

Rising Star: Bracewell's Andrej Kormuth

By Clark Mindock

Law360 (August 3, 2020, 3:13 PM EDT) -- Andrej Kormuth of Bracewell LLP has advised clients on major energy and infrastructure deals, including Qatar's first solar plant and stadiums for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, earning him a spot among the project finance law practitioners under age 40 honored as Law360 Rising Stars.

HIS MOST INTERESTING CASE:

Kormuth told Law360 that the most interesting cases to him aren't always the ones with the biggest price tags attached. Rather, it's the ones that involve delicate work or novel issues that most compel him.

He pointed to his work on Qatar's first solar photovoltaic plant, which he described as new territory for a country that relies heavily on oil and gas energy products.

"As it goes with every transaction which is a first, it tends to be pioneering in every respect," Kormuth said.

He said that working on a project for Qatar that diverged from its normal assets presented a "myriad" of challenges and that the COVID-19 pandemic has only made the project more interesting to him. The pandemic has had an especially pronounced effect on banks, which have reevaluated their financial contributions in the face of significant risks and uncertainties, according to Kormuth.

Furthermore, much of the work he did on the project in 2019 has had to be revisited because of the pandemic, the attorney noted.

"It continues to be interesting to this day," he said.

WHY HE'S A PROJECT FINANCE LAWYER:

Kormuth originally wanted to be a litigator when he started out as an attorney, but he said the grandeur of project finance — and the




Andrej Kormuth
Bracewell

Age: 36
 Home base: Dubai
 Position: Partner
 Law school: The University of Cambridge
 First job after law school: Associate at Bell Dewar, now part of Fasken

opportunity to see his work result in tangible things like stadiums and solar farms — drew him in.

"It's really tangible. We structure deals for physical assets. It's not something that sits in the ether. It is real," he said.

He added that he sees traces of his energy work in the foundations of modern society.

"A lot of it drives the economy," Kormuth said. "If you think of power deals — which I've done too many to remember — they are the bedrock of the economy. If you do not have power, you can't do anything. You literally can't."

WHAT MOTIVATES HIM:

"I feel like it's almost a cliché, but I think it's relationships," Kormuth said.

Noting that the legal profession is inherently one driven by people, Kormuth said he can't separate the human interactions from the statutes written down on paper. The law, he said, is a "fictitious concept" that is "ultimately brought about by imagination and put into practice through legislation in society."

"But the most interesting thing about it is dealing with people," he said.

On any given day he is prepared to interact with different people with different personalities and different points of view, for better or worse, he said.

"The discussion, the negotiations, the debates that we have with our clients and with our counterparts. Some are heated and some are not. Some are pleasant and some are not pleasant. But altogether, I think you walk away a little bit richer in experience," he said. "That, in my mind, is pretty rewarding."

HIS PROUDEST MOMENT:

Kormuth said that becoming a partner at Bracewell was a highlight but not the mountaintop. Instead, he holds a special fondness for the very moment he became an attorney. It opened up all the doors he has now walked through, he said.

"Becoming an attorney is the beginning of everything. It is a relatively small step in hindsight, but it's an enormous leap. Not to use the Neil Armstrong analogy here, but it's a leap. It is a leap toward a career, right?" he said.

"The court imparted responsibility to look after clients and to look after the public and it's the beginning of everything you want to do as far as being a lawyer is concerned," he added.

— *As told to Clark Mindock*

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2020 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,300 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2020, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.