

Mayer Brown Adds Fund Formation Pro From Skadden

By Ryan Boysen

Law360 (January 6, 2020, 7:34 PM EST) -- Mayer Brown has hired a private equity and all-around financial expert from Skadden as a partner at its New York office, the firm announced Monday, part of its yearslong push to grow its fund formation practice.

James "Jim" Schell was previously the head of the interdisciplinary private equity funds team at Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP. He'll be joining the corporate and securities practice at Mayer Brown, as well as its fund formation and investment management group.



Jim Schell

Schell has represented private equity funds, retail and investment banks, insurance companies other financial institutions for more than 25 years, according to a statement put out by Mayer Brown. He specializes in setting up new funds and reorganizing existing ones as well as advising on mergers and joint ventures.

John W. Noell Jr., the head of the fund formation group, told Law360 that Schell's hiring is the latest example of Mayer Brown's push to build out that group, which previously focused solely on real estate funds but has grown into a full-service practice over the past few years.

"It's been sort of a series of strategic one-off hires, if you will, and I think we've had a lot of success in building out the group in that way," Noell said. "We could have just gone after a 20- or 30-person team from another firm, and maybe at some point, it's possible that we still will. But so far we're focused on growing the group very carefully."

Noell's group **hired** Tram Nguyen, another private equity fund formation specialist, from Paul Hastings LLP last year. The year before that, Noell's group hired a handful of other lawyers who specialize in various aspects of fund formation, including Aubry Smith, Iliana Kirova and Kristine Koren, among others.

Noell said it's hard to quantify exactly how many lawyers are "in" his group since attorneys from various backgrounds will drop in and out as needed based on the project and the client. But he said the group easily encompasses "well over 100" attorneys on a good day.

"Jim's arrival is the latest example of our success in building a highly competitive fund formation team,"

Noell said in the statement.

For his part, Schell said the move made sense because it will allow him to take his own fund formation practice to the next level.

"I was drawn to Mayer Brown by the superb quality and character of its lawyers, as well as the firm's commitment to serve clients confronted by transformational change in legal, economic and technological areas," Schell said in the statement. "I am excited to join forces with Mayer Brown's world-class talent pool and think that my experience and insight will be quite valuable to our clients."

Schell received his Bachelor of Arts from Yale University and his Juris Doctor from Columbia Law School.

--Editing by Jay Jackson Jr.