



Borel & Barbey: balancing future and tradition

Managing partner Luca Bozzo discusses the firm's identity, as well as the challenges and ambitions shaping its trajectory

by flavio caci

Amongst Switzerland's most distinctive characteristics, there's the fact that each major city hosts a unique business ecosystem, providing different access points to international routes. The case of Borel & Barbey, a firm based solely in Geneva since 1907, yet active internationally, is a concrete personification of that trait. Once an associate and partner at the firm, since January 2025 **Luca Bozzo** has joined Borel & Barbey's managing partnership lineup. "More pressure, more responsibilities, more support to other partners" – that's what changed for him at first glance. Beyond those aspects though, there's much more to discover.

You're the third and latest appointed managing partner at the firm. Could you please tell us which aspects are shared between the three of you and which are specific to your work?

We work together on most tasks, so there is no *a priori* or specifically defined allocation of responsibilities. My two co-managing partners are **Marc Fischer** and **Nicolas Killen**, who both go back a long time in the role. Our responsibilities are somehow in continuity of what we previously experienced throughout our careers.

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As the newest managing partner, I am the one promoting different perspectives and pushing for changes, but also the one with the least experience. On that note, our firm never considered disruption as something necessary, yet we do our very best to always adapt and evolve. Over the last 20 years, we have managed to stay upon all standards. We do embrace progress and technological advances but not blindly or for the sake of following trends.



BOREL & BARBEY'S OFFICES IN GENEVA

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Borel & Barbey is synonymous with Geneva: what unique and specific opportunities does this city create for a law firm? What limits, if any, are posed by it?

We are indeed deeply rooted in Geneva, a small city, but full of potential. Here, we do have access to a wealth of interesting cooperation opportunities, as well as a concentration of promising individuals. Of course, with that comes along quite intense competition. Now, how do we handle this? First and foremost, we always try to work with our specialists in the different fields to assist and advise our clients - companies and individuals. When advising on matters with a wider or international dimension, which is often the case, we partner with other firms based in Switzerland or abroad. The fact that our physical presence is strictly limited to Geneva provides us with a distinct advantage: it grants us complete

freedom in choosing the specialists we collaborate with. We're not tied to any larger structure or firm that might impose specific choices on us. This independence is a deliberate decision on our part.

Based on this model, it seems like lateral hires for the partnership would not fit the firm's wider strategic approach, is that the case?

That's correct: while we don't typically consider lateral hires for partnership positions, we do engage in lateral hiring for certain senior roles. In such cases, advancement to partnership remains contingent on the lawyer demonstrating strong technical expertise, substantial experience, and importantly, exceptional interpersonal and leadership skills.

Speaking of the next generation at the firm, are you seeing any peculiar shift in mentality among your younger associates?

The new generation is often described as problematic, because, as a matter of principle, more concerned about work-life balance. While I think it is a clear trend, at Borel & Barbey we don't see it as a negative one. 30 years ago there were just no limits: if you wanted to be a lawyer - so they said - the first five to seven years of your career, you had to sacrifice your private life. That's clearly something that the new generation does not accept anymore. Notwithstanding such change, we can definitely say there's no shortage of capable and skilled young lawyers out there.

LUCA BOZZO'S PROFESSIONAL TIMELINE

Since 2025: Managing Partner at Borel & Barbey

• **2015-2024:** Partner at Borel & Barbey

• **2011-2014:** Associate at Borel & Barbey

• **2007-2010:** Associate at Lenz & Staehelin Zurich

• **2007:** Geneva Bar

• **2004-2007:** Trainee lawyer at Lenz & Staehelin Geneva

• **2003:** Master of Law (MLaw), bilingual French-German, Universities of Fribourg & Zurich

You transitioned to managing partnership in 2025, amid a moment of economic instability. Has that impacted any of your strategic decisions for the firm?

As a partnership, we have never evolved based on trends. When we decide to allocate more resources to a certain department, it means we have strong feeling and data showing the need for that change. We do tend to make these decisions more carefully than some of our competitors. So while we might not capture the same immediate value from positive trends, we will also take on fewer risks in case of a downturn. As a consequence, our business model won't "explode" upwards in case of an excessively good economic environment, though we would certainly benefit from it nonetheless. That's also true on the flip side of the coin, when we can better absorb an economic downturn. We prefer to grow organically and conservatively, avoiding trends that we don't believe represent lasting developments.

Throughout your career, you supported companies of all sizes and typologies. To what extent do you rely on versatility as a tool to navigate the responsibilities of a managing partner?

Just like my fellow managing partners, I had the luck to be in very close contact with bright and skilled clients and to participate in a lot of business ventures. I do believe that this is helpful, however the most important aspect of that experience is the personal and human side, even more than the technical one. For sure, having the opportunity to work on different business transactions and evolve in a business environment gives you a certain degree of flexibility.

Borel & Barbey was founded in 1907. How do you ensure that the firm's original values are maintained while still being up to date with the market's evolution?

Over the last 20 years, we have undergone a major shift towards a more technical approach. Today, lawyers must be specialised, there's no way around it. As a firm, we've done our very best to embrace this change without detaching from our clients' interests. 📱



LUCA BOZZO