

# Broadening our partnership with Celestica

London Partner Ashley Ballard talks about our growing relationship with Celestica.



## CLIENT SIDE

## Broadening our partnership with Celestica

**O**ur client partnership with multi-national design, manufacturing and supply chain solutions company Celestica has flourished and broadened in recent years, showing the value of growing relationships and trust.

As our video with Celestica Chief Legal Officer Robert (Rob) Ellis illustrates, the client greatly values the Firm's global depth of expertise and its ability to quickly form the best cross-border teams.

London Partner Ashley Ballard explains: "Celestica was the first client I worked with when I joined the Firm in 1998.

"Celestica was formed from the spin-off of IBM's manufacturing and assembly division in 1996 and listed on the New York and Toronto exchanges. We worked with them in Europe on numerous transactions as they diversified and acquired businesses across the continent.

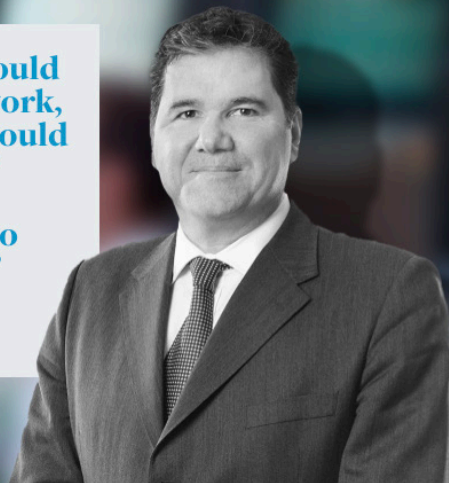
"Over the years, we built a strong relationship with then general counsel Betty DelBianco, who saw us as her preferred counsel for European transactions, but she had similar strong relationships with other firms elsewhere.

"As it became less attractive to manufacture in Europe, the European transactional work has decreased over the last decade, but we maintained a strong relationship with the broader Celestica legal team until the GC retired and her deputy, Rob Ellis succeeded her in the GC role at the end of 2020."

A change in leadership at the top could have been a challenge to the relationship, but it has led to a new, exciting chapter.

**"I was confident we would retain the European work, but he confirmed he would be open to a change of counsel elsewhere, which was testimony to the trust he had in us."**

ASHLEY BALLARD,  
PARTNER, LONDON



Ashley says: "I knew Rob well from our daily work and from yearly face-to-face catchups in Toronto, so I reached out and, more in hope than expectation, asked if there was a possibility of them considering White & Case for their matters in the United States and Asia.

"I was confident we would retain the European work, but he confirmed he would be open to a change of counsel elsewhere, which was testimony to the trust he had in us.

"We then worked with the Firm's Global Director of Pricing Strategy Brian Dunlop to agree a global fee arrangement that included modest volume-based discounts, showing our aspirations to build our relationship with them globally."

This marked a new stage in the relationship. Last year, we represented Celestica on 10 transactions, including one M&A deal in the United States and two significant M&A deals in China. We also did litigation work for the client in the United States and Europe for the first time.

Ashley says: "We have broadened the relationship substantially with so many more partners involved, including Vivian Choi in Shanghai, Peiwen Chen in Hong Kong, Morgan Hollins in Houston and John Padro in New York.

"We expect this litigation work to increase as Celestica continues to transition into new sectors, such as defense, aerospace and healthcare and grows in the more litigious US marketplace."

One significant deal in 2021 was our representation of the client in its US\$306 million acquisition of design, engineering and manufacturing company, PCI Limited.

The deal was completed during lockdown and across multiple time zones and jurisdictions with the Firm providing around-the-clock service in the United States, Europe and Asia. We have over 40 fee earners working on the matter across eight offices.

---

**"We have  
broadened the  
relationship  
substantially  
with so many  
more partners  
involved."**

---

THE CLIENT EXPERIENCE

**A conversation with  
Celestica Chief Legal  
Officer Robert Ellis**

**A conversation with Celestica  
Chief Legal Officer Robert Ellis**





Ashley says: "Our global footprint was particularly vital because Celestica was unable to send its teams out to Asia for face-to-face negotiations due to the pandemic lockdown.

"That meant they relied on us to field a joined-up team that could deliver the local and international expertise they required 24/7.

"It reinforced to the new GC the advantages of using a single firm with global capabilities."

**"Celestica is active across the globe and, as we expand the relationship into new practice areas and geographies, I see the partnership deepening."**

The Firm also worked on its first M&A deal in the United States for Celestica in 2021 and on three US litigations, plus the aborted sale of a Chinese manufacturing facility.

Ashley says: "It's great to see the relationship go from strength to strength, which is reward for building trust with the client over many years.

"During that time, we've been careful to be open and honest. On several occasions, if a deal was too small for us or we did not have the correct resources, I would provide references for suitable firms, for instance on a couple of small acquisitions in Scotland and Austria.

"Also, though it might seem like a small thing, we have only needed to have one discussion about a bill during the whole relationship, which builds trust.

"Importantly, we have always stepped up and delivered the best of the Firm and that's something Rob comments on in the video."

Looking forward, Ashley is optimistic that the relationship will keep on growing.

He says: "Celestica is active across the globe and, as we expand the relationship into new practice areas and geographies, I see the partnership deepening.

"That will only happen if we stay close to them and continue to deliver a joined-up experience that delivers the best the Firm can offer."



## Celestica fact file



Celestica was founded in 1994 but its heritage spans 75 years



The company recorded revenues of US\$5.6 billion in 2021



Celestica's values are teamwork, ingenuity, confidence and care



23,000 employees worked for Celestica in 2021



It is headquartered in Toronto, Canada