

Rising Star: Morgan Lewis' Michael King

By **Ian Thoms**

Law360, New York (March 23, 2011) -- In a career spanning just over a decade, Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP partner Michael R. King has already earned a reputation as a go-to attorney in the oil and gas field, helping companies like ConocoPhillips Co. and BG Group PLC ink billion-dollar deals, just some of the accomplishments that earned him a spot on Law360's list of five energy lawyers under 40 to watch.

King, 38, and based in Houston, grew up in an oil and gas family. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather all worked in the industry. So when it came time to pick a practice area out of law school in 2000, King went with what he knew best — energy — and soon found himself in the middle of a booming industry.

"That was the time the dot-com boom was going on, and many law students were interested in doing venture capital and securities work," King said. "Nobody wanted to do oil and gas work. I would like to say that I was being contrarian by design and I was able to see the energy boom that took place coming, but that's not really the case."

King's decision to go with oil and gas, as well as his background, made him a valuable commodity coming out of the University of Texas School of Law, according to David Asmus, the head of Morgan Lewis' energy transactions practice. Asmus hired King as an associate at Baker Botts LLP back in 2000. The pair joined Morgan Lewis in 2009.

"Mike has been a sought-after lawyer since he was in law school," Asmus said. "We had a three-way battle with two other law firms to get him in the door as a first-year lawyer."

Asmus said firms liked that King had already worked as a professional engineer. It gave him a maturity they didn't see in other candidates.

"Unlike some who came out of law school during that period, Mike did not have an excessively glorified view of himself," Asmus said. "That was the era of the dot-com boom. There was a lot of opportunity for people coming out of school, and some of them were all too willing to let people know how wonderful they were."

After graduating from Baylor University in 1994, King wasn't ready to go right back to school. Instead, he opted to go to work for global engineering, construction and services company KBR Inc.

His degree in engineering and work for KBR has helped King grapple with some of the more technical language and complex mathematics involved in some of the deals on which he has worked.. "I understand the basics, so it's not absolute Greek to me," he said.

During his time with KBR, he traveled to Hungary, where the company was providing support to U.S. troops performing peacekeeping operations in the Balkans. The experience gave King a global perspective at an early age, he said, and made it easy to sign onto projects in Japan, Indonesia and Equatorial Guinea later in his career.

Asmus credited King's willingness to venture into unfamiliar territory — whether literally in the case of overseas projects or figuratively in the case of new types of oil and gas transactions — with greatly helping his career.

"From day one, he was able to walk in and deal with most any situation without being overwhelmed," Asmus said. "He's been willing to take chances. He's shown no hesitation to work on new projects."

Some of King's career highlights include his representation of ConocoPhillips in the sales of some of its oil and gas properties in the Texas Panhandle and Permian Basin, deals valued at more than \$700 million.

King represented BG Group in its acquisition of 50 percent of EXCO Resources Inc.'s upstream and midstream interests in eastern Texas and northern Louisiana. That deal was valued at \$1.2 billion.

He also represented Total E&P USA Inc. in its acquisition of 25 percent of Chesapeake Energy Corp.'s upstream Barnett Shale natural gas assets through a \$2.25 billion joint venture agreement.

To reach this point in his career, after practicing for just more than 10 years, King credits good luck, hard work and some dedicated mentors.

"It was the right place, right time to get into the business," King said. "It's also helped that as a young lawyer I got to work with some people who were experts in the field and took an interest in my career. I've also had great people working for me. And I've worked really hard."

--Editing by John Williams.