

McCarter & English Gets New Philadelphia Office Leader

BY ZACK NEEDLES

Of the Legal Staff

Twelve days after the firm made public the election of its new chairman, Newark, N.J.-based general practice firm McCarter & English has announced the new head of its Philadelphia office.

Joel E. Horowitz, an employee benefits and executive compensation attorney with the firm, has been named managing partner of its 20-lawyer Center City office, replacing business litigation partner Alexander Kerr, who was asked to step down from the position but remains at the firm.

Horowitz called the appointment “flat-tering and unexpected,” saying that while it

wasn’t necessarily a position he had prior interest in, it’s one he has embraced.

“It’s not something I particularly sought out,” he said. “My interest has been helping to grow the Philadelphia office and to establish more

of a presence for our business practice in Philadelphia and I had really been concentrating on that. This is consistent with that, I think, but I hadn’t particularly sought it out.”

According to Horowitz, who has been with the firm for about four years, the decision to select him for the leadership role was based on “a consensus among management.”

“I was really just asked by our [firmwide] managing partner whether I’d have any interest and whether I’d undertake the duties,” he said.

Horowitz said Kerr “served in that role for many years and continues to be a leader in the office and a leader in the firm.” According to Horowitz, there is no set term for office managing partner positions in the firm.

Kerr said the firm “asked me to refocus my efforts on continuing to develop business.”



HOROWITZ

“I think it’s healthy to bring in different people for an office managing partner position,” he said. “I think Joel’s wonderfully capable and will do a great job.”

Firmwide managing partner Eric Watt Wiechmann and Chairman Michael P. Kelly were both unavailable for comment.

GROWING

Horowitz’s new duties, which he described as “largely administrative and coordinating,” center mostly on helping to establish McCarter & English as a force in Philadelphia, with the same name recognition it has in New Jersey, its main market.

“We want to establish as much of a presence as possible in the Philadelphia region,” he said. “We have a lot of excellent lawyers who are not necessarily known institutionally.”

Part of his job, he said, will entail “promotion and being the face of the firm in Philadelphia” in order to establish the McCarter & English brand in the city.

“I think a large part of that is getting to a size and range of practice areas that makes us a little more of a well-known name among clients in the Philadelphia region,” he said. “We have a well-known practice in particular practice areas with particular lawyers, but if we can significantly grow the Philadelphia office, more potential clients are going to have a better sense that we’re here.”

According to Horowitz, the firm is “actively engaged at various stages” in discussions with potential hires in hopes to “significantly” expand its Philadelphia location.

Horowitz said one strength of the Center City office is its strong relationship with the firm’s Wilmington, Del., office, which proves mutually beneficial for both locations when clients come to the firm with regional matters.

“We work closely with [the Wilmington office],” he said. “There’s a synergy there between us where the combination of the two offices is more than the sum of the parts.”



BALANCING

Horowitz said he has no intention of letting his own practice wane as he takes on his new responsibilities as managing partner.

"Quite the opposite," he said. "I hope it generates additional opportunities."

And while he admits his new role will place a significant demand on time, it will also give him the opportunity to help boost the practices of all the attorneys in the office by placing him in the driver's seat for things like business development and lateral hiring.

"I think the idea is to concentrate on the visibility of the firm and the development of the practice," he said. "If, incidentally, that's good for me, it's good for everybody."

CHANGING

McCarter & English just went through another significant leadership change in early August, when Michael P. Kelly was elected to take over as chairman of the firm following the unexpected death of its chairman, Andrew T. Berry, on July 24 at the age of 69.

Berry had been with the firm for 44 years and had been chairman for 12.

Kelly, a partner at McCarter & English for almost a decade and the former managing partner of the Wilmington office, was elected by the executive committee to chair the 400-attorney firm.

Horowitz said his becoming managing partner of the Philadelphia office was unrelated to the change in firm heads and that his appointment actually slightly preceded Kelly's election to chairman. •