

## **Pascale Longuet: « The law is omnipresent in the American culture »**

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*Photo : Pascale Longuet, Esq.*

Pascale Longuet is a member of the bars of Paris and New York. The representation of French and European clients in their activities in the United States, and of American clients in issues they may face in France is a logical consequence of Pascale's dual legal training in France and the United States.

## **Lepetitjournal New York: Can you introduce your firm?**

**Pascale Longuet:** I created my firm in New York in 1996 following professional experiences in France and in the United States, where I arrived in 1989. The firm's activities are organized around two axes: the assistance of French or French-speaking companies (for example, Canadian) in the United States, and the representation of individuals.

The accompaniment of French companies in the United States entails the following main activities:

- As to corporate law: analysis of situations, creation of the most appropriate legal structure when there is an implantation, assistance throughout corporate life, transactions of recapitalization, acquisitions, sales, and sometimes dissolutions, or even bankruptcy proceedings.
- As to labor law: assistance in hiring and dismissing employees, negotiating contracts, drafting of employee handbooks.
- Trademark registrations.
- Drafting, reviewing and negotiating of many commercial contracts, for instance, the terms and conditions of sale on behalf of French company which sells industrial equipment to a US customer.
- Assistance in debt collection, and litigation in collaboration with other specialized colleagues.

## **What size of companies do you accompany and what are the problems of your customers?**

The clients are typically small and middle market companies; an individual structure such as mine is not necessarily organized to advise very large groups, although the firm regularly assists institutional investors.

The fields of activities of these companies are very varied: clothing and textiles, food industry, art restoration, manufacturing of industrial products and equipment (for instance semiconductors, temperature sensors, concrete manufacturing units).

The support I provide is diversified, and across the board because corporate clients may be in very different situations and these companies may or may not be established in the United States.

The assistance of individuals, the second part of the firm's activities, focuses on the interface between countries, at the crossroads of legal systems.

This covers American individuals who need assistance with a litigation in France, in liaison with local counsel, who contemplate a transaction in France, or in settling the French part of an estate.

These individuals may also be French persons in need of assistance in litigation proceedings in the United States, or who wish to recover and transfer American assets to France. An example is that

of individuals under guardianship in France; the judgment of French guardianship (*tutelle*) must be validated or "domesticated" in the United States so that US banking assets can be released. Another situation is that of French individuals wishing to liquidate and repatriate assets placed in retirement accounts or life insurance policies in the United States; this situation may occur in the context of the settlement of an estate. In these cases of representation of individuals, one has to find the solution to resolve the problems of the client while conforming with very different legal systems.

These different fields of activity are exciting and very rewarding, because they are between countries and cultures, but also because they rely on relationships of trust with customers and other participants despite the geographical distance.

### **Is the double culture important in your business?**

The double bar admission and the double legal culture are very important in my activities. I am approached with certain files mainly because I am admitted in the two jurisdictions, or because I am a member of the French bar. The firm works in collaboration and network with many colleagues and legal professionals: in France because the firm has no daily practice of French law, and in the United States. It is often necessary to use skills which are complementary to mine, such as litigation, taxation and immigration.

### **Have things changed in your profession in 30 years?**

Yes and no! As far as French companies are concerned, there is much more competition than there was a few years ago. However, these companies still encounter the same types of obstacles when they arrive, namely an absence of knowledge of the American context, of the English language, of their clientele, and they also have difficulty understanding the fact that the law is omnipresent in the American culture. These difficulties will soon be the subject of an article that can be communicated individually upon registration on the website of the firm: [www.longuetlaw.com](http://www.longuetlaw.com).

### **Do you have an anecdote to tell us?**

Yes, I have an anecdote to tell you that happened to me when I was a young lawyer in Paris. I was very proud of myself, having just joined a firm and was sent to the Court House. A taxi had been ordered and was waiting for me on Avenue Victor Hugo in Paris. I get in the cab and the driver turns to me and says: "You must make a mistake Mademoiselle, because this a taxi for Maître Longuet". And I said, "Well, I am Maître Longuet! ". It was unbelievable!

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