career-wise. However, he relocated without the long arm and efficiency of the Alumni Network.

“I was an A&O alumni drinks party just before we moved and caught up with alumnus Siobhan Lewington, an executive recruiter who had done some hiring for me at Merrill. Siobhan gave my details overnight to a headhunter friend in New Zealand who rang the next morning asking why I hadn’t applied for the open CEO role at the Financial Markets Authority (FMA) there.”

Before Rob knew it, he was on a plane to New Zealand to interview with the FMA board. He missed his own leaving party in London but two weeks later was offered the job.

The FMA, New Zealand’s equivalent of the UK’s Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), was set up in 2011. Rob started as CEO in February 2014, in charge of growing the organisation into a fully fledged securities regulator.

“The attraction for me, having been in big institutions like A&O and BAML, was to go somewhere smaller with 170 people and actually build it: hire the people, get it known out in the market, build the relationship with the industry,” says Rob. “It was a lot of fun. I did a lot of monetary policy work. We used the likes of Boyan and Stephen Miller for a lot of our capital markets work. It was like I’d never left.”

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THE A&O MENTORING PROGRAMME

The A&O Mentoring Programme is open to all global alumni and A&O partners and staff.

WHY SHOULD I HAVE A MENTOR?
A mentor offers a confidential environment in which you can discuss issues and explore solutions. Using their experience, they can help you address professional challenges, offer guidance and support, suggest networking opportunities or even just be a sounding board for ideas.

WHO CAN I APPROACH TO MENTOR ME?
We currently have 58 mentors profiled on the Alumni Network website, from a variety of backgrounds, both A&O and alumni. We will initially approach them on your behalf. If you feel that they are not the right fit, we can approach someone else.

HOW MUCH TIME DO I HAVE TO COMMIT TO A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP?
For both mentors and mentees it can be as little as one to two hours per month, per mentee, or as much time as you can afford and feel comfortable with, over a period of about 12 months.

DO WE BOTH HAVE TO BE BASED IN THE SAME LOCATION?
No. You can work together through a combination of face-to-face meetings (if at all possible), Skype sessions, telephone calls and emails.

DOESN’T NEEDING A MENTOR INDICATE THAT I AM FAILING OR LACKING IN SOMETHING?
No, not at all. Having a mentor shows your dedication to professional growth. Research shows that a significant number of successful senior managers have a mentor. Even Mark Zuckerberg was mentored by Steve Jobs!

I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE PROGRAMME AS A MENTOR/MENTEE/BOTH. HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?
Just visit the Alumni Network website mentoring pages, or get in touch with the Alumni team, who can guide you.

HOW MENTORING HAS MADE A DIFFERENCE...

“I have really been enjoying my mentoring relationship with the alumnus you matched me up with. His experience matched the request I sent you perfectly, and it has been so valuable working with someone who ‘gets’ how A&O works. I have already learnt a lot, and am looking forward to continuing to do so.”

“I can honestly say mentoring is the reason I stayed in my role. I had written my letter of resignation and my mentor provided me with reassurance and encouragement and, frankly, pushed me to dare and to have the courage of my convictions.”

“I would recommend cross-office/location mentoring. The knowledge transfer is amazing and it really works on the phone.”

“Frankly, it was nerve-racking returning to the City after many years out. My mentor guided me back and gave me great confidence and continues to do, since we meet once every three months or so.”

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“I was really enjoying my mentoring relationship with the alumnus you matched me up with. His experience matched the request I sent you perfectly, and it has been so valuable working with someone who ‘gets’ how A&O works. I have already learnt a lot, and am looking forward to continuing to do so.”

“In my view, mentoring is a necessity in making yourself better at the job you do.”

“‘The relationship is working well and we meet regularly and I think that expectations are being met on both sides. My mentee is a new senior position, and appears to be achieving what he wants. What is helpful is there is an honesty between us so we can have open discussions.’

“It’s about having honesty and learning new things from people who have a different perspective.”

