

Gallery of Lawyers

Established Top Lawyers

The Ukrainian legal market is in its infancy compared with Western Europe and the United States, which boast centuries- and decades-old legal traditions.

The country's leading lawyers, therefore, are not only those who have worked on huge projects with big clients. They are the groundbreakers who established and developed their practices from scratch after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 saw Ukraine shift toward a market economy.

The Kyiv Post asked 20 of the leading Ukrainian law firms to pick out who they consider to be the top lawyer in 10 fields. The following law firms presented their responses: DLA Piper, Pavlenko&Poberezhnyuk Law Group, CMS Cameron McKenna, Integrites, Asters, Avellum Partners, Astapov Lawyers, Salans, Magisters, Konnov&Sozanovsky, Vasyl Kisil & Partners, SayenkoKharenko, Lavrynovych&Partners, Beiten Burkhardt and Arzinger.

Most of the top lawyers were pioneers in obtaining additional education abroad in the mid-1990s, before returning to Ukraine, often to work for locally founded companies or to set up their own firms.



Antimonopoly Law
Ihor Svechkar, partner at Asters

Age: 31

Years in field: Eight

Education: Master's at the Institute of International Relations of National University Taras Shevchenko in Kyiv; master's in international law at Utrecht University, the Netherlands.

Experience: Represented Schering-Plough and Merck in obtaining clearance for their \$41.1 billion merger. Advised Telenor in VimpelCom-Kyivstar merger and antitrust proceedings into alleged abuse of dominance and concerted practices initiated by Farimex.

Top clients: GlaxoSmithKline, Coca-Cola, Nissan, Philip Morris, Walt Disney, Biersdorf, Heel, Telenor and Ansell.

Quote: "First of all, the key to success is to be attentive to details. Second is to take enjoyment from what you do and not treat work as a routine. It gives room for development."

"I like this field because it is very pleasant to work with one of the most European and modern state authorities in Ukraine - the Antimonopoly Committee. I also have the opportunity to communicate with other lawyers in this field from other countries, so I can compare where we are and predict where we will be in several years."



Foreign Trade

Tetyana Slipachuk, partner at Vasil Kisiil & Partners

Age: 42

Years in field: 15

Education: Master's in law at National University Taras Shevchenko in Kyiv; Ph.D. in Business Law and Arbitration at National University Taras Shevchenko in Kyiv.

Experience: Advised a Korean automobile manufacturer on terminating a distribution agreement with a Ukrainian distributor; counseled a leading Austrian infrastructure group in waste management; consulted on the Ukrainian legislation stipulating provisions against corruption.

Top clients: Would not disclose.

Quote: "There are two parts to success. First, professionalism. I work on myself a lot and I'm constantly learning new things. Second, there are certain life values that I keep in my work, such as ethics and honesty in problem-solving and decision-making in deals."



M&A and Corporate Law

Volodymyr Sayenko, partner at SayenkoKharenko

Age: 35

Years in field: 15

Education: LL.M. in Transnational Business Practice from McGeorge School of Law; Doctor of Law in Securities Law from National University Taras Shevchenko in Kyiv.

Experience: Advised on the acquisition of five metallurgy plants in Ukraine by Evraz Group, the largest M&A deal in Ukraine's metal sector, the sale of Volia Cable to Providence Equity Partners and the acquisition of Bank Forum by Commerzbank.

Top clients: Alpha Bank, Citibank, Commerzbank, Dyckerhoff, Japan Tobacco, Philip Morris, Piraeus Bank, Severstal, TNK-BP, TUI Travel and UBS.

Quote: "It's all about hard work and experience on unique projects. I've been dealing with mergers and acquisitions for nearly 16 years, and it requires broad knowledge in various legal areas. To be successful it is necessary not only to be knowledgeable in corporate law but also in the specifics of the economic sector where the deals are performed."



Energy Law

Olexandr Martinenko, partner at CMS Cameron McKenna

Age: 48

Years in field: 15

Education: Master's from Law Faculty at National University Taras Shevchenko in Kyiv; master's from Kyiv Institute of Industrial Property; LL.M at Harvard University, Massachusetts, U.S.; Ph.D in Law at Koretskiy's Institute of State and Law of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

Experience: Worked on a number of upstream and downstream segments of oil and gas practice with respect to international companies' growing interest in Ukraine for joint exploration and further extraction of natural resources.

