

Interview with Nadja Vietz, attorney at HARRIS & MOURE

Harris & Moure is one of the only firms of its size in the United States focused on working with small and medium sized companies that operate internationally.

“The Strong Euro Makes The United States A Very Attractive Place For Foreign Businesses”

Harris & Moure is a Seattle “Law Boutique,” a small and specialized law firm, offering legal advice in corporate law and litigation/arbitration matters. Nadja Vietz, of the firm, talks to us about the firm and the characteristics of the U.S. legal system and the U.S. market, which is, without a doubt, a priority destination for Spanish companies that want to go international.

- What services do you offer in foreign commerce and international implantation and how is your firm set up to offer these services to your clients?

About half of our work is assisting foreign companies coming to the United States. The other half is focused on assisting American and European companies in Asia and in Russia. Our attorneys speak English, Chinese, Spanish, German, Russian, French, Japanese, and even a bit of Turkish. One of our attorneys spends almost all his time in China. We are always cooperating and working with attorneys throughout Asia, Europe and the United States.

- What characteristics of the American legal and tax system would you emphasize and in what way do they affect the Spanish company that decides to establish commercial relations with your country?

The most important thing for foreign companies coming to the United States to understand is how easy it is to be sued here and how expensive that can be. We always tell clients, “yes, our requiring you to do this or that for your legal protection -- starting with a good contract -- may cost you around \$3,000. But if you do not take these step and you are sued (even if you win), it will almost certainly cost you at least \$50,000.” In the United States, the winner of a lawsuit almost always has to pay its own legal costs and attorneys’ fees [unlike in most other countries]. Another characteristic of the US legal system is how easy it is to set up a company here, compared to Spain or Germany.

- With this in mind, what is your advice?

The most important thing to realize when going international is that you should always follow the laws of the country in which you are doing business. To do this, you must have an international lawyer assisting you.

- Internet business transactions are completely globalized, creating the appearance of immunity for fraud and the trick. What should a victim of internet fraud do?

We have handled a number of these international internet fraud cases [for online internet merchants against credit card processors] with mixed success. On one hand, we recommend protection by using good contracts before doing the internet business, but on

the other hand the anonymity of the internet oftentimes protects the company on the other end that becomes insolvent or simply disappears. It is definitely buyer beware on the internet.

- How do you see the investment and setup of Spanish companies in the United States and vice versa developing?

I see both Spanish and American companies becoming more international, which will naturally lead to an increase in Spanish companies coming here and American companies going there. Many in the United States speak Spanish and the ties between the United States and Latin America grow closer every year. The increase in those ties will make it even more attractive for Spanish companies to come here and will better equip American companies to go to Spain. From a practical point of view, it should not be forgotten how strong the Euro is now in relation to the Dollar, which makes the United States an even more attractive location for European businesses, including Spanish businesses.

PROFILE

Nadja Vietz graduated from Law School of the University Leipzig, Germany and also has a degree in French Law, International Public Law and European Law from the Faculté des Affaires Internationales of Le Havre, France. She is licensed as an attorney in Germany and Spain. Before joining Harris & Moure, where she works mostly with European clients, she worked for several years at an international law firm in Spain. She has published, among other articles, “The New Company Law in the People’s Republic of China”, and she is a member of the German American Lawyers' Association, the German Spanish Lawyers' Association and the former President of the Junior Entrepreneur Association of Barcelona.