



LUÍS PAIS ANTUNES
Managing Partner, **PLMJ**

“Behavioural, management and leadership skills are all part of our training programmes”

Leaders League. After one year as Managing Partner, what is your initial assessment and where do you want to take the firm?

Luís Pais Antunes. PLMJ has an almost 50-year history of success and sound leadership. Now is the time to consolidate our position as a full-service, independent law firm with a strong international presence, in particular in Portuguese-speaking countries, while at the same time securing our leading position in the Portuguese market.

For this, we need to focus on being even more efficient and innovative. We still have room to improve our modus operandi by taking advantage of the increasing synergies between our areas of practice and local offices, thereby improving readiness and quality in the most cost-effective way. But we also need to get closer to our actual and potential clients, listen carefully to their needs and provide them with high quality and highly efficient services.

Leaders League. What is it that differentiates your firm from others on the market?

L.P.A. Our goal is to always be one step ahead in the market. This means that we need to have the best people and the best practices, to invest in the best technologies, to get the best students from the universities and to innovate in all fields. But this also means that we must have a better knowledge of the markets and of the clients' needs, as well as solid training programmes.

To cope with the demands of actual and potential clients, we have reinvented our training programmes and place more importance on including behavioural, management and leadership skills, on exchanging/sharing practical experience between lawyers and on customised training aimed at specific groups/individuals.

Leaders League. You are one of the few Portuguese law firms with a very clear international strategy. How do you plan on reinforcing your international implementations?

L.P.A. We have gained considerable experience in advising companies and individuals who choose PLMJ as their privileged partner to set up and develop their businesses in Portugal, and this experience has brought us a better understanding of the challenges facing those wishing to invest abroad. It has also

motivated us to provide better support to our existing and future clients in their internationalisation projects. Multidisciplinary teams of lawyers specialising in different legal systems and with profound knowledge of the local culture are in a better position to provide top quality full-service solutions.

The firm has specialised teams to deal with clients from almost every corner of the world from where our international mandates originate. Just to mention a few, our firm has a China/Macau Desk, an Italian Desk, a French Desk, a German Desk, a UK Desk, a Scandinavian Desk, a Swiss Desk and, more recently, a Benelux Desk. Through PLMJ International Legal Network, our network of joint ventures and desks, clients will be able to keep the same contact lawyer in the country of origin, who will coordinate work with local teams in the various markets.

On top of this, PLMJ remains focused on reinforcing our operations in Africa, in particular, in Angola and Mozambique but will not close the door on other international markets and will continue to take a step-by-step approach. Internationalization already represents more than 20% of our annual income, but there is room to expand our presence abroad.

Leaders League. What are the recent trends in the Portuguese M&A market?

L.P.A. Although there is still some uncertainty on the evolution of the European economy, it is of the utmost importance that conditions are created to boost private investment. Following a period of political instability, it is now expected that the Portuguese market will become again a “point of interest” for investors.

Among the more recent examples of significant M&A deals, one should mention the sale of most of Barclays Bank's business in Portugal to Spanish Bank Bankinter, the acquisition by Atlantic Gateway of a relevant stake in TAP (the country's flag carrier airline), the sale by Efacec Capital of its majority stake in Efacec Power Solution to Winterfell Gestão de Investimentos, as well as the purchase by Grupo Portucel Soporcel of an additional stake in Semapa and the acquisition by Bergé Automoción of a majority stake in Mitsubishi Motors Portugal. ♦