

## Global 20: Reed Smith

By **Michael Phillis**

*Law360 (August 22, 2019, 2:50 PM EDT)* -- Reed Smith LLP helped the Bank of New York Mellon navigate Puerto Rico's debt restructuring and represented a former hedge fund CEO accused in a major fraud investigation brought by Denmark's tax authority, winning the firm a place on Law360's Global 20 list.

Slightly over 1,800 attorneys work at Reed Smith, which is based in Pittsburgh, and just over a third of those are outside the U.S. in a dozen locations, including London and Hong Kong. Global managing partner Sandy Thomas said the firm started its global expansion efforts in the early 2000s, which were driven by the increased cross-border needs of its clients. The firm is set up to think globally, Thomas said.

"We can size up a client's problem. We can address it in its various cross-border dimensions. And consistently across our groups and our geographies we try to get to a practical solution for the client," Thomas said. "We have a huge emphasis in the firm on listening. ... We hear a lot from clients that that may be a little bit of a lost art, but we try to be really good at that."

The firm focuses on five practice areas that are global in nature: life sciences and health, energy and natural resources, financial services, transportation and media and entertainment.

"We are a decidedly sector-based firm," Thomas said. "Each one of those industries draws on resources all across global Reed Smith."

Reed Smith continued to represent the Bank of New York Mellon as indentured trustee for the bondholders of the Puerto Rico Sales Tax Financing Corp., or COFINA, which carried about \$18 billion in



**Reed Smith**

**Global headcount:** 1,816  
**Total offices:** 28

**Offices by Region:**  
**North America:** 16  
**Europe:** 5  
**Asia-Pacific:** 5  
**Middle East:** 2

debt, in addition to its work in conjunction with the employee retirement system and several other bondholders.

“It’s real money,” said partner Eric A. Schaffer, adding that the firm was uniquely positioned to deal with the complex issues involved with such a high-profile and complicated restructuring.

Bond insurer Ambac Assurance Corp. and senior bondholder Whitebox sued the bank in 2017, accusing it of mishandling its duty as the trustee for COFINA bondholders. BNY Mellon argued that under the terms of the restructuring plan, Ambac and Whitebox needed to set money aside to pay potential defense costs. The two entities resisted.

Ambac settled, and then in February, the bankruptcy court said BNY Mellon could hold back \$20 million from Whitebox to cover the potential litigation fees and expenses.

“That’s a really good number,” Schaffer said, adding that Whitebox dropped its case soon afterward.

The firm also assisted the former CEO and other higher-ups of Solo Capital, which is now in administration, navigate claims of tax fraud and investigators’ allegations that they cheated the Danish government out of about \$1.9 billion in taxes.

“The matter is extremely complex with numerous defendants and likely to be one of the largest cases currently before the high court,” said Eoin O’Shea, a partner at the firm.

In January, Reed Smith helped persuade the Texas Supreme Court to revive Anadarko Petroleum Corp.’s effort to force Lloyd’s of London underwriters to cover about \$100 million in Anadarko’s legal defenses stemming from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon explosion. The victory overturned a state court of appeals decision. The high court’s opinion said defense costs constituted a “liability” insured under the energy policy belonging to Anadarko, which was a minority partner in the offshore well.

The firm announced last year that it was opening a new base in Leeds to expand its "Reed Smith Global Solutions" offerings. The opening builds upon its previous RSGS experience and operations in Pittsburgh. RSGS offers legal and business services for clients, according to the firm. The effort aims to increase efficiency and includes human resources, technology, data science and a slew of other professionals in addition to attorneys.

M. Tamara Box, managing partner for Europe and the Middle East, said RSGS can also serve clients who need help with repeatable tasks.

“Our goal, really, for all of this is to deliver on the promise that our clients are asking us to make and that is more for less,” Box said. “I think a lot of competitors are focused on the ‘less’ end of that. We are focused on the more.”

She said the Pittsburgh and Leeds offices are now fully integrated, and the expansion helps reach clients in Europe, the Middle East and other areas.

The firm also brought on board significant new talent. As a sample, in June 2018, Howard Womersley Smith was hired as a partner from Taylor Vinters LLP. Smith works out of Reed Smith’s London office and has experience acting for financial service providers, including banks and insurers, and fintech suppliers. In July 2018, Reed Smith announced it had hired two attorneys from Pinsent Masons LLP and the

founder of Lahiri LLC to strengthen its Middle East offerings.

Thomas said that when Reed Smith brings on partners, the firm makes sure the new arrivals will be a culture fit.

"We are looking for people to join Reed Smith who fit with our culture and a defining aspect — not the, but a defining aspect of our culture — is that we like each other," Thomas said. "We treat each other well, and we will put down everything to help a partner with a client issue."

*Methodology: Law360 surveyed law firms about their global attorney headcounts, office locations and cross-border and international work between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019. Headcount and office information is as of March 31, 2019, except where noted for individual firms.*

--Additional reporting by Jeff Sistrunk and Bonnie Eslinger. Editing by Haylee Pearl.