

## Mayer Brown Adds PE Partner From Deacons In Hong Kong

By **Matthew Perlman**

*Law360, New York (January 10, 2017, 7:47 PM EST)* --Mayer Brown JSM has added a partner to its Hong Kong office from Deacons, bringing 30 years of experience in the field of private equity, focusing on fund formation and investment management matters including downstream investments into and out of the Asia-Pacific region.

Robert Woll joined the firm's global corporate and securities practice, and its fund formation and investment management group, on Dec. 19. Woll advises both institutional and independent managers on the formation of alternative asset management businesses and platforms, including buyout funds, growth equity funds, venture capital funds, infrastructure funds, real estate funds, special situations funds, fund-of-funds and co-investment vehicles. He also works for financial institutions, investors and entrepreneurs on investments, particularly of late in the emerging fintech space.



Robert Woll

Woll, who is fluent in Mandarin and proficient in Russian and French, started working in Asia during the mid-1980s for Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP in a banking and institutional investing group. He said private fund formation wasn't its own practice yet, but he became interested in the work because he saw how tailored and negotiated each investment was. He also appreciated the growing industry's enthusiasm and creativity.

"We had a slew of these private equity funds that were being raised at the time," Woll told Law360. "It was just legally very interesting work. I was intrigued with the intricacies of it and it gets you right into the heart of capital raising for the sponsors. It was very entrepreneurial."

Woll said his interest in coming to Mayer Brown was piqued in 2008 when the firm combined with Johnson Stokes & Master, a large and longstanding Hong Kong firm that had offices in mainland China, Thailand and Vietnam. The merger, which resulted in Mayer Brown JSM, showed that the firm was committed to providing the type of global service private equity work requires.

"It was actually quite a stunning development when Mayer Brown combined with JSM. That was huge news," Woll said. "I would date it to that development. I started to think about it. For me it's been an inevitable thing."

Woll said the ability to tap a deep bench when working on fund formations is important, because investors in the vehicles often come from a range of jurisdictions and industries, including pension funds and insurance companies, that all have differing regulatory requirements. This is something Mayer Brown definitely offers, he said.

“In those areas of highly specialized regulatory expertise, as a fund counsel, it’s just a huge competitive advantage to have the global one-stop-shop, so to speak, in terms of the regulatory landscape,” he said.

More than half of Woll’s practice involves fund formation and fundraising, he said, but he also counsels on downstream investments for the funds and other clients. This work includes outbound investments from Chinese entities and co-investment vehicles, among other deals.

Increasingly, Woll said he is seeing large Chinese institutions and entrepreneurs making investments in U.S. startups with the aim of forming a partnership for the U.S. company’s expansion into China, ventures in which they often take a majority stake.

He has also been seeing increased activity in Hong Kong from the emerging financial technology, or fintech, industry. He said some of the push is coming from the government, which is trying to nurture the nascent industry. But entrepreneurs and banking institutions are working on things ranging from consumer payment tools to banking infrastructure.

“Hong Kong is making a push, the way many of the major financial centers are trying to develop this industry,” Woll said. “That’s going to be an area we’re focusing on as well.”

Woll received a bachelor’s degree from Princeton University and his law degree from Stanford Law School.

--Editing by Jack Karp.