

White & Case partners with Harbor for added expertise to meet its complex procurement needs

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Jose Pariente, Managing Director, Harbor

Global law firm White & Case has 44 offices throughout the Americas, EMEA and Asia-Pacific. Due to its size and global reach across multiple jurisdictions, the firm developed a first-class vendor management department to meet its multi-faceted procurement and contract management requirements.

However, in 2022, aiming to enhance capabilities and improve efficiency, it shifted its vendor management office (VMO) to Harbor. In a far-sighted decision, its experienced team transitioned to Harbor as an outsourced vendor governance service provider.

Steve Wrede, Chief Financial Officer for White & Case, says the decision has enabled the firm to draw on additional expertise, further improve vendor selection processes, and meet its clients' demands for better risk mitigation regarding the operational, reputational, and financial risks vendors can pose.

Increasing complexity challenges in-house resources

Jose Pariente headed up White & Case's Global Sourcing & Procurement operations and now fulfils a similar role as Managing Director of Harbor's team focused on White & Case. He says the biggest challenge for most law firms' procurement departments is that they will always be small compared to the rest of the firm.

"As a firm grows, more and more spend areas come to the fore, and you need expertise. You quickly run out of internal resources that can speak to all those areas."

White & Case's in-house team was involved in a growing and increasingly complex number of vendor and procurement opportunities, particularly in vendor onboarding and diversity.

"Strategic sourcing, vendor management and negotiations, onboarding, ESG and contract compliance were core



duties, and we were also involved in litigation funding support and recovery," says Pariente.

As law firms grow and scale across international borders, their procurement needs become more complicated.

"Managing relationships with multiple vendors, each with its contract, pricing structures, and internal relationships, can be challenging and time-consuming," explains Pariente.

Add to that cost control, regulatory compliance, and risk management, and the requirements an in-house VMO must meet become quite challenging. The need to meet jurisdictional conditions across its global network meant White & Case often looked outside the firm for advice and support.

"We certainly weren't averse to outsourcing when required," says Wrede. "It was a good way of getting access to specialist advice when needed, which is one of the reasons we explored such a comprehensive partnership with Harbor."

It also solved an ongoing resourcing headache for Wrede. "Recruiting people is always challenging and expensive and law firms are not always the first place procurement professionals want to go."

The decision was also driven by the firm's desire to create further career advancement opportunities for the team. "I knew we had some great people who wanted to spread their wings, so moving to Harbor was an opportunity for them to grow their skill set and advance professionally," explains Wrede.



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Broader experience, richer insights

The transition was perfectly timed for Christina O'Malley, Director, Harbor, who had been Procurement Manager at White & Case and moved to Harbor to support White & Case. She had gained extensive experience at the firm and was ready for a new challenge.

"I am still focused on White & Case, but I get exposure to other clients too. It has been beneficial to shoulder-tap other VMO resources at Harbor to get insights into new operating methods."

Strategic sourcing, procurement, and contract negotiations are core competencies for Harbor, the outsourced VMO provider for 20+ clients.

"Harbor is doing vendor renewals for a client daily. In contrast, an in-house VMO may only do one a year, which means it is more difficult to know what to expect," says O'Malley. "Harbor is always in the market, and awareness of trends and where prices are heading is invaluable. That intelligence is vital when negotiating licenses and setting other long-term contracts."

O'Malley says the team has tightened its internal work-in-progress processes, which Wrede agrees has been beneficial. "Harbor has good reporting structures, alleviating some of the oversight I would otherwise have to do personally. There is a good cadence to our communications with the team."

Strategic partnerships the way ahead

Pariente says moving to an outsourced arrangement was a natural progression that has allowed White & Case to focus on its core competencies—delivering best-in-class legal services to its global client base.

"As part of Harbor, we have access to advanced technology and analytics tools and a bench of talent that can help optimize procurement processes. We can adjust our services based on White & Case's changing needs, which benefits firms experiencing rapid growth."

Kevin McClean, Executive Vice President, leads Harbor's Vendor Governance + Sourcing practice and says post-Covid, the firm has tripled the number of outsourced teams it operates on behalf of clients.



"Outsourcing procurement in legal is definitely on the upward trend. We have 110+ procurement professionals, creating a thriving community. There is growth potential, access to training, and mentorship for the entire team. As the complexity of law firms increases and access to expertise becomes much harder to find and retain, more firms will look to leverage a third party. Our ability to provide a return on investment, report key performance indicators (KPIs), and offer flexibility creates a unique value proposition for law firms."

Says Wrede: "The reason the move has been so successful is the quality of the staff, the solid internal relationships, the seamlessness by which we were able to convert the service and the intimate familiarity the team has with our internal processes. We continue to be supported by a team of outstanding procurement professionals who can now bring to bear all the resources and knowledge of a world-class procurement provider."



"We are supported by a team of outstanding procurement professionals with all the resources and knowledge of a world class procurement provider."

Steve Wrede, Chief Financial Officer, White & Case

HARBOR

Harbor is a trusted provider of professional services to the world's leading law firms, corporations, and their law departments. With our globally integrated team of industry experts - strategists, technologists, and specialists – we navigate alongside our clients, providing essential resources and invaluable insights to help steer them towards a future where they can thrive.

WHITE & CASE

White & Case is a global law firm with longstanding offices in the markets that matter today. Our on-the-ground experience, our cross-border integration and our depth of local, US and English-qualified lawyers help our clients work with confidence in any one market or across many. We guide our clients through difficult issues, bringing our insight and judgment to each situation. Our innovative approaches create original solutions to our clients' most complex domestic and multijurisdictional deals and disputes.