

USA Small Cap Private Equity Firm of the Year

- Hamilton Robinson Capital Partners

● The eminent award of USA Small Capital Private Equity Firm of the Year goes to Hamilton Robinson. Charlotte Abbott of Acquisition International caught up with its foremost partner, Scott Oakford, to enjoy a discussion on matters relating to team ethos, business strategy and his expectations for the future.

To begin with, we congratulated him on his award. Oakford responded, “Well, we had a fabulous year last year as we created very large profits for our limited partners. The market is extremely competitive in the US and Europe.”

Indeed, the market is hugely competitive, particularly so given the difficult economic conditions. Oakford, however, has seen this kind of outlook before. “This firm was started in 1984 so we’ve seen a series of downturns, general broad industry declines and recoveries and we’ve seen some industry specific recessions as well. In every one of these downturns comes, of course, opportunity so we’re always looking for opportunity to help companies deal with the downturns.”

This experience means that the firm has great belief in its strategy. Resilient it has been up to this point, and Oakford sees no reason to deviate. “We have stuck to our basic strategy of creating value in our portfolios with improved culture, lean operations and add-on acquisitions. We believe in our core strategies in every market.”

This strategy involves a focus on, as Oakford informed us,

“ Always, investment activity in North America first and foremost. And then we address the global market through add-on acquisitions. ”

The Eurozone troubles have also been shrewdly negotiated by the firm. “It has opened up opportunities for companies here in the United States and North America that are exporting. So we are seeing strength in North American manufacturing businesses with an export orientation. It’s been attractive for us.”

The team forms a strong and agile nexus. On its specific culture, Oakford kindly expanded, “We promote a positive culture not only in the businesses that we invest in but we also promote it right here in our own operating company. We do that by including all the managers in the participation in the profits of the investments and in the ownership of the operating company itself. You can’t communicate enough. We are very active on internal communication, discussion of projects, discussion of the organization and planning for the future of our business.”

To summarize, Oakford is confident that it is their sticking to their core investment strategy which helped them to enormous success in 2011. They fully intend to chart a similar course this year, and we bet they will be strong contenders again for next year’s awards.



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Japanese Intellectual Property Law Firm of the Year

- Ishioroshi & Associates

● The runaway winners of this year’s Japanese Intellectual Property Law Firm of the Year are Ishioroshi & Associates. Acquisition International had a chance to speak with its founder, Masaki Ishioroshi, to talk matters teamwork, closing deals in challenging economic conditions, and delivering for their customers.

We began our talk by asking him what he feels is the cause of the recognition his team is enjoying. He commented on both deal generation and project management. “We were very happy and proud to be chosen ahead of several other exceptional IP law firms in Japan. Over the past years, we have taken into consideration that our clients’ budget restrictions have become tighter and their expectations higher. We have, therefore, concentrated on providing more sophisticated legal advice in a more efficient way. Our firm is small and this has enabled us to enhance the quality and expertise of our work rather than on just growth.”

Masaki was also happy to talk of his consummate team. “Our team is our most valuable asset and teamwork is critical to our success. The experienced lawyers take every oppor-

tunity to share know-how and expertise with young lawyers spending. This, we believe, keeps the whole team productive.”

As for the strategies used to deal with the stresses of transaction management, Ishioroshi explained the meticulous detail they ascribe each caseload.

“ Even if a transaction is big and seemingly overwhelming, it consists of small issues in most cases. Therefore, though always having in mind the goal and the overall purpose of the transaction, we handle each small but important issue promptly and efficiently. Doing so can alleviate stresses of such deal management yet, of course, stress remains in order to close significant transactions. ”

This attention to detail and desire to improve expertise throughout the company are the keys to ensuring future successes at Ishioroshi & Associates. Further, as Masaki highlighted, “Clients

are interested in achieving their business goals, not in legal theory. Corporate lawyers need to have good understanding of their clients’ business. We fully grasp our clients’ business goals and provide tailor-made legal advice for each client concerning intellectual property laws.”

He was also, rightly so, upbeat and keen to discuss the future of his company. “In Japan, the number of lawyers has dramatically and rapidly increased over the recent years. We will seek to continue to differentiate ourselves with an emphasis on expertise and quality. Even in a high-supply environment, there are not necessarily many lawyers who are able to provide sophisticated legal advice in areas that require high expertise and experience. We expect to remain the best at what we do, working with higher even levels of sophistication to meet our clients’ specialized needs.”

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