

Winston & Strawn Pulls Out of Beijing and Taipei



Summary: *Winston & Strawn is among a number of U.S. law firms addressing their abilities in Asia.*

Winston & Strawn has officially closed its doors in Taipei and Beijing. The two offices closed at the end of last year, sending some of its lawyers to offices in Hong Kong and Shanghai, their last two Asian offices. This is not a new thing with many U.S. law firms also shrinking their presence in the region.

Senior intellectual property associate Gino Cheng opted to stay with the firm and work from the Hong Kong office. He was at the Taipei office. Others like former resident partner Horng-Dar Lin chose to leave the firm. There are now eight partners in Hong Kong and only one in Shanghai. Several Shanghai partners, including former Asia employment head Matthew Durham, have left the firm as well.

Winston first launched into the Asian market at the end of 2008. They started with three partners left after Heller Ehrman dissolved. Two of those partners, Simon Luk and David Hall-Jones are still with the firm in Hong Kong while the third partner, Michael Phillips left just two years later. Winston has faced a number of other challenges in Asia. In 2009, they opened up their Beijing and Shanghai offices. Shortly after, the Beijing managing partner Ge Xiangyang left for Mayer Brown JSM. Jem Li took over the role but left three years later to join Australian firm Minter Ellison.

In 2014, Winston opened its fourth Asian office in Taipei with IP litigator John Alison leading the way. He had left Finnegan Henderson Farabow Garrett & Dunner. Soon after he formed a Taiwan practice with partners Thomas Jarvis and Vivian Kuo. Jarvis and Kuo worked out of the Washington D.C. office. Later that same year, the law firm brought on Horng-Dar Lin as its second partner, giving Lin the responsibility to handle local law work. This move was unusual for U.S. law firms. Most focus on IP litigation, helping Taiwan manufacturers in the U.S. The law firms that are an exception are K&L Gates, Jones Day, and Baker McKenzie, which do full-service local legal work. The majority of the other U.S. law firms that have offices in Taiwan like Perkins Coie, Orrick Herrington, and Finnegan do not employ resident lawyers or very few.

A Chicago-based spokesman said the firm is still committed to Asia, working on strategic recruiting to keep the area strong. The consolidation of the two offices helps the law firm work more efficiently.

The other firms reexamining their presence in Asia include Orrick Herrington and Cadwalader Wickersham & Taft. Orrick Herrington had a capital markets and corporate team leave for Morgan Lewis & Bockius, forcing them to refit their strategy in Asia. Cadwalader closed their offices in Beijing and Hong Kong last year.

Are you surprised that law firms are shrinking their presence in Asia or leaving Asia all together? Tell us in the comments below.

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