

Q&A: Chambers USA Editor Toby Eccleshall

In April, [Chambers and Partners](#) published its [Chambers USA 2019](#) rankings of the top lawyers and law firms in the United States. Chambers researchers conduct exhaustive interviews with general counsel and other legal industry thought leaders. I recently interviewed Chambers USA editor Toby Eccleshall about the latest and most-prominent legal and business trends and issues that provide law firms with new opportunities. We also discussed upcoming changes and new features Chambers is offering in the United States this year. Here are some highlights from our conversation.



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What are some of the most-interesting trends coming out of *Chambers USA 2019*?

For one, in the banking arena, the domination of the financing marketplace by traditional lender-side firms is disrupted from several angles. Borrowers are widely acknowledged to be gaining in power with regard to the negotiation of terms, with prominent borrower-side firms increasingly mentioned in the same breath as those working with leading banks.

The growth in the alternative lending sphere has brought about change in the legal market. Sponsors are turning to their formation and buyouts counsel for advice in financing transactions, and the financing groups of these firms are growing rapidly. As a result, firms on both sides of the borrower/lender coin are facing a choice: diversify or specialize. Many have chosen the first option, with private equity-related work showcased by over four times as many firms in 2019 as in 2018.

Energy is an interesting space as well, since the industry faces environmental concerns and external pressures. Renewable power continues to dominate the power side of the U.S. energy industry as tax credits continue to be available for new projects.

What's new in *Chambers USA 2019*?

Cannabis is a new area we covered in 2019. As evidenced by more than double the number of cannabis-related corporate transactions in *Chambers* submissions over the past year, the legal market for serving cannabis businesses is growing rapidly to help clients navigate complex regulations as participants, including new entrants, approach the industry from several angles.

New cannabis products, particularly in the medical field, make this a ripe area for IP work.

I understand you are opening an office in New York this month.

Yes – there are many exciting new developments at Chambers. This month, we will be opening our first U.S.-based office in New York and running a series of educational forums across the country. This will give us the opportunity to meet regularly with firms and in-house counsel, and provide greater transparency on the research process. The contact in our New York office is Harry Major and the address is 880 3rd Avenue, New York, NY 10022 USA.

What are Chambers Forums?

Chambers Forums are a global series of jurisdictionally significant conferences, three of which are [taking place in the United States in June 2019](#). We draw together top experts on key topics and open lines of communication between Chambers editors, leading general counsel and recognized firms.

Diversity is such an important topic in the legal community. What is Chambers doing to support diversity and inclusion?

Our newly launched global [Chambers D&I Charter](#) encourages law firms and legal departments to partner with us and share their diversity data to create and implement [ongoing diversity plans](#). Charter signatories commit to a set of principles that include building a diverse and inclusive workplace culture and attracting, recruiting and promoting diverse talent. The Charter builds on the findings of the Chambers D&I program and offers signatories a structured approach to addressing the root causes of inequality in the workplace through the bespoke creation of action plans, training and toolkits. We also appointed a D&I Global Advisory Board composed of senior general counsel trailblazers who are at the forefront of driving inclusion throughout the legal profession. We are excited about how U.S. law firms and legal departments are driving necessary change, although there is more work to be done. The Charter provides an opportunity for international learning and discussion.

Earlier this month, we hosted our inaugural Chambers Diversity and Inclusion Awards: USA 2019, celebrating the leading corporations, general counsel, law firms and attorneys who are furthering the advancement of diversity and inclusion in the legal industry. This year's awards featured 16 categories for private practice attorneys and law firms, and 12 categories for general counsel and corporate legal teams.

What's next for Chambers?

The 2019 *Litigation Support Guide* and *High Net Worth Guide* will launch this summer.

The *Chambers High Net Worth Guide* is our first publication specifically aimed at the international private wealth market. The guide is used by family offices and professional advisers to wealthy individuals, providing objective guidance on an international scale, and covers private wealth management work and related focuses in key jurisdictions

around the world, featuring in-depth editorial content about the leading lawyers and law firms for wealthy individuals and families.

The *Litigation Support Guide* is a comprehensive guide to the leading professional services providers in the litigation market. This year, we have greatly expanded the categories to include litigation funding, business intelligence and investigations, eDiscovery, forensic accounting, witness familiarization, training, and more.

As Chambers continues its growth in the U.S. market, it is providing more ways for general counsel and law firms to learn from each other. If you have questions or need assistance with 2020 Chambers submissions, contact me, Lisa Altman, at laltman@jaffepr.com.