

# A True Partnership

An Interview with Neil J. Oxford, Chair, Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP

**EDITORS' NOTE** Neil Oxford is the chair of Hughes Hubbard & Reed and a partner in the firm's Litigation department. Oxford focuses his practice on complex commercial litigation and disputes and internal investigations. He has practiced in both the United Kingdom and the United States and represents U.S. and non-U.S. clients in a broad range of civil litigation and regulatory matters, including commercial disputes, international arbitration, anti-corruption investigations and compliance matters. Oxford has significant experience in complex cross-border litigation, including the representation of sovereigns in significant fraud cases. Oxford's current representations include the Danish tax authority as plaintiff in efforts to recover proceeds of a \$2 billion fraud. Prior to joining Hughes Hubbard & Reed in 2001, he qualified as a solicitor in Scotland and practiced commercial litigation at Maclay Murray & Spens LLP in Glasgow. Oxford earned an LL.M. with First Class Honors from the University of Cambridge and an LL.B. with First Class Honors from the University of Aberdeen.



Neil J. Oxford

*world as quickly as possible. Today, Hughes Hubbard strikes a balance between scale and agility, allowing it to tackle its clients' largest and most complex matters while adapting to an ever-changing market. The firm prides itself on fostering a collaborative environment within its teams and across its practices and offices, as well as with its clients and other law firms. Hughes Hubbard's long-held dedication to inclusion and pro bono makes its lawyers better and enhances creative problem solving.*

## How do you describe Hughes Hubbard & Reed's culture and values?

Hughes Hubbard is a firm that balances tradition with progress. We have a storied legacy rooted in principled advocacy, landmark cases, and a reputation for integrity that spans more than a century. What defines us today is our forward-looking mindset and our deep commitment to doing the hard work the right way. There's a quiet confidence here. People turn to us when the stakes are high, and the path forward isn't obvious; our prior results speak for themselves and attract new clients. Our culture is built on intellectual rigor, mutual respect, and a preference for collaboration over competition – but when swords must be drawn, we're ready to fight.

We value substance over flash. Our lawyers are sharp, strategic, and unafraid to take on complexity. Many of us have spent our entire careers here, with occasional breaks for government service, and have been trained since day

one in how to find creative solutions to our clients' most complex problems. And we find ourselves attracting like-minded talent when partners in other firms see how we practice, and they want to be a part of something that is rather unusual today.

We are also deeply committed to the idea of stewardship – of our profession, our firm, and our broader community. Our values show in our pro bono work, our mentorship of younger lawyers, and the high standards we set for ourselves every day. Hughes Hubbard has been around for more than a century not because we chase trends, but because we remain true to what matters: doing great work for great clients, in a way that earns trust, builds relationships, and leaves the firm stronger for the next generation.

## What has led to Hughes Hubbard & Reed's industry leadership and how do you define the Hughes Hubbard difference?

Industry leadership isn't something you can proclaim, it's something you earn, matter by matter, year after year. At Hughes Hubbard, it comes down to three things: trust, tenacity, and an unwavering focus on getting it right. We don't have hundreds of partners or thousands of lawyers. That's a deliberate choice. When other firms chase scale and volume, we prefer a true partnership, one where we all actually know each other really well. This breeds better collaboration and even better results for our clients. While many firms talk about service, we live it, with a level of responsiveness and personal investment that our clients remember long after the matter is resolved. When you hire Hughes Hubbard partners, they are on top of

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your matters from start to finish. You will not be handed off to large armies of associates to run up your bill.

More broadly, the HHR difference lies in how we practice: with independence, agility, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. None of our partners practice in one niche area day in, day out. Not only does that make our professional lives vastly more interesting, but it also gives us a much broader base of experience from which to advise our clients. We don't pretend to do everything, but we're a go-to firm in areas where precision and sophistication matter. Our practices are laser focused on Finance, M&A, Litigation, Corporate Restructuring & Bankruptcy, International Arbitration, and Investigations – across industries. Whether advising global airlines on high-profile restructurings and financings, major corporations in their M&A deals, helping collectors, museums, and foundations navigate the intricate world of Art Law, or serving as trusted advisors to high-net-worth individuals and families through our Private Client practice – these are spaces where reputation is earned over decades, and we're proud to be recognized leaders in each.

