



# ‘Critical challenge’

**Talent drives business because good client service requires the right people**

**Christopher McKenna**

*Boston Office Managing Partner – Foley & Lardner LLP*

## **What are the key opportunities and challenges facing the legal industry?**

Talent is one of the critical challenges because our people are the main drivers of our business. To deliver good client service, you need the right people with a dedication to the profession and clients. So professional recruitment and retaining talent is always a significant challenge in a demanding environment with a high-level expectation of client service. One of Foley’s key differentiators is our collaborative culture and focus on our people. We are always striving to build more connected teams, which strengthens our culture, and we have a great platform to help folks find and develop their professional development path.

In the Boston market, we’ve seen an increase in the number of law firms that have joined the market over the past decade. The strength of the local market is one reason why the city of Boston is very sticky for both service providers and clients alike.

One of Foley’s strategic pillars focuses on top talent, including diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. We announced an updated DE&I strategic plan last summer driven by advanced data analytics. The plan focuses on five objectives: recruitment, development and promotion, client engagement, collaboration and education.

## **How would you describe the business community in the Boston region in the past year or so?**

Massachusetts – and specifically Boston – has a high concentration of talent in technology, biotech and various aspects of telecommunications and software. Foley’s emerging technology practice acts as a gateway to

help entrepreneurs and companies come to do business in the United States, to get formed, funded, operated and grow. We have strong relationships with different government economic institutions, accelerators and incubators for startup entities across the globe, including Canada, Hungary, France, Italy, Columbia, Greece and Latin America. We not only see emerging technology companies from around the world start in the Boston market but the region also has a robust startup ecosystem, with startup activities springing up around the rich Boston academic environment, such as MIT.

Foley is also involved in many activities with local accelerators, such as Mass Challenge, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting innovation and entrepreneurship. Startups admitted into the incubator go through curriculum, mentorship and exhibition events designed to produce avenues of growth, funding and third-party collaboration. All in all, the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in Boston and globally.

## **What is your outlook for the firm and the legal sector in Boston for the next two to three years?**

There’s some economic uncertainty in the short term and we’re probably already in a slight recession. We expect the overall legal market demand to flatten a bit but we are optimistic that although there is some downward pressure on demand, it shouldn’t last too long. Foley has a well-diversified service platform and a diverse client base that has allowed us to continue to grow in spite of the current economic conditions. We are operating from a position of strength and remain long-term focused and confident in our future. ■