

## Crowell & Moring's Inglima On Its Streak Of Boutique Add-Ons

By **Aebra Coe**

*Law360 (June 25, 2021, 2:36 PM EDT)* -- Crowell & Moring LLP announced Thursday that it had inked the latest in a number of recent combinations with boutique law firms, bringing on Chicago-based intellectual property boutique Brinks Gilson & Lione just two months after finalizing a deal with New York's Richards Kibbe & Orbe LLP.

Law360 Pulse touched base with Crowell & Moring Chair Philip Inglima and Brinks Gilson President Gustavo Siller on Thursday to learn how the combination came together and what each stood to gain by teaming up with the other.

Here, the two law firm leaders share their thoughts on the deal.

**This first question is a little tongue-in-cheek, but with Kibbe & Orbe this spring and now Brinks Gilson, is Crowell & Moring becoming the elite boutique whisperer?**

**Inglima:** I'd be very happy to assume that title. But I think our firm's success really has been driven by, when we've entered new locales, doing it with elite boutiques, and there's a longer list before Kibbe & Orbe. It was true in Los Angeles ... and with Folger Levin & Kahn LLP in San Francisco, King Pagano Harrison in New York. So we'll gladly take that mantle, but I know you're joking, and we're just very happy this has come to pass.

**Looking at that track record and this most recent combination, how does Crowell position itself to attract these firms?**

**Inglima:** First of all, we try to be in sync across our partnership about what our strategic growth objectives are. And we want to be gaining the insights of our partners who have dealt either on the same side or across the aisle from other professionals who can say, 'Who are folks who we have a really high regard for, and who would we want to work with?' That has, at times, been part of the impetus for those connections.

In this instance, it was a client doing that for us. A client looking at us and saying: 'You want to be in Chicago? You should be looking at the folks at Brinks Gilson because we think of both of you in the same



Philip Inglima



Gustavo Siller

category, which is trusted advisers and outstanding practitioners and folks we like.' Those are exactly the kind of indicators we're looking for in any growth opportunity, whether it's one or 61. It was a really inspired suggestion from a client that brought us together, and I don't think we could have had a better endorsement.

### **Is there something about the legal market right now, as an established boutique, that makes joining a large law firm more attractive now than it may have been in the past?**

**Siller:** We've been independent for over 100 years and have, we think, been fairly successful at it. But the legal industry is changing and that's happening because client needs are changing.

We're highly specialized in intellectual property, and ... people view us as a technology firm. They view our strength as having a deep bench on certain technologies. But as clients' products and services have changed, the need for legal services in this technology space has grown beyond IP. There are other adjacent areas we don't have expertise in, such as cybersecurity. Clients frequently approach us about providing legal services not just in brand protection, but in areas such as advertising and media. We don't have the deep bench we'd like to have and the clients are looking for.

As client needs have changed, we started to explore the possibility of moving to a bigger platform that had that deeper bench in other technology areas. Clients don't just have IP needs, they have technology needs. And so moving to a platform that provides our clients with a lot of the areas that we weren't able to was very attractive to us.

The other thing that's happened is clients are looking more and more to converge their work into fewer and fewer firms. Being a specialty boutique firm puts us at somewhat of a disadvantage in that regard. Those two things were pretty much the impetus for us thinking that a large platform might be an opportunity for us to explore.

### **This addition gives your firm a presence in the Midwest, and Chicago specifically. Was it important for you to be in that region? Why?**

**Inglima:** We've been quite happy with our success on the East Coast and West Coast of the United States, and we've been quite committed to continuing to grow each of our offices — particularly New York and San Francisco have been a high priority. As we were doing that, we believed it would still be important for us and for our clients to be in the middle of the country. When you look at the Midwest, Chicago is the place to be and the preferred choice to embark on that movement. We already have a number of clients in Chicago or in Illinois, or nearby in Michigan and Minnesota.

There also is the fact that we're deeply engaged, as Brinks is, with some industries like the automotive industry, the transportation industry more broadly. [And] a lot of tech industries and consultants ... work across a range of these industries. We thought that between their Midwest nexus and our desire to bring more of our regulatory practices, more of our transactional practices, into that region, we thought this was a perfect place to build from.

To enter a market with our brand being known only because of our national presence generally as opposed to our commitment to that community is not the right way to go. But with Brinks and their 100-year-old brand, really deep client following and their success in a variety of areas that relate directly to IP and on the periphery of that practice, that all was a very clear draw for us. We were completely over the moon with not just how well that aligned with our desire for that region as our next location, but for

the intersection with our clients' principal industries.

I'll also note that it also extends to what is a more recent foray for us into Asia. We went to Shanghai, initially in a trade capacity and now as a multipractice legal office. We've gone to Singapore with a trade office in the last 13 months. Now we are hoping to bring aboard the Shenzhen team that has been working with Brinks since 2017, and we have braced ourselves for the regulatory pursuit of certification there. We've done that once before with Shanghai, so we know the rhythms, and we intend to embark on that right away, as well to be able to announce in Shenzhen.

--Editing by Steven Edelstone.

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