Top clients: Would not disclose.

Quote: "To become recognized you need to be active on the market. Talk to customers, partners, colleagues from other law firms and get acquainted with the community. Water never flows under a settled stone. My experience with energy started in 1994 and my first big client was Shell."

"If you don't have interest in the field, you'll never be able even to focus on it, never mind achieving success in it."



International Finance

Michael Kharenko, partner at SayenkoKharenko

Age: 34

Years in field: 8

Education: LL.M. at Columbia University School of Law; LL.D. in Public Finance Law from National University Taras Shevchenko in Kyiv.

Experience: Eurobonds placements by the State of Ukraine, City of Kyiv, UkrEximBank, UkrSotsbank, UkrSibbank, Alpha Bank, FUIB, Interpipe, DTEK, Metinvest, MHP, Azovstal, Stirol; all IPOs by Ukrainian companies in 2008; the largest debt restructurings in Ukraine in 2009 in energy, real estate and banking sectors.

Top clients: Commerzbank, Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank, HSBC, UBS and VTB.

Quote: "Success comes to firms that can produce a result, find individual solutions, solve complicated tasks and, most importantly, think outside the box. On a personal level, the key to success is striving to understand a client's business from the inside, and desire to find a solution. It is also very important for clients to see your personal involvement in the projects and, as simple as it sounds, ability to deliver on time."



Land and Real Estate

Serhiy Piontkovsky, partner at Baker & McKenzie

Age: 43

Years in field: 11

Education: Master's in international law from the Moscow Institute of International Relations; LL.M. at Harvard Law School.

Experience: Advised Quinn Group on the \$59 million acquisition of the Shopping Mall "Univermag Ukraina" and the \$95 million acquisition of Leonardo Business Center.

Top clients: NEST, Raven Group, Asnova Holding, Gooioord B.V., U.S. Government, ITT Investment Group operated by InterContinental Hotels Group

Quote: "It is all about teamwork. First and foremost, a law firm is about the people who work there and communicate with clients. Its success totally depends on the lawyers that work for it."



Litigation

Oleh Makarov, managing partner at Vasil Kisiil & Partners

Age: 44

Years in field: 20

Education: Master's in international law from the Institute of International Relations at Kyiv Taras Shevchenko National University.

Experience: Represented a Ukrainian pharmaceutical enterprise against the Ministry of Health in a dispute over a \$50 million tender; acted for a shareholder in a dispute over the shares in a leading Ukrainian real estate and development company with assets worth more than \$1 billion; represented a multinational media company in a dispute regarding a controlling stake in one of the major national TV broadcasters in Ukraine.

Top clients: Would not disclose.

Quote: "I've been in litigation for 20 years. We were the first private law firm and we were the first to work as so-called business lawyers. Then the market started to change. Commercial courts emerged. I enjoy representing somebody's interests in courts, protecting them."

"There is perhaps no single secret for success, just individual and team work, love for your work, deep understanding of your clients, focusing on results and preparing precisely and thoroughly for court hearings."



Tax

Oleksandr Minin, KM Partners

Age: 43

Years in field: 20

Education: Master's in economics at Kyiv Taras Shevchenko National University; master's in international law at International Relations Institute of Kyiv Taras Shevchenko National University.

Experience: Advised on the sale of AvtoZAZbank to Bank of Cyprus; worked with Kraft Foods Ukraine in developing a structural model for so called "new markets", including territorial extension to the other countries and integration of Cadbury business.

Top clients: AES (Kyiv and Rivne regional energy distribution companies), Bunge, CHS, Kraft Foods, Monsanto, Motorola, Philip Morris, Raiffeisen Group companies, SC Johnson and Tetra Pak.

Quote: "We work not for business but for people. We strive to help and that leads to success. The state and business are not equal in the field of tax legislation: The state sets the rules and taxpayers follow them. Therefore it is very important to ensure protection of the taxpayer's interests."



Banking and Finance

Serhiy Chorny, partner at Baker & McKenzie

Age: 45

Years in field: 15

Education: Master's in International Law and Ph.D. in Law at National University Taras Shevchenko in Kyiv; LL.M at the University of Essex, U.K.; Diploma in international and comparative law of human rights at Institut International des Droits de l'Homme, Strasbourg, France.

