



Investigations & White-Collar Crime



VINCENT DESRY

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PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY

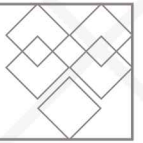
Vincent Desry is a partner in Cohen & Gresser's Paris office whose practice spans white-collar criminal law, general criminal law, and civil and commercial litigation, with particular strength in cross-border matters. He advises corporations, executives and public figures in complex political-financial and business cases, including fraud, money laundering, bribery, tax fraud and misuse of assets. He has acted in several landmark French criminal cases, including as trial counsel for former President Nicolas Sarkozy in the *Bygmalion* case. Recognised by The Legal 500, Lawdragon and Law360, he is regarded as a rising leader in white-collar defence.

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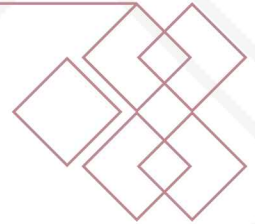


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Q&A WITH VINCENT DESRY



What standout moments in your career have significantly shaped your professional journey?

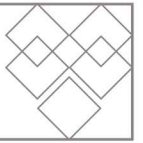
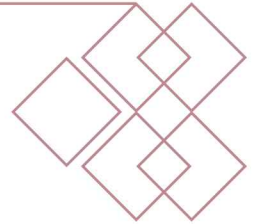
◆ Two years ago, former French President Nicolas Sarkozy appointed me as his sole lawyer for the appeal in the *Bygmalion* case, after he was convicted by first instance courts for exceeding legal election spending limits during his 2012 campaign. President Sarkozy's decision to change his defence team occurred after having seen me plead in the interest of his co-defendant in another trial. In the months leading up to this appeal hearing, I devoted myself entirely to the cause. I knew every line of the case file. Age is irrelevant. What matters is knowledge of the file and the implementation of a strategy. During the *Bygmalion* case, I was the youngest lawyer in the courtroom. At the end of the one-month appeal hearing alone, the Court of Appeal reduced President Sarkozy's sentence by half. This case is now pending before the French Supreme Court.

Could you describe your approach to tackling complex legal challenges? What principles or philosophies guide your work?

◆ The cases I am usually called upon to handle are often complex in nature or involve longstanding proceedings. These cases are complex either because of the subject matter they concern, their age, or the issues they raise. While it is necessary to understand these cases in all their complexity, the role of the lawyer is to simplify them – not in order to obscure the difficulties, but to be able to offer the courts a better understanding, and as a result a better resolution. In my view – and this was the vision of my mentor Hervé Temime, with whom I worked for eight years – it is by proposing a solution that can be simply stated that cases can be won. However, I will not hide this from you: finding this simple solution very often requires a lot of work, time and creativity.

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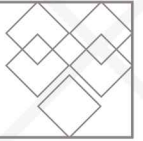
**What are your predictions for the future of your legal specialty? How do you see your vocation evolving over the next few years?**

◆ French criminal law has always been inspired by American criminal law – with a 10-year delay – which is the reason why I specifically wanted to complete my studies with a master of laws at NYU School of Law and passed the New York bar. As a result, I am admitted to practice before both New York state and French courts. Today, French criminal business law is much stricter than it was 10 years ago. Investigative resources have increased, courts have become more specialised and the risks, particularly financial ones, are even greater; confiscations and damages are added to fines and prison sentences. Precisely because this balance of power has evolved, French white-collar criminal lawyers must no longer simply defend their clients in court but must also work alongside them internally – before any difficulties arise – and, when it serves their clients’ interests, engage proactively with prosecuting authorities to mitigate risk. ■

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**REPRESENTATIVE ENGAGEMENTS**

- ◆ Represented former French President Nicolas Sarkozy as sole trial counsel in the high-profile *Bygmalion* appeal, reworking the defence strategy and presenting a new constitutional argument. Although the conviction was upheld, the sentence was reduced by half, and the case is now pending before the French Supreme Court.
- ◆ Co-represented an African political figure in a widely covered bribery trial. The defence successfully argued the alleged conduct did not constitute an offence for foreign public officials, securing a full acquittal.
- ◆ Defended a Russian businessman against enforcement in France of Russian judgments totalling over €100m. Successfully led French courts to reject both criminal forfeiture and civil rulings, a landmark victory upheld on appeal.
- ◆ Secured the recusal of an investigating judge and transfer of venue to Paris in a sensitive rape investigation involving a French actor, ensuring greater impartiality and fairness in the proceedings.

