



Seeking Good Fortune With Mandarin Monikers

These lawyers reach out to Chinese clients with new names and cultural training

By Lisa Holton

Tim Bancroft's Mandarin name—translated into English—is "Transcontinental Sailing." Why? He likes conducting international business and loves sailing. Dan Avery's is "Sincere and Helpful" because that's the way his co-workers see him. They both work for a law firm with a new Chinese name that translates as "Taking Care of Our Worldwide Clients at Our Peak Capacity."

That firm is better known as the Boston-based Goulston & Storrs, which has represented middle-market companies for nearly 100 years and started doing business in China in 1998.

Goulston & Storrs has achieved the unusual. It's a midsize, business-oriented firm based in New England while most of the leading law firms serving the Asia market are large ones based on the West Coast. It also has achieved that success without a satellite office in Asia, though it plans to open one this year in Shanghai or Beijing.

This year, Goulston & Storrs decided to mix it up some more with an unusual marketing strategy. With assistance from a Chinese-born associate who has practiced law in Shanghai, the firm gave Chinese names to the 10 attorneys who make up the China practice.

The lawyers also have undergone cultural training in a discipline known as "guanxi," the Mandarin term for correct behavior in Chinese business dealings. It addresses everything from proper seating and dress at meetings to the number and correct wording of toasts that should be given afterward at dinner.

The [Web pages](#) for Goulston & Storrs' China group and each of its seven attorneys have a button with Chinese characters that clicks to a Mandarin translation of the page.

Lucia Lian, the Chinese-born associate who devised the names for the firm, says the approach is not a marketing gimmick. "Many international law firms have been doing business over there for years, and they've never managed to pick up a meaningful Chinese name," says Lian, who is based in Boston. "It is important because it represents a direct effort to understand Chinese culture and practices. They remember us because we've made that effort."

Adds Bancroft, a director of the firm, "We're not Westerners pretending to be Chinese. We want to respect the culture and show we're always willing to learn something new about it."

Goulston & Storrs marketing director Theresa Bomba acknowledges that the firm's effort might be seen as a marketing stunt here in the states. But she says it is similar to the way American immigrants give themselves Western names to fit in better.

For the past eight years, Goulston & Storrs has worked with Chinese-based companies that

want to do business here in the retail, technology, finance, life sciences, real estate and hospitality industries. The firm has also represented U.S. companies that have operated primarily with China-based partners and are ready to make the transition to operating their own facilities over there.

Legal marketing consultant Larry Bodine says the kind of high-profile marketing tactics used by Goulston & Storrs can work for other firms as long as they have the depth to produce results for both U.S. and Chinese clients.

"China has one of the most Byzantine and complex business structures on the planet," says Bodine of Glen Ellyn, Ill. He calls the Chinese names "a cute gimmick that gets people in the door," but says lawyers still "have to prove themselves as problem-solvers or moneymakers for their clients. I wish them the Chinese character for 'good luck!' "

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