“Map showing A&O mentors globally (at the time of going to press).

Europe
- 45
- Brussels 2
- Casablanca 1
- Düsseldorf 1
- Frankfurt 3
- Hamburg 1
- London 34
- Luxembourg 1
- Madrid 1
- Milan 1

ASIA
- 5
- Bangkok 2
- Hong Kong 2
- Shanghai 1

AFRICA
- 2
- Johannesburg 2

NORTH AMERICA
- 2
- New York 2

AUSTRALIA
- 4
- Sydney 4

TOTAL 58

50 active pairings

JOHN KIBLER
A&O: 2009-2016

New York partner John Kibler, who died of cancer in February, will be remembered as much for his personality as for the important contribution he made to A&O’s Restructuring practice. He was widely recognised as an excellent lawyer, a supportive colleague and a patient mentor who willingly shared his many talents.

John joined A&O’s Restructuring practice in New York in 2009 and became a partner in 2011. His work regularly brought him into contact with colleagues in other offices and practice groups, including Real Estate, Derivatives and Litigation, as a result of which he was well known in the wider A&O network.

“John made a critically important contribution to A&O’s Restructuring practice at a time of extreme turbulence and uncertainty in the world’s financial markets,” said former senior partner David Morley. “He will be remembered as a talented and hardworking lawyer with an outgoing personality and an unparalleled sense of humour.”

Daniel Guyder, New York Restructuring partner, said: “John was an exceptional lawyer but more importantly was a fantastic person. He was a friend to all, no matter your role or position, he treated everyone with the same smile and warmth. He will be sorely missed.”

He is survived by his wife, Karen, and their two young children, Hans and Kirsten.

VANESSA HARDMAN

Vanessa, a partner in the London Securitisation team, died in July, after a long battle with cancer.

Vanessa will be remembered for her luminosity, the desire to help everyone around her—whether that was rolling-up her sleeves to assist on a deal, lending hats and jewellery to friends, helping her family or just sharing her time with loved ones.

Vanessa will also be remembered for her generosity; she wanted to help everyone around her—whether that was rolling-up her sleeves to assist on a deal, lending hats and jewellery to friends, helping her family or just sharing her time with loved ones.

Vanessa was a keen sportswoman, particularly excelling at hockey and skiing. She also enjoyed the finer things in life—a glass of Champagne was always welcome.

Fellow Securitisation partner Angela Clist said: “Vanessa was inspirational. She always worked extremely hard (even setting up office in the hospital), but never let that get on top of her—she had a great sense of humour, unflagging energy, and was devoted to her many friends and family. She will be remembered with much love and affection.”

Senior partner Wim Dejonghe added: “Vanessa was a hugely respected and popular partner. During her illness, she never stopped seeing the bright side of life and continued to be very committed to her work. She will be very greatly missed.”

She is survived by her husband, Dominic, and other family (including Claude the cat).

CHARLES RODIER
A&O: 1964-1970

Charles died in June, following a long illness. Charles completed his articles at A&O in the early 1960s and then worked as an in-house lawyer at EMI in its Classical Music department. Google Charles Rodier and there is a glowing tribute to him, saying his name is on every EMI classical music contract and how he liked to get contracts signed and not make difficulties.

Charles was the son of one of the early partners of A&O, Peter (Harold Paillet) Rodier, HPR, who headed the Property department when I joined A&O in the early 1960s.

– Andrew Morton, former Corporate partner

PERSONAL TRIBUTES

Visit the Alumni Network website at allenovery.com/alumni to read the personal tributes submitted by former friends and colleagues.

Submit your own tributes by emailing thealumniteam@allenovery.com.
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CREDITS

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MANAGING EDITORS
Stella Ekkeshis, Jenny Enever

CONSULTING EDITOR
Chuck Grieve

COPYWRITERS
Jane Foley, Chuck Grieve, Humphrey Keenlyside, Joanna Stewart

PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHER
Nathan Clarke

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION
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SEVEN WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED