

# SACRAMENTO BUSINESS JOURNAL

## Law firm Lewis Brisbois's Sacramento office aims to expand international reach

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The Sacramento office of law firm Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith LLP is aiming to expand its international reach after bringing on five new hires who formerly worked at Locke Lord LLP.

The new hires – Scott Bartel, John Yung, Eric Stiff, Deborah Seo, and associate Alice Du – bring international corporate and commercial law experience, as well as a client base spanning several continents.

Lewis Brisbois was founded in Los Angeles in 1979 and has over 40 offices across the country, including eight in California. The firm recorded \$440 million in gross revenues in 2016.

Locke Lord closed its Sacramento office shortly after the five attorneys left for Lewis Brisbois.

“We already have a strong team of litigation lawyers, so we wanted to build out our transactional expertise,” said John Poulos, managing partner at Lewis Brisbois.

According to Yung, Lewis Brisbois's long-established roots in California made it an attractive home for the team.

“Lewis Brisbois gave us a great opportunity to grow our platform as a practice and expand here in the Sacramento area,” he said. “Locke Lord was not (headquartered) in California...And that caused some tension at points.”

The working relationship between



**Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith LLP managing partner  
John Poulos**

Bartel, Yung and Stiff dates back to the 1980s, when the three worked at the Sacramento-based firm Bartel Eng Linn and Schroder. The firm initially focused on California-based clients but soon set its sights abroad. Bartel established clients in Europe as Yung branched out into China. Meanwhile, Stiff expanded the team's reach into Canada.

Being based in the capital of the state with the sixth-largest economy in the world is seen by international clients as

a key asset, according to Yung.

Some have characterized the new hires as a raid on Locke Lord, but the reality is much more banal, according to Poulos. He encountered Christopher Bakes – then a partner at Locke Lord – on a plane to Los Angeles. The two had been colleagues at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP in years past.

“We were both heading to our respective trials,” Poulos recalled. “I said how much I was enjoyed working at Lewis Brisbois, and I told him to give me a call if he was ever interested in joining.”

In February, several months after the airborne encounter, Poulos received a call from Bakes, who expressed interest in joining Lewis Brisbois. That got the ball rolling on hiring the team of five attorneys from Locke Lord.

“When we heard the Bartel group was interested (in leaving Locke Lord), we threw our hat in the ring,” Poulos said. “Clearly, it worked out.”

Lewis Brisbois's revenues have traditionally come from its insurance practice, but Poulos said revenues from commercial and corporate law are “growing at a fast clip.” He estimated that about half of the Sacramento office's revenues come from its insurance practice, and the other from commercial and corporate practice. The new hires reflect this trend – and there may be more new faces to come.

“I don't think we're done yet,” said Poulos. “My intention is to hire a few more highly regarded attorneys to round out our bench.”