

Mayer Brown Thinks the Next Tech Hotspot May Be Outside the US

The firm's leader pointed to Brazil, Israel and the Greater Bay Area in South China and Hong Kong as potential landing spots or places it can supplement a current presence.

By Andrew Maloney

What You Need to Know

- Mayer Brown has an eye on new international markets with emerging company work.
- The firm is looking at new locations as well as strengthening its existing international offices.
- Consultants say there are several international markets where there are opportunities for emerging company work.

Mayer Brown, which launched in Salt Lake City this year, is seeking the next city where it can capitalize on emerging company work, particularly in technology, life sciences and fintech.

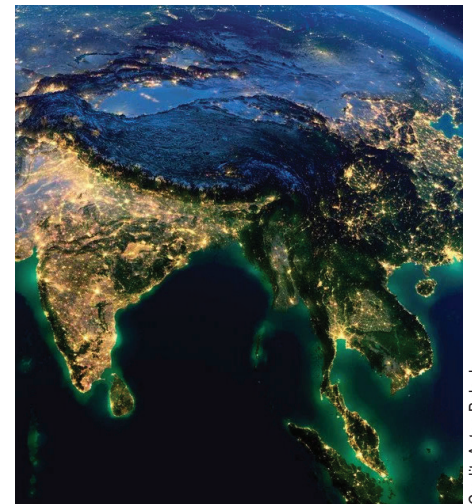
But it's not just looking domestically.

The firm believes more and more "unicorns" will form outside the states and that new technology companies everywhere are globalizing earlier in their lifecycle. It also wants about

40% of its attorneys to be based outside the U.S. anyway, saying that's "the right balance" to execute the firm's strategy.

Mayer Brown isn't alone in its international aspirations. Industry analysts say despite a general pivot away from globalization over the last few years, law firms that already have an international brand are now in a position to reallocate resources to build success in burgeoning foreign tech hubs, especially as new technology companies continue to mushroom outside the U.S.

Mayer Brown has no imminent opening or specific timeline for further expansion, said managing partner Jon Van Gorp. But in an interview, he pointed to places as diverse as Brazil, Israel, and the Greater Bay Area in South China and Hong Kong as potential landing spots or places it can supplement a current presence,



Credit: Anton Balazh

where there are large populations and tech incubators with government support.

He also noted the firm can strengthen its position in European cities with developing technology centers, such as London, Paris and Frankfurt, as it seeks to build "a globally connected emerging companies practice."

"I don't think Salt Lake has similarities to anything else we've done," Van Gorp said. "But I think there are opportunities to do an office opening like Salt Lake

City that takes advantage of the emerging company opportunities in different parts of the world. So, for us it would be looking at places globally where that might be possible, as opposed to just looking at the U.S., where a lot of the focus has been for law firms.”

Like Baker McKenzie, Hogan Lovells, and DLA Piper, Mayer Brown was “a very early mover in globalization, so they have a brand for that,” said Peter Zeughauser, founding partner of the law firm consultancy Zeughauser Group. “They know how to do it. That space is still a good space for firms like them.”

Other firms that are more U.S.-focused are probably better off leaning into that, Zeughauser said.

Big Law and business, in general, are in the midst of a pivot away from globalization after events such as the U.S.-China trade war under the Trump administration, and sanctions against Russia. But Susan Mendelsohn, a Chicago-based legal recruiter, said all of her clients who have a global pres-

ence are still looking for that next international hotspot. “Particularly after closing down offices in Russia—that could present new opportunities to take that money and look elsewhere,” she said.

And, Zeughauser said, there’s been an “explosion” of emerging companies in the Greater Bay Area, the megalopolis that includes cities in the Guangdong province of China like Shenzhen, and special administrative regions Hong Kong and Macau. Zeughauser said that area will likely “outdistance Silicon Valley in terms of emerging companies” in the future.

He added that Bangalore, India, and Sidney, Australia, are “extremely hot” emerging tech markets, while some firms, like Greenberg Traurig, have established a base in Israel.

Like Salt Lake City, those markets can be [tough to crack](#) without strong local connections or name recognition in the tech industry. And they may have a pretty firm ceiling in terms of how many new entrants they can support, Zeughauser said. But he

said that most major developed countries—and some developing ones—have big tech centers.

“And in each of them, there are a small number of U.S. firms that are pursuing them,” he said.

As of last month, Mayer Brown’s Salt Lake head count had increased to 17 lawyers, including 10 partners and seven associates. Van Gorp said the recent additions have brought in clients who’ve subsequently asked for help in the United Kingdom, Brazil, Singapore and Germany, countries where the firm already has offices.

He added the firm’s office in Salt Lake can serve as a valuable gateway for lawyers and their clients who not only need work done in Utah but across multiple continents.

“We see this as an entry point for these companies to provide an opportunity for us across the firm. Their problems are growing quickly, and becoming more complex, so they’re in need of lots of specific advice,” he said.