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“INCREASINGLY INVOLVED IN LARGE CAP LBOS, OUR CLIENTS ARE EXPANDING OUTSIDE OF FRANCE TO COUNTRIES SUCH AS CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES”

“An increasing number of clients need our assistance in broader contexts”

Leaders League. How do you envision Opleo Avocats’ future development and growth?

Pierre-Olivier Bernard. The future for Opleo Avocats depends largely on our success within the international environment because an increasing number of clients need our assistance in broader contexts. A lot of businesses are currently developing their activities outside of Paris in cities such as Lyon, Bordeaux and Nantes, not to mention in other countries. It is therefore, my vision that our development depends on not only clients based in Paris but also in other cities, which is increasingly true. In addition, some important clients may prefer to expand their business networks outside of France, particularly in Asia or North America, instead of just in Belgium or neighboring European countries, as was the case in the past.

Leaders League. How is your firm organized to better serve international clients?

P-O.B. Today we are working closely with our ‘Best Friends,’ the majority of which are big international firms with whom we correspond. Progressively, we have also forged strong relationships with boutique firms who share the same vision with us, which helps us provide best advice for our clients on an international scale. During the selection of partners, we make a list of criteria in terms of quality, excellence, team, practice expertise, types of clients, as well as lawyers’ past career paths. Taking a cue from our motto “Beyond decision making” we act for our clients in order to help them make the right decision. However, the right decision is just the first step, that’s why we decided that we also had to emphasize the importance of value creation. As a result, our representation of individual clients and their corporation is based on how we create value for the people as well as the corporation. One example of this is the management packages.

Leaders League. During an LBO transaction, how do you organize management packages to make sure mana-

gers are focused on business instead of being distracted by the whole LBO process?

P-O.B. In order to list the professional activities of our clients, we have developed a management package and set up information meetings as a matter of course to explain the mechanism of the management package to our client. Sometimes we negotiate a management package without the clients being present. A lot of these packages are conceived for cross-border LBOs, because sometimes when French investment firms make an LBO the management teams are in countries such as Australia, China, Germany or the United States. Therefore, we have to adapt the packages to these contexts, often in cooperation with our Best Friends on in country. Increasingly involved in Large Cap LBOs, our clients are expanding outside of France to countries such as China and the United States, so it is important for us to make sure these packages are adapted for them.

Concerning the Private Equity activities, we have worked with business angels, investment firms and managers. When we draft the tax and legal documentation, we try to have a global vision of our clients’ situations, as it is fundamental for them to be advised in the global context and not only at the level of investment.

Leaders League. How do you interpret the “virtuous circle of value creation”?

P-O.B. The objective of Opleo Avocat is to help the business community to make the right decisions. The first step is value creation, so all of our services are oriented towards either the professional activities of our clients or their investments. Three areas of practice expertise are organized around the cycle of value creation: human capital, personal capital and professional capital. There is not just one key driver, which is why it is a continuous circle. Our organization around this concept allows the individual to be the client of the whole firm instead of one particular lawyer, and we put all of our services at their disposal: corporate/contract law, tax law, property law and labor law, to name but a few. ♦