

THE MANAGEMENT

Two New MPs at Foley Hoag

Posted by Ross Todd

The Am Law Daily has noted a trend of sorts. Lately, when firms have announced changes in leadership, some have opted to have two people hold the position of chair instead of one. This spring McDermott Will & Emery elected litigators Jeffrey Stone and Peter Sacripanti to replace chairman Harvey Freishtat. At Willkie Farr & Gallagher last week, corporate partners Thomas Cerabino and Steven Gartner took over the reins from long-time chair Jack Nusbaum.

Add Foley Hoag to the list of firms opting for the two-leader model. Corporate transactions partner William Kolb (pictured, left) and environmental/energy partner Adam Kahn (pictured, right) have been selected as joint managing partners, succeeding Robby Sanoff who had been Foley's managing partner since 2004. Sanoff is returning to his litigation practice full time.

The Am Law Daily chatted with Kolb and Kahn on Wednesday afternoon about their firm, shared leadership duties, and how often they typically talk to each other during the day. Here's what they had to say.

WHY DID FOLEY HOAG OPT FOR THE CHANGE NOW?

Adam Kahn: The change is now largely because Robby Sanoff, who has been the managing partner for the last five years, has rotated off. Bill and I have both been on the executive committee together. We are hopefully going to be continuing where Robby left off.



OTHER FIRMS THAT HAVE ANNOUNCED NEW LEADERSHIP IN RECENT MONTHS AND THE PAST YEAR HAVE DECIDED ON A TWO-PERSON LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE. WHY IS THIS PREFERABLE, AND WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS, BOTH FOR EACH OF YOU INDIVIDUALLY AND FOR THE FIRM AS A WHOLE?

William Kolb: Foley Hoag actually has had the co-managing partner structure in the past. I'm not sure it works for every law firm but it works for us. Adam and I have worked together at the firm for 20 years. What it does is it allows us to manage the firm but also continue to do client work. We both have active practices and we look forward to continuing that. We think having that on-the-ground experience practicing law helps us. It helps us be better managers. It helps us understand the practice of law better. And it helps us provide better service to the firm's clients.

WILL IT BE EASY FOR YOU TWO TO STAY UNIVOCAL? IS THAT EVEN A CONCERN?

Kolb: So far no problems. What are we, seven days into it?

Kahn: In fact we've been working on this transition for some time. We're very confident that our management styles will complement each other.

HOW DO YOUR STYLES DIFFER?

Kolb: I think we both try to achieve consensus. We both appreciate and solicit input from others at the firm and we want to be well informed. We talk and then we make a decision.

Kahn: What I would add is that historically we've worked in different areas of the law. That allows us to understand the individual practice areas in the firm better. It gets us closer to our clients, closer to our clients' needs, and closer to our lawyers.

SO WHAT'S FOLEY HOAG'S STRATEGY MOVING FORWARD?

Kolb: Our strategy is to have dynamic market-leading practices and not try and be all things to all people. So we concentrate on what we're really good at. For us that has not meant opening offices in every city in the world.

Kahn: Both Foley Hoag as a firm and Bill and I individually view ourselves as entrepreneurial. That said we don't invest in growth for growth's sake. We do expect to make a number of lateral hires and do expect to continue to grow organically.

IN WHAT AREAS DO YOU PLAN TO GROW?

Kolb: Life sciences and health care, high tech, intellectual property, clean energy, and our administrative law practice.

Kahn: To that I'd add international disputes, securities litigation, investment management, government strategies, and corporate social responsibility.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU GUYS TALK IN THE COURSE OF A DAY?

Kahn: I talk to Bill more than I talk to my wife that's for sure. And I love my wife.

Kolb: We have meetings. We have e-mail exchanges. We have phone calls.

IS THERE A CUTOFF TIME FOR YOUR COMMUNICATIONS?

Kolb: It's a 24/7 job and practice, and we do manage to sleep and go home. But we know how to reach each other if we need to.

Kahn: That's not radically different from practice. No client-focused, attentive lawyer can limit his or her days from nine to five anyway.

Interviews are edited for grammar, length, and style.