



## Michael H. Johnson

Shareholder

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With extensive experience in foreign direct investment, M&A, and international trade throughout the world, Michael Johnson counsels domestic and international public and private entities in a variety of legal areas across numerous industries.

Mr. Johnson chairs the Firm's Economic Development and Cross-Border Corporate Transactions practices where he leads a team of attorneys focused on inbound investment into the U.S., as well as domestic expansions of U.S. companies. He counsels domestic and international public and private entities in areas including cross-border transactions, foreign direct investment, international trade and market entry, and commercial and corporate law. He works with clients in advanced manufacturing industries, with a specific focus on automotive, aerospace, heavy and advanced manufacturing, and technology. In 2019, he carried out a secondment assignment in the inhouse legal department of a client and global aerospace leader in Bern, Switzerland.

Mr. Johnson has extensive experience in trade, investment and M&A projects in Europe, Latin America and Africa. He is the North American corporate counsel for numerous European, Latin American, and Asian entities in diverse manufacturing and service industries and is corporate counsel for several U.S.-based exporters. He has guided many entities in their initial market entry and establishment of manufacturing facilities and commercial operations in the U.S., from site selection, negotiation of incentives and tax abatements through launch of operations. His work for these companies includes corporate structuring, general commercial advisory services, corporate compliance, including anti-corruption and due diligence. Additionally, he provides Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) training for clients. As a polyglot fluent in French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Italian, and Catalan, his cross-border legal and cultural skills are critical in serving as a trusted advisor for domestic and international companies.

Mr. Johnson also worked for FIFA (the international governing body of football [soccer], based in Zurich, Switzerland) as a FIFA Media Officer in charge of venue media operations for the FIFA World Cup France (1998), Sydney Olympics (2000), FIFA Confederations Cup Korea – Japan (2001), FIFA World Cup Korea – Japan (2002), FIFA Women's World Cup USA (Head Media Officer, 2003), FIFA Confederations Cup Germany (2005), FIFA World Cup Germany (2006), FIFA U-20 World Cup Canada (2007) and the FIFA World Cup South Africa (2010).

Mr. Johnson also worked as an economic development practitioner for the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama from 1995 to 2001. He focused on the recruitment of foreign owned, inward-bound investment projects to the state of Alabama, and participated in local and state incentive negotiations, representation of the State in the U.S. and abroad, and trade and export initiatives.

Mr. Johnson has served as Honorary Consul of Germany in Alabama since 2011. He was previously Honorary Consul of Brazil for Alabama from 1995 to 2010.

## Representative Matters

### Economic Development and Foreign Direct Investments

- Consultant to the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations, the Brazilian Ministry of Planning, Management and Budget, Geneva-based United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for

economic development training, and the Ministry of Export, Innovation and Economic Development of Quebec.

- Advised a national-level food processor on multi-state site selection process for plant location.
- Negotiated and led the acquisition of a manufacturing facility for the graphite industry.
- Advised a German entity on the location of a \$35 million manufacturing facility in Texas, including site acquisition, incentives negotiation, construction and build-out of the plant.
- Advised an aerospace materials manufacturer on facility expansion projects in multi-year, multi-phase expansion of more than \$400 million in capital investment.
- Advised a large food processor on plant expansion projects in Louisiana and North Carolina, including state and local incentives negotiation, transportation analysis and infrastructure financing.
- Advised a German automotive supplier on the location of a \$200+ million manufacturing facility, including site acquisition, construction and build-out, commercial and corporate matters, and operational matters.

### **Corporate Transactions**

- Led negotiations and advised a Swedish aerospace sector manufacturer on a large-scale production and commercial agreement with a U.S.-based customer.
- Advised a Swiss defense-sector entity on an asset purchase and restructuring in the United States.
- Advised a Swiss space company on the location of a U.S. manufacturing plant and commercial operations.
- Led acquisition of a Brazilian entity for a multinational technology company.
- Led acquisition of a German medical technology company for a U.S.-based technology fund.
- Advised on numerous projects for U.S. and European clients in establishment of subsidiary entities and operations in Brazil, Mexico, Germany, and Peru.
- Advised an Italian manufacturer on the acquisition of a U.S.-based plant facility.
- Advised an Italian company on the sale of its U.S.-based subsidiary.
- Advised a U.S. company on the purchase of a UK-based manufacturing company.
- Outside legal counsel to numerous Brazilian manufacturing and service entities for operational matters in the United States.
- Advised a publicly traded Brazilian entity on the acquisition of a manufacturing facility in the U.S.
- Counsel to U.S. entities for public bid projects in Brazil.
- U.S. legal counsel for startup operations for European manufacturers.
- Counsel for expansion and consolidation of chemicals and materials manufacturing facilities to publicly traded entity.
- Conducted virtual training seminars on FCPA compliance for a global investment management firm.



