

BEER EXPERTS WANTED

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Mahou San Miguel's head of legal international Pablo García-Murga wants to use law firms that are proactive, with high ethical standards, and a detailed understanding of the drinks industry.



Are you an expert on beer? When **Pablo García-Murga** (pictured), head of legal international at Spanish brewer Mahou San Miguel, is looking for external legal advisers, what he really wants are lawyers that have an in-depth understanding of the company's business. And Mahou San Miguel's business is beer. It is Spain's largest brewer and is responsible for more than a third (34 per cent) of the country's beer production. Meanwhile, Mahou San Miguel also accounts for 70 per cent of the Spanish-produced beer consumed worldwide. In total, the company exports its beers to more than 70 countries – it has 45 brands and 76 product varieties. When selecting external law firms, "fundamentally, specialisation is the added value," says García-Murga. "We sometimes

face operations, or have other needs, that require external counsel and are outside our day-to-day remit, so we count on the expertise of external law firms to provide specific support." What impresses García-Murga most is law firms that are "client-oriented" and who have a detailed understanding of the beverages sector. He argues that such expertise will mean that the firm in question will be able to identify any potential problem Mahou San Miguel has more speedily, and they will also be able to come with more creative, and more efficient, solutions to any such problems. García-Murga also demands that the solutions offered should be focussed on "generating value" for the business.

BE PROACTIVE

The fact that beer is so popular means that Mahou San Miguel – as the producer of mass-consumer products – needs its lawyers to have a particular type of industry expertise. "Knowledge of our business, and of the mass-consumption sector that is the beer industry, is fundamental," García-Murga explains. "There are a series of important factors that come into play, such as distribution, vertical relationships within the value chain, branding and marketing, for example". For any lawyers looking to win beverage industry clients, and therefore seeking to increase their knowledge of the industry, here is some of the latest business information from Mahou San Miguel. In February, the company launched its first 'craft beer', the Mahou Cinco Estrellas Session IPA, its first India Pale Ale-type brew. One of the reasons behind the launch was that craft beer is the fastest growing segment in Spain's beer industry – it grew by 36 per cent in 2017, according to Madrid-based DBK Informa. In addition to being able to draw on extensive industry knowledge, what else should law firms offer in order to maximise their chances of winning Mahou San Miguel as a client? Being proactive is an important quality that the company looks for in its legal advisers. "External law firms also add value by providing innovative solutions, getting ahead of a problem, and being proactive in their counselling of the client while demonstrating flexibility and an in-depth knowledge of the reality in which the company operates," García-Murga says.

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