Experience: Advised a London-based international bank in connection with the restructuring of \$500 million Eurobonds issued by state oil and gas company Naftogaz. Advised the controlling shareholders of Praxev Bank on its sale for \$750 million to Intesa Sanpaolo.

Top clients: Bank Finance & Credit, First Ukrainian International Bank, Standard Bank, Metinvest, the City of Kyiv, Ferrexpo, UkrSibbank, PrivatBank, Interpipe Limited, TAS-Kommerzbank, MHP, Azovstal Iron & Steel Works, EBRD, UniCredit Group, ING Bank and Standard Bank.

Quote: “I started to specialize in banking and finance when the first syndicated loans were issued on the market. I was given the task of developing this practice within our firm. Later we were the first to help banks issue Eurobonds, then corporate.”

Upcoming young lawyers

In the last 10 years the high demand for lawyers on Ukraine’s fast-growing market brought up a generation of young and ambitious specialists. Some were made counselors, appointed head of a law firm’s regional office or even founded their own legal business before hitting 30. Others succeeded in becoming a partner in their late 20s which would be impossible in a law firm in the U.K. or the U.S.

“Lawyers of leading British law firms usually become partners between 33 and 36. I have never come across a partner younger than 30 in an international law firm,” said Nick Fletcher, partner at the Kyiv and Warsaw offices of Clifford Chance, one of the U.K.’s “Magic Circle” of leading law firms. Fletcher, 48, became a partner at 35, an average age for this position in his company. In Ukraine this threshold is several years lower.

The overheating of Ukraine’s market before the 2008 crisis led to a shortage of lawyers, and many young lawyers were therefore promoted fast.

But many of them became successful not only due to the favorable market conditions, but because of their ambition and thirst for work. Unlike some of their older colleagues, most of them have studied law at the best universities abroad. Apart from their native Ukrainian and Russian, all of them speak at least one foreign language, mostly English.

Kyiv Post picked just five examples of lawyers who, despite their young age, have already built successful careers in their profession in very different ways.



***Antonina Yaholnyk,
31, partner at the Kyiv office of Baker & McKenzie***

Yaholnyk, from the Ternopil region in Western Ukraine, was one of five lucky Ukrainian students to win a scholarship to study law at Cambridge University from 2002-3. She graduated from the prestigious law school with an LL.M (Master of Law) degree. She was one of a group of lawyers who founded the competition law department in the Kyiv office of Baker & McKenzie, one of the world’s leading law firms, when she was just 24. Yaholnyk became head of the department at the age of 27 and was made a partner at 30.

Quote: “The sooner a young individual realizes what he or she wants to be the better, not only in terms of profession but also exact specialization. From my second year at Lviv University I realized I was not interested in jurisprudence in general, but antimonopoly legislation. At that moment almost nobody was interested in it. After graduation, I realized that every step I took should be in order to develop my specialization. The present and near future is clear: It’s time for narrow specialists in the legal business.”

Client list:

Advised ArcelorMittal, PepsiCo, Shell, Nike, EFG Eurobank Ergasias and many other multinational companies on competition law matters. Worked on around 10 initial public offerings, including XXI Century, Ferrexpo and Myronivsky Hliboproduct.

Experience:

Before joining the Kyiv office of Baker & McKenzie in 2003, Yaholnyk worked at the European Commission, the World Trade Organization, the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliament of Ukraine.

Education:

2003 – LL.M. at the University of Cambridge, faculty of law.

2002 – master's degree in international law and economics at the World Trade Institute, Switzerland.

2001 – bachelor's degree in law at Ivan Franko National University of Lviv.



Viktor Dovhan,
30, managing partner of D&D Lawyers

Dovhan was a pre-senior lawyer at Kyiv's office of Chadbourne & Park, one of the world's biggest law firms, when the global financial crisis hit in 2008, taking a particular toll on the legal sector. But he managed to take advantage of this situation. After being made redundant, Dovhan and his partner Eugene Dankanych founded a new law firm, D&D Lawyers, at the age of 29. Now he earns more running his own business, including 25 lawyers in Kyiv, Toronto, New York and partners in Moscow,

Warsaw and Brussels.

Quote:

When I was laid off I spent a month thinking whether to work for myself or spend a long time looking for a new job. Now, I have my own law firm, which makes me proud. We lawyers of the younger generation are more flexible than our older colleagues. We do business in crisis conditions. With D&D Lawyers it took us half a year to cover all the initial expenses and start to turn a profit. I want to build a business that will be in the top 10 Ukrainian law firms. To do this in three years is realistic.”

