

Rising Star: WilmerHale's Naboth van den Broek

By Drew Singer



Law360, New York (April 23, 2014, 1:34 PM ET) -- WilmerHale's Naboth van den Broek has so many sky miles he should be given a pilot's license, but he'll have to settle for a Law360 Rising Star award, thanks to his repertoire of legal work that spans practice areas as often as it does continents.

At 38-years-old, van den Broek is one of five international trade attorneys who has seen the most success under the age of 40, as determined by a panel of Law360 editors. Upon learning of the distinction, he told Law360 that the "international trade" aspect of his work is much bigger than the "attorney" part.

"I wanted to go into this field because I didn't want to be just a lawyer," he said. "What has always attracted me about international economic law — which is the broad definition of what we do — is a

combination of law, politics, business and economic interests. That combination, you don't see in that many other fields of law.

"We deal on a daily basis with some of the biggest international political issues out there, some of the most strategically and commercially important issues of companies," he added. "We use legal tools, but we also use policy tools that you have in parallel to that."

Roughly half of van den Broek's work involves disputes at the World Trade Organization, where he has worked at the panel, prepanel, appellate body and compliance stages. His client list, although largely confidential, includes several major governments and international corporations.

Outside of the WTO, he advised a coalition of western technology and energy companies including General Electric Co., Siemens AG and Philips on global trade, investment and intellectual property issues. Recently, his work with the coalition has focused on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, a possible trade initiative between the U.S. and European Union.

"For the trade and trade policy practice, I was happy we were able to achieve some important commercial goals for several of our clients in the TTIP negotiations," he said. "That's a big part of the practice, half of my practice is policy work, leveraging negotiations and contacts between governments

to achieve the commercial goals and market-opening goals of our clients.”

To meet those goals, van den Broek said he spends up to 30 hours per week on an airplane, which can put a strain on the traditional social life of someone still in his 30s.

“The travel is not always easy on personal life,” he said. “At the same time, when your own background is very international, which it is in my case, personal life happens in a lot of places around the world.”

Van den Broek said his travel strategy includes bringing a fully-charged iPad on his flights, so he can follow current events.

“Particularly in an area like this, which requires fairly broad knowledge and a sense of what's going on in the world, it's important to read not just the things narrowly relevant to your field of law, but also to be aware of how people think in different places,” he said. “There's a cultural aspect to this type of international work as well.”

Van den Broek also won the annual Law360 distinction in 2010 for representing a foreign government in a dispute over Chinese policies designed to support the country's domestic car part industry. In December 2008, the WTO's appellate body upheld a decision siding with the U.S., EU and Canada, ruling that China's charges on imported car parts ran afoul of the country's WTO obligations.

It's world-changing victories like those that keep van den Broek energized despite the hectic lifestyle of a world traveler who happens to be a lawyer.

“I think it's really loving what you do,” he told Law360. “It's constantly being engaged by the work you do, the cases you work on and clients you work with. Then, no matter how much comes your way, it's never very tiring.”

--Editing by Andrew Park.