### **Professional Honors & Activities**

- Recipient – AlabamaGermany Partnership (AGP) Rainer Bauer Award (2022)
- American Bar Association
- Alabama State Bar Association
  - Co-Chair, Spanish-Speaking Lawyers Committee (2008 – 2011)
- Birmingham Bar Association
- Economic Development Association of Alabama
- Alabama Automotive Manufacturers Association
- German American Chamber of Commerce
- Birmingham Rotary Club
- Alabama Germany Partnership
  - Board of Directors (2011 – present)
- Honorary Consul of Germany for Alabama (2011 – present)
- Honorary Consul of Brazil for Alabama (1995 – 2010)
- Brazilian American Chamber of Commerce (Atlanta)

- Board of Directors (2008 – 2014)
- Selected to the *Birmingham Business Journal's* 2024 Best of the Bar List
- Listed in *The Best Lawyers in America*® for Mergers and Acquisitions Law (2014 – 2023)
- Listed in *Birmingham Magazine* as a 2017 "Top International Law Attorney"



## Publications

- "Why You Need to Know the Three GEOs of FDI," *Area Development* (May 2024)
- "U.S. Attracting FDI From European Manufacturers," *Area Development* (August 2023)
- "How Bham Can Go Global," *Birmingham Business Journal* (December 2015)



## Speaking Engagements

- "Foreign Direct Investment and What the Future Holds for Electric Vehicles and Batteries," The Consultants Forum Executive Summit, organized by Area Development (November 2024)
- "Legal Aspects of Entering the United States Market," *amec* (March 2022)
- "Conversation with German Consul General Dr. Heike Fuller," Alabama Germany Partnership Webinar (October 2020)
- Panelist – "German Business Committee Panel Discussion on Issues Related to COVID-19 and its Business Impact," AlabamaGermany Partnership's virtual presentation (July 23, 2020)
- Panelist – Lunch & Learn with The Consulate General of Canada: Update on Multilateral Trade Negotiations (USMCA and EU), § 232 Investigations, § 301 Tariffs, and FIRRMA Implementation, Alabama Germany Partnership (October 2019)
- "German FDI and Trade in Alabama and the Southeast," German Foreign Office Consular Conference (November 2018)
- "Product Liability in the U.S.," International Chambers of Commerce (IHK), Mannheim, Germany (September 2018)
- Moderator – "Trade Policies and How They Affect SMEs: NAFTA, Tariffs and Other Trade Obstacles," German Mittelstand - Southern SME Forum, Birmingham, Alabama (April 2018)
- "Doing Business in the USA/Rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen für den erfolgreichen Markteintritt in den USA," Advantage Austria Webinar (October 2017)
- "Birmingham's 2017 International Trade Series," 2017 International Trade Series, Birmingham, Alabama (October 2017)
- "Foreign Language Acquisition in the U.S.: Better Late Than Never – Practical Benefits from a Practitioner's Perspective," Department of World Languages, Culture and Literature at the University of North Texas (November 2016)
- "Legal Issues with a Latin Flair," The North Alabama International Trade Association, Huntsville, Alabama (June 2016)
- "Legal Considerations When Entering the United States Market," Unione Industriale di Torino, Torino, Italy (June 2016)
- Panelist – "Brazil: What Next?," Nashville Chamber of Commerce's International Business Council Breakfast, Nashville, Tennessee (September 2015)
- "Doing Business in the Southeastern USA: Legal and Tax Implications," Brazilian-American Chamber of Commerce, Atlanta, Georgia (August 2013)
- "Entering the Brazilian Market: Legal, Tax and Regulatory Considerations," Export University's Exporting 201 & 301 seminars, Mississippi (February 23-24, 2011)



## Webinars

- Immigration Law: What Multinational Employers Need to Know Now (October 2020)
- U.S. & Germany: Strained Alliance? (August 2020)



## Education

- University of Miami, J.D., 1992
- University of Alabama, M.A., Romance Languages, 1989
- Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1988
- Samford University, B.A., International Relations and Spanish, 1987
- Pantheon-Sorbonne University (Université de Paris I), 1986



## Admissions

- Alabama, 1992
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit
- U.S. Bankruptcy Courts