Client list:

Marine Transport Bank, Bank Lviv, Ukrainian crane distributor Aviatechservice and Dnipropetrovsk ferroalloy distributor East Vector.

Education:

2006 – Ph.D at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Institute of International Relations.

2002 – master of law at the University of Bonn, Germany.

2001 – bachelor of law with distinction at Ivan Franko National University of Lviv;



Olga Khoroshylova,
31, partner at Magisters

Olga Khoroshy-lova was 28 when appointed a partner in Magisters, one of Ukraine's leading and most dynamically developing law firms. She came to the firm in 2000, building her success on a desire to work and the rapid economic growth that lasted until mid-2008. She now heads the banking and finance practice at Magisters. Khoroshylova's top client list includes Ukraine's Ministry of Finance and state energy company Naftogaz, which she has been working with for the last 10 years.

Quote:

At the beginning of your career you have to work really hard, as you are learning. During the most intensive periods of my work I didn't go home at night. In the morning I would take a shower at the office and carry on working. If a lawyer considers such a rhythm exciting, then he or she will succeed."

"Older lawyers are definitely more experienced, while lawyers of the younger generation are thirstier for new ideas, for new transactions. That's why this excitement that pushes them to do more and more transactions can compensate for a relative lack of experience."

Client list:

Ukraine's Ministry of Finance, Naftogaz, Alfa-Bank, Morgan Stanley, Credit Suisse bank, Deutsche Bank and UBS.

Education:

2001 – Master of International Law, diploma with honours, Institute of International Relations, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv.



Anna Babych,
27, counselor at Vasil Kisil & Partners

Babych, from the town of Brovary near Kyiv, started working as a lawyer in her third year at university. When she was 22 she came to Vasil Kisil & Partners, one of the leading Ukrainian law firms, and realized it's the company she wanted to stay in. After five years she was promoted to a counselor. The next goal – to become a partner in the next two or three years – is a realistic aim for the young specialist in corporate and mergers and acquisitions law who has impressive international corporations in her client list.

Quote:

Mergers and acquisitions practice always means big corporations. But behind well known company names are real people. I always teach my younger colleagues that the most important thing is to put yourself in your client's shoes. All lawyers like to talk a lot

and to write a lot with many legal details, but not all clients want to read that. My Korean clients, as many other businessmen from Eastern Asia, like to read reports of 150 pages. When dealing with a local businessman who owns a business in Ukraine, he or she wants you to explain in three words what real risks he would face here. It is very important for a lawyer to establish a personal connection with a client.”

Client List:

OTP Bank, BNP Paribas Suisse, ING Bank, Siemens, Google, Central European Media Enterprises, Danone, Philips, Voestalpine, Turkcell, Logitech, British American Tobacco, Aladdin Group and Ukrainian Media Holding.

Education:

2005 – master’s degree in law at National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.



Markian Malskyy,
25, head of the Western Ukrainian branch of Arzinger

With two master’s degrees in law in Sweden and Switzerland and one from his native city of Lviv, Malskyy could have joined the team of a top law firm in the capital, as many young lawyers do. However, he chose to make a career in his region. A year ago he became head of the Western Ukrainian branch of Arzinger, a local Ukrainian law firm, formerly with international network Arzinger and Partners. Now Malskyy manages an office of five lawyers and wants to make it the leading law team in Western Ukraine.

Quote:

I never sit idle and always keep myself busy. It is nice to realize that in the last five years I have accomplished the same as others in 10 or 15. As the saying goes, don’t work harder, work smarter. Heading the Western Ukrainian branch of Arzinger, I already have a position equivalent to partnership, but it’s obvious that no one can become an official partner in a respected law firm in his mid-20s. My first ambition is to become a partner in the next seven years. The second ambition is to prove there are opportunities for personal and business growth not only in Kyiv, but in the regions. Clients became more interested in decent advice with a specific local background.

Client list:

Represented Lviv city council in the negotiations with the Union of European Football Associations on preparations for the Euro 2012 football championship to be held in Ukraine and Poland.

Education:

2007 – master in international law and economics at the World Trade Institute, Bern, Switzerland.

2006 – LL.M at Stockholm University, Sweden.

2006 – master’s degree at Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, faculties of law and international economics