

## Venture Capital Law Firm of the Year in Switzerland



### Deschenaux, Hornblower & Associés

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**The founder of Deschenaux, Hornblower & Associés, Marc René François Deschenaux, began his professional career as a software developer writing trading applications for commodities and securities. He wrote a small piece of software called "Autoarbitrage" which continuously scanned various securities and commodities prices to identify profitable arbitrage opportunities. At a time when computerised trading was essentially unheard of, the program provided a huge advantage in terms of trade identification. The program was capable of helping its user identify a profitable trade up to 105 minutes before conventional traders could reach the same conclusion.**

After being promoted from being a software developer to trader trainee, Mr Deschenaux rose through the trading ranks at breakneck speed. Because of the program he had devised, Mr Deschenaux became a successful broker at 19, a successful trader at 20, and head of trading at 22. His meteoric rise was too much to take for the old-school senior traders, who regarded Mr Deschenaux as merely a computer whiz. As a result of this dissension in the ranks, Mr Deschenaux was transferred to the "Special Operations Department" where all kinds of complex transactions took place from correcting a mishandled trade to handling countertrading transactions.

Mr Deschenaux began studying law in 1987 at the University of Geneva. He quickly realised however that the University did not offer the training he sought to become a business lawyer. The program's focus was in public and constitutional law and catered to the needs of aspiring barristers. Instead of continuing at the University of Geneva, he began his studies in England, also taking advantage of various distance learning opportunities at universities in the United States and United Kingdom.

When he founded CD World in 1995, Mr Deschenaux understood that his group needed a legal department. While it was not named "Deschenaux & Partners" at that time, these lawyers, namely Philippe Gobet, esquire, today a lawyer at the Geneva bar, Guzman Fernandez, esquire, formerly a lawyer at the Geneva bar, Thierry Luc, formerly a lawyer in Belgium, and Alexandre Gnatowski-Swirski, a legal advisor, were the first legal team part of the Deschenaux group of companies.

In February 2000, after leaving CD World to create Investraders, Marc Deschenaux recreated a legal team, rehiring Thierry Luc and adding to the internal team

Robert Wexler, a US tax attorney. As an external team, Mr Deschenaux hired Schwab, Flaherty & Associés, a Geneva law firm.

In 2005, Marc Deschenaux opened a private non-bar law firm, first named "Marc Deschenaux – Non-Bar Law Firm" and later named "Marc Deschenaux & Associés – Non-Bar Law Firm," which was the predecessor in law to Deschenaux & Partners. He was acting as a legal advisor for various clients, including Biomind, Air Industries, Rosetel and many others.

During the same period, Marc Deschenaux sought to join Schwab, Flaherty & Associés. It was agreed with their founding partner, Alexandre Schwab, esquire, that Marc Deschenaux's foreign qualifications were not sufficient to join the law firm despite more than 20 years' experience in contracts and corporate laws. He was required obtain Swiss law diplomas in order to qualify as an employee of the Schwab, Flaherty & Associés law firm.

So Marc Deschenaux passed the Bachelor of Laws Degree at the University of Geneva in 2008. Upon his graduation, Marc Deschenaux joined Schwab, Flaherty & Associés law firm directly with an "of counsel" status due to his long business and financial law experience. Despite his hiring, Marc Deschenaux continued his law studies and received the Certificate of Transnational Law in 2009 and the Master of Laws in Economy in 2010, while maintaining his activity as a legal advisor at Schwab, Flaherty & Associés. In May 2010, Marc Deschenaux left Schwab, Flaherty & Associés to dissociate his growing financial activity from this law firm.

Marc Deschenaux established, shared offices and collaborated with Claude Haegi, who had been Mayor of Geneva

and President of the State Council of Geneva at Rue de l'Arquebuse, 12. In the summer 2009 he hired Danusha Harshane Silva, Sarah Asper and other law faculty colleagues and built the foundations of the current firm.

Olga Bozek joined the firm early 2011 as an intern and quickly became partner. In August 2012, shortly after her wedding, she left. In January 2012, Marc Deschenaux teamed up with Zeina Wakim, esquire, a Geneva attorney and UK solicitor and moved the firm to Rue du Rhône 86, in the MIF multifamily offices run by the Wakim family. He hired Inna Kempf, Nadia Pascal and later, Gael Collin.

In January 2013, Deschenaux & Partners had grown too large and moved to Rue de Lausanne, 42. In 2013, Michael Horner, an engineer and analyst joined the firm as a partner. He is currently in charge of the strategy of the firm. In September 2014, now settled in new offices located in Geneva, Rue Rothschild 50, Marc Deschenaux teamed up with two young partners, Luke Hornblower and Julien Machuca.

In January 2015, Frédéric Gross joined the team which is now made up of five partners. DH&P recruited Mr Gross from Swiss Investment House, Inc. (SIH) to add financial and analytical expertise of the team and advise clients at the pre-IPO and IPO stages of financing. In parallel, SIH remains active for the distribution of private offerings.