One other major difference is that, despite having only one office outside the U.S., the vast majority of the work we do is cross-border. We are able to do this because we have longstanding relationships with the best independent firms in every jurisdiction, and we pick the right lawyer for each specific matter. That avoids the problem other firms experience of having to use the lawyer in the Warsaw office for tax advice when she may actually be a real estate lawyer. Said another way, we invest in people and relationships, not bricks and mortar. Ultimately, it's our people who set us apart: lawyers and professionals who combine intellectual firepower with integrity and a genuine commitment to helping our clients, and each other, succeed. Our clients actually enjoy the company of our lawyers, whether together in the trenches of a deal or litigation or catching up over lunch.

**How important is it for you to still practice law in addition to serving as Chair?**

It's essential. Practicing law keeps me grounded in the realities our clients face and connected to the day-to-day work that defines who we are as a firm. Leadership from a distance isn't my style. I believe you lead best when

you're in the trenches with your colleagues, navigating challenges and solving problems side by side. Being active in the practice allows me to make better decisions as Chair. I see firsthand how our teams operate, where we're excelling, and where we can grow. It also reinforces the culture I want to preserve: one that values excellence, responsiveness, and integrity in every engagement. And candidly, I still love the practice of law. The intellectual challenge, the strategy, and the relationships are what drew me to this profession in the first place. Serving as Chair is an honor, but being a lawyer is the foundation of it all.

**Will you highlight Hughes Hubbard & Reed's focus on fostering an inclusive work environment?**

At Hughes Hubbard, inclusion isn't a trend – it's been part of who we are for generations. Long before diversity became a focus across the legal industry, we were building a firm that worked across borders, languages, and perspectives. We carry on the legacy of our founder, Charles Evans Hughes, an eventual Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court and notable proponent of women's suffrage, whose most famous quote is displayed prominently over our entry reception desk: “When we lose the right to be different, we lose the privilege to be free.”

Hughes Hubbard was the first national law firm to elevate a Black woman to partner, the Hon. Amalya Kearse in 1968, who was also the first woman to be elected to the American College of Trial Lawyers. The next woman to be made a Hughes Hubbard partner, Candace Beinecke, eventually became the first woman to lead a national law firm when she was named the Chair of Hughes Hubbard in 1999. We've always believed that the best legal thinking comes from bringing different voices to the table. Whether it's cultural, professional, or experiential diversity, we know it leads to sharper insights and better outcomes.

Inclusion here isn't just about programs or metrics – it's about instinctively seeking out and valuing different viewpoints, because that's what strengthens us. You'll see that in the way we build our teams, the matters we take on, and the way we support one another. It's not about checking boxes – it's about building a community that reflects the world we operate in. And for Hughes Hubbard, that's always been second nature.

**What has made public service and pro bono work such a part of the firm's culture?**

Public service is woven into the DNA of Hughes Hubbard. It goes back to our founding and to generations of lawyers here who believed that the law is not just a business, but a profession with a responsibility to serve the greater good. For example, in New York we have served as primary litigation counsel for the New York Blood Center for nearly 30 years, successfully defending the organization against personal injury and liability claims and protecting a community institution that plays a vital role in public health throughout the region.

That belief has endured because it's never been performative for us. Our lawyers take on pro bono matters with the same commitment and rigor they bring to our largest corporate clients. Whether it's advocating for the underserved, defending civil liberties, or supporting humanitarian causes, this work gives meaning and balance to what we do. We also know that public service strengthens our firm. It attracts lawyers who want to practice with purpose. It deepens our skills and broadens our perspectives. And it reinforces the values we stand for: integrity, courage, and a belief that we owe it to our communities. In a world where so many things change quickly, that part of our culture hasn't – and won't. We're proud of that.

**What advice do you offer to young people interested in pursuing a career in the legal profession?**

First, know your “why.” Law is demanding – intellectually, emotionally, and often personally. If you understand what drives you, whether it's solving complex problems, advocating for others, or shaping the world around you, that purpose will keep you grounded through the inevitable long days and difficult matters. Second, be curious. The best lawyers aren't just smart, they're students of everything: business, people, strategy, history. The more you understand the world, the more effective you'll be in helping clients navigate it. Third, remember that integrity is non-negotiable. Reputation is built over decades and lost in seconds. Your word, your ethics, and how you treat others are the things that will define your career far more than any single matter or client. And finally, surround yourself with people who challenge and support you. No one succeeds alone. Find mentors, invest in relationships, and seek out places – like Hughes Hubbard – where collaboration is a value, not a buzzword. ●