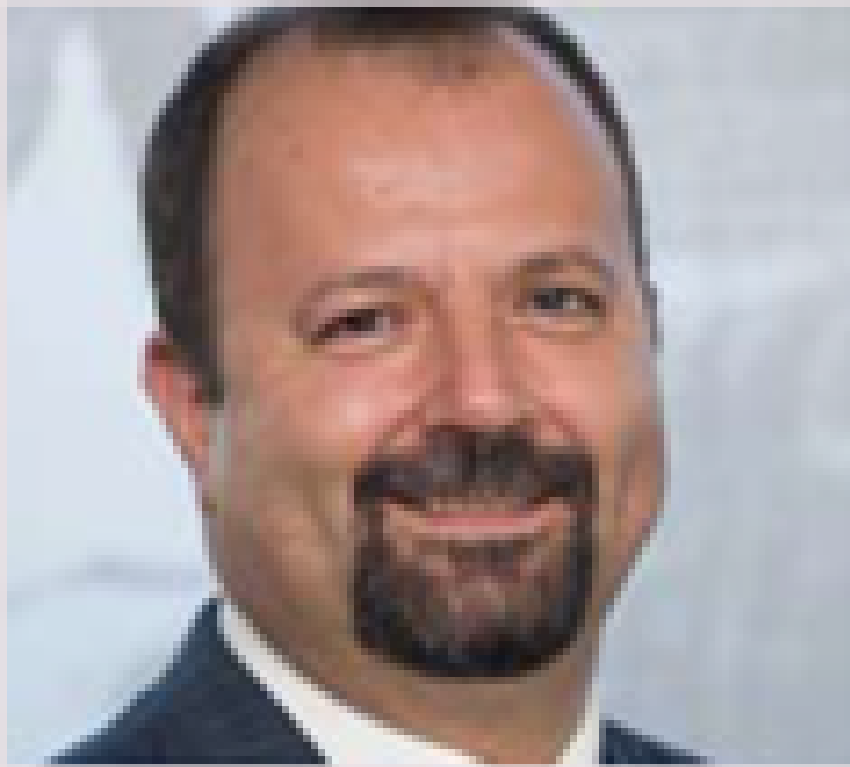


CONSISTENCY IN SERVICE PROVISION IS CRUCIAL - VDA

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It is vital that clients receive the same level of service from their legal advisers regardless of the jurisdiction in which they are working, says João Afonso Fialho, partner at Vieira de Almeida in Lisbon.

"In a global world, you cannot say to a client that you are just a local firm," he adds. "The best clients are global and so lawyers should be." Consequently, Afonso Fialho says that, along with replicating knowledge and know-how in different jurisdictions, law firms need to ensure that, regardless of geography, clients' service expectations are met.

"There is no such thing as a patient client," he says. "The meaning of time may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but clients' conception of time is usually unchangeable – that's why effective and timely delivery of service is not only a challenge, it is probably the biggest challenge." Afonso Fialho adds: "Clients expect to take their relationship with you everywhere they go – what used to be preliminary advice on projects or operations is now long-term, permanent and detailed counselling." As a result, it is important that law firms put money and effort into ensuring they have the capacity to provide a seamless service to clients regardless of the jurisdiction, says Afonso Fialho. "Distinct environments call for different solutions but with a common denominator, that being, adopting the

same best international practices and principles," he explains. But while using the appropriate IT and adopting uniform processes – in addition to investing in team building and training – go some way towards meeting client expectations, Afonso Fialho says one of the key requirements is giving service delivery the level of priority it deserves. He continues: "If mitigating professional risk is a full-time job in an international practice, the same should apply to delivery."