

Inmar Legal Ltd.: second to none in the Far East

Dmitry Kafanov, the Senior Partner of Inmar Legal Ltd., on the firm being in the top of Pravo.ru-300 national rating.

11 of December, PrimaMedia. A high-profile awards ceremony for the top companies in the VII Pravo.ru-300 annual rating of Russian law firms was held on the 6th of December at the Ritz-Carlton hotel. Inmar Legal Ltd. of Vladivostok has been recognized as one of the best Russian law firms in the region in a number of categories. Here is Dmitry Kafanov, the Senior Partner of the leading law firm, giving his comments on the results of 2016 Pravo.ru-300 national rating for our reporter.

— Dmitry Aleksandrovich, which axes of Inmar's business were graded high by the nation-wide rating?

— This year there were as many as three main spheres of practice in our firm graded by the regional rating among the best performance. They are the arbitration practice, the practice in real estate and construction and in maritime law. I feel that it is our best result for all the years we've been regular participants in the rating.

In fact, looking at the results of the rating I am quite positive, though I wish I was not, that today we have no competition among law firms here, in the Far East, among firms that provide services of the same specialty profile.

— "No competition" – isn't that too daring to say? There are a lot of law firms in the Far East...

— This is true. I think, there are more than a hundred of companies offering various services in civil law in Vladivostok only. However, basing on uncompromising legality, transparency, application of best practices in law, on the principles of social activism and encouragement of people-oriented enterprises, on independence from whatever political powers or business corporations, our business model is a unique one for the local market, which gives us a strong advantage over our competition.

The business environment of the Far East has been drastically changing over recent years. The market has been increasingly procured by quality foreign investment that can and does have a beneficial effect on the region's development.

At the forefront there emerged an enterprise based on documented management principles, operating entirely within the legal boundaries, administered by young, highly professional and up-to-date management who are earnest to reject that not-in-a-good-way old-school of 'handling the business'.

All that requires that new approaches be found for both organization of the legal service business and market promotion of your services.

On the other hand, I regularly engage with representatives of leading law firms in Moscow and St. Petersburg and I have to admit that in some respects we come considerably inferior to our colleagues, and that there is so much we have to learn from them.

— You talk about the legality and transparency. But others might find the ‘business handling’ method quicker and more expedite.

— Sure, any business person may be tempted by the option of some informal solution to their issues. Just try surfing any local online ad site and you’ll find there plenty of offerings like guaranteed licenses of every kind, guaranteed win in any litigation, guaranteed registration for real estate and so on.

But the latest experience in criminal prosecution of unconscientious officers, as well as unscrupulous lawyers, as well as opportunistic entrepreneurs has shown, that business solutions outside the legal boundaries, with application of some corrupt schemes, merely create an illusion of settlement, but in fact they breed troubles much more grave than the original ones have ever been.

One will agree that it is hardly pleasant when someone, for instance, wants to register a piece of property avoiding all the statutory procedures, pays a considerable fortune for that only to lose one day the right to their belonging – just because either the officer has been caught up doing shady ventures, or the lawyers had used forged documents for the registration.

— As a firm awarded with a high grade in Pravo-300 rating for its arbitration practice, could you make an overall expert judgment about the work of the judiciary establishment in Russia?

— There was a time when we were one of the few Russian law firms that had favored an idea expressed by the Russian President that the Supreme Court of Arbitration be merged with the Supreme Court. While some of our colleagues were signing various petitions to save the Supreme Court of Arbitration – foreseeing an absolute judiciary collapse caused by such a merger, we repeatedly professed that we have to push forward to change the situation when the court is turned into some sort of a ‘commercial body to resolve disputes’, whose judgment often depends only on how much that or the other party ‘brings’. Experience has proven that said court merger had been a perfectly justified decision. Now the justice system is profoundly changing for the better.

Of course, we have times when strange – to say the least – legal judgments are reality. But our independence and complete legality gives us strong competitive edge in such seemingly stalemate situations.

Where some would try to keep it in ‘good terms’ with the judge, we are free to use every legal means to solve the issue – up to applying to the qualification board of judges.

Still, despite the systemic positive change in the judiciary, there are some tendencies in the court practice that are bound to raise a concern. First of all, by this I mean the pro-authority stand of courts in taxation and customs proceedings. In other words, it won’t matter how well one’s cause of action is justified: the likelihood of a judgment in favor of a taxpayer or an importer/exporter in such cases is rather low.

— In your opinion, will the next year be a successful one for the business providing legal services?

I have no reservations about the next year having vigorous economic growth in general and new prospects arising for the legal business – with all the special measures taken

by the government to support the development of the Far East, the introduction of original instruments to attract investments and the major changes in the legislation governing the fisheries. It is no incident that the September Eastern Economic Forum was joined by representatives from virtually every major Russian law firm, and they made no secret about them being interested in our region – as in one among those having the most potential for business development.

FYI: The Pravo.ru-300 rating is produced by a reputable law media of Pravo.ru. For the 7 years of its existence the rating has grown into a large-scale research that reflects the development of businesses and tendencies of the market. The main mission of Pravo.ru-300 is to promote transparency of the Russian legal services market. It is already several years that it has served as a guide for vessels and clients.