

Michael Hawkins

Chairman, ALFA International

While a partner at Cincinnati-based Dinsmore & Shohl for the past 12 years, and for many years before, Michael Hawkins devoted three decades to volunteer service overseas, participating in missions to Vietnam, Cambodia, Israel, Africa, and others. He also served six years on the National Board for the American Red Cross and is currently a board member of Refugees International, an advocacy association for displaced individuals in countries like Sudan and Ethiopia. "When you travel and see the deplorable circumstances that people are in, it's only natural to want to be involved," he says. "In fact, it's pretty hard to stay silent."

Now Hawkins's abiding interest in international humanitarian missions has led to his appointment as the new chairman of one of the largest networks of global independent law firms. In October 2007 he was named chairman of ALFA International, where he will be working to coordinate a membership of over 9,000 lawyers in 125 firms as well as continuing his labor

and employment law practice.

Like other legal networks, ALFA International offers training and education for attorneys and clients, along with periodic networking events like conferences or seminars. Members can participate in numerous practice groups: retail, health care, transportation, insurance, employment, and other practice areas.

Currently the organization has a roster of 85 domestic firms and 40 international, but that balance is changing. "We expect our international roster to grow, due to the strengthening economy in many areas of the world," says Hawkins. "Latin America and Asia are particularly strong areas right now."

The opportunity to network with peers on a worldwide scale is a significant benefit for many members,



and what members often cite as the most valuable membership resource. "Having a personal connection is a definite advantage when you look to consult with another attorney on behalf of a client," Hawkins says. "This is a very competitive marketplace, and you want to know your clients will be taken care of.

Something as simple as an unreturned phone call can cause problems, but that's less likely to happen when you already have a relationship with that outside contact." Hawkins says the networking opportunities at ALFA International can provide twofold solutions. "When we are able to meet, exchange ideas, and brainstorm with others, we get valuable insight into global challenges," he says. "This is the first step in finding desperately needed solutions." — Karen Dean