

# Denver Firms Partner Globally

By **Matt Masich**  
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DENVER — You don't have to have an international firm to do business with international clients. Some small or midsize firms expand their reach in the global marketplace by joining law firm networks, with one allied firm per country (or per U.S. state) sending business each other's way.

And it doesn't stop at sharing business; firms in some networks have begun exchanging lawyers.

Alvaro Gussoni Aldaya is a corporate lawyer with the Lapique & Santeugini law firm in Montevideo, Uruguay, but he has spent the summer as an intern with Denver firm Moyer White.

"I think that a good lawyer in the corporate area must know a lot about foreign companies, and U.S. companies are very important," he said.

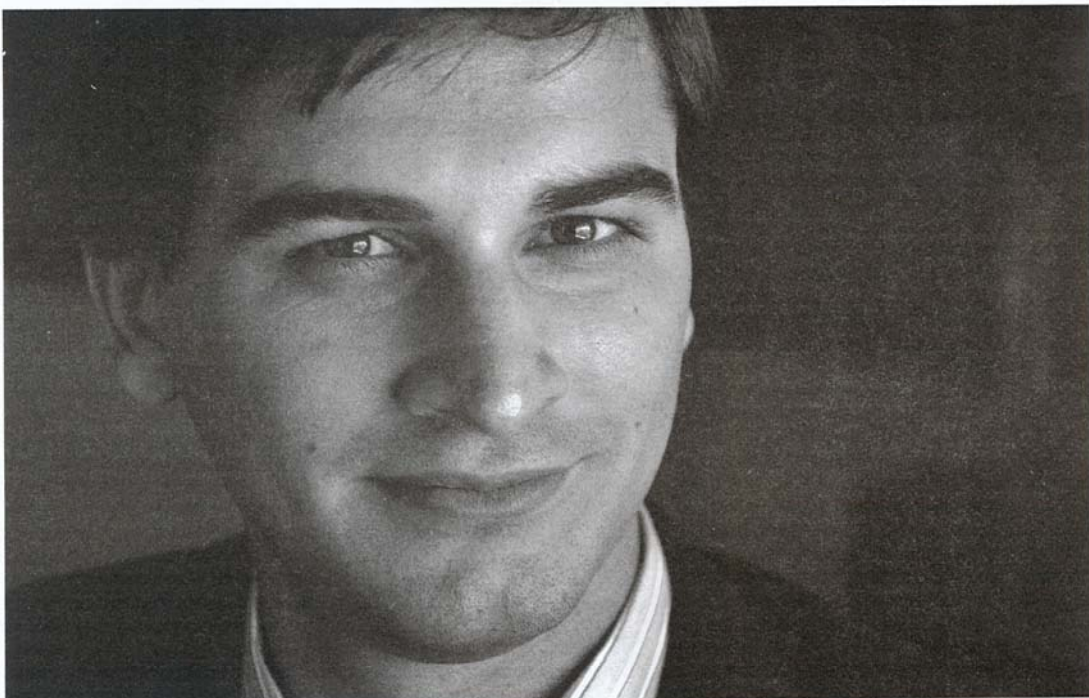
Aldaya is the first exchange associate in a program developed by the International Alliance of Law Firms, a network in which Moyer White is the Colorado representative. Ted White, named partner at the firm, hopes the exchange program catches on with other firms.

"It's good for everybody to have greater interaction and understanding," White said.

White is active in the network, where he is a vice president, and he has long been a proponent of international business and exchange of ideas, particularly among the countries of the western hemisphere. White was board chairman of the Biennial of the Americas, a month-long celebration of the culture, ideas and people of North and South America, which had its kickoff in Denver last year.

White serves on the International Alliance of Law Firm board with a partner in the Uruguayan firm, with whom he came up with the idea of a lawyer exchange program about a year ago. Aldaya came with the partner to the alliance's annual meeting in May in Chicago, then flew to Denver to start his internship at Moyer White.

"We wanted to give him an understanding of how business operates in the U.S.," White said. "He's seen some interesting issues



Alvaro Gussoni Aldaya is a corporate lawyer with the Lapique & Santeugini law firm in Montevideo, Uruguay, but he has spent the summer as an intern with Denver firm Moyer White. | LAW WEEK PHOTO JAMIE COTTEN

that involve how corporate governance works here."

Clients have given Moyer White permission to have Aldaya sit in on a variety of business matters, such as shareholder meetings where a dissident minority negotiates with the majority shareholders.

"I went to meetings and events with clients of Moyer White, and they introduced me to them," Aldaya said. "It was good for the firm because [clients] see that they have an international program and international activity."

Aldaya finds the American limited partnership companies particularly interesting, and plans to draw on his experience here in a law school class he teaches in Uruguay. The firm doesn't bill clients for any of Aldaya's work; it's mainly a learning opportunity for

him. He had a firm grasp of English when he arrived, but he spent the first weeks in Denver learning business law terms.

"The only way to know about the legal words and business words is to come here," Aldaya said. "It is impossible to learn these words in Uruguay," with English teachers who are non-native speakers — and non-lawyers.

The cultural exchange has gone beyond the law. Aldaya introduced Moyer White lawyers to *yerba maté*, the caffeinated beverage that is as ubiquitous in Uruguay as Starbucks coffee is here. Two or three of the American lawyers have taken to drinking it regularly.

Aldaya has stayed at the house of transactional partner Lorn Sharrow, and she and other lawyers have taken him on trips to Georgetown and Red Rocks.

"It was amazing experience for me, and I think for the firm it was a good experience, too," he said. "I hope that this kind of program can be copied by other firms."

Moyer White has an associate interested in international law and trade who wants to be an exchange associate with the alliance firm in China. There are multiple benefits to the exchange program, White said.

"I think it would be attractive to young associates to join a firm where they have this opportunity," he said. "It could be beneficial to recruiting lawyers if they're interested at all in international law ... The clients will appreciate having lawyers and law firms that not only know lawyers in another country, but who have actually worked at law firms there."

The firm will share its exchange experience with other firms when it hosts the alliance members from the Americas in February at a conference in Aspen.

## Working the networks

Other Denver firms are active in international networks. Davis Graham & Stubbs is a member of Lex Mundi, perhaps the biggest international network of law firms. Membership generates enough business to "more than pay for" the network's dues, but the main benefit is client service.

"Let's say we're representing a client in a multijurisdictional transaction," said Chris Richardson, Davis Graham's managing partner. "We can coordinate in a seamless way with partner firms [in other countries] that know the local regulatory environment. We think that's more effective than having a large, multinational firm with branch offices."

Lawyers from the firm network at Lex Mundi events and attend training in international legal issues at the Lex Mundi Institute in Monterey, Calif.

Davis Graham several years ago hosted a lawyer from a Venezuelan law firm for about three months. At the time, the firm was doing a lot of oil and gas work with companies there. The firm has considered hosting a lawyer from another Latin American country, such as Brazil.

Lindquist & Vennum's Denver office is a member of the TAGLaw network.

"It generates really a shocking number of referrals," said Tiffanie Stasiak, partner-in-charge of Lindquist's Denver office. "It allows me to be one phone call away from somebody that you trust in another state or country."

The Denver office has never hosted an exchange lawyer. "But I think it's a great idea," she said, adding that TAGLaw's European members regularly exchange lawyers for short amounts of time. •

— Matt Masich, [MMasich@CircuitMedia.com](mailto:MMasich@CircuitMedia.com)