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Global network opens doors for firms

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The head of an association of independent international law firms encouraged Polsinelli P.C. lawyers today to use the group to expand business throughout the world.

"You really have a big opportunity here," Mark Lowndes, a New Zealand lawyer and chairman of Multilaw told about 20 lawyers at Polsinelli's Loop office.

Multilaw was founded in 1990 and now consists of about 8,000 lawyers with 76 law firms in 66 countries.

Polsinelli, a national firm, joined Multilaw in 2006. Since then, it grew from 220 lawyers to 660 lawyers.

The firm's Chicago office, which opened in 2006, increased from six to 80 lawyers.

As Polsinelli grew both locally and nationally, so has its international-related work for clients, said Anthony J. Nasharr III, managing director of the firm's Chicago office.

"The relationship with Multilaw has allowed us to serve that work," he said. "This is our global answer and it gives us the resources we need to satisfy the clients."

Nasharr serves as one of four directors for Multilaw's Americas regional committee.

Mark A. Brand, a Polsinelli shareholder, said he referred a few litigation clients to Multilaw firms in Australia and the United



Mark Lowndes

Kingdom.

His primary purpose was to try to find his clients representation through Multilaw, rather than also to receive business, Brand said.

Lowndes made a half-hour presentation to the lawyers in which he provided an overview of Multilaw.

Since the association consists of firms throughout the world, a lawyer here could build and generate new business with assistance from other Multilaw member firms with clients that have international-based business, he said.

Multilaw continues growing. For example, it recruited Saudi and Pakistani law firms to join this year.

Lowndes stressed though, "the



Anthony J. Nasharr III

key thing for us is not just dots on a map, it's quality."

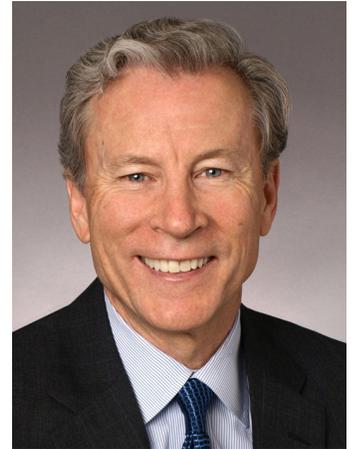
Multilaw holds annual regional conferences in various locations throughout the world. Its annual conference is scheduled in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in October.

If lawyers plan to attend a conference, Lowndes encouraged them to seek out other Multilaw members and meet with them.

"It is a great networking opportunity," he said.

Multilaw also established virtual communities for its members where the lawyers can learn about topics including white-collar crime, insolvency and insurance.

The group also sponsors the Multilaw Academy, which is a training program in international lawyering for lawyers with three



Mark A. Brand

to six years' experience at its member law firms.

The academy faculty consists of experienced partners from Multilaw member firms. The next academy is set for August in Oxford, United Kingdom.

Besides Polsinelli, two other firm's with Chicago offices also are Multilaw members. They are Holland & Knight LLP and Duane, Morris LLP.

When law firms encounter conflicts with clients and need to refer those matters to other firms, Lowndes suggested that, for example, Polsinelli could send the matters to Holland & Knight or Duane, Morris.

"They are all your friends (through Multilaw) and at the same time competitors," Lowndes said.