



Company: Astra Asset Management UK Limited
 Name: Anish Mathur
 Address: 35 King Street, London, EC2V 8EH
 Phone: +44 203 189 9700
 Web: www.astra-amco.com

Attaining Excellence in Alternatives

Astra Asset Management UK Limited, recipient of the Best Alternative Asset Manager – London award, is a London based investment manager. We invited Anish Mathur to tell us more.

Founded in August 2012, Astra Asset Management as a firm implements non-vanilla credit strategies exploiting complexity, relative value and capital structure arbitrage opportunities across asset classes both in the US and Europe, with a focus on corporate and mortgage backed credit.

The firm's first fund, Astra Structured Credit Investments Limited ('ASCIL'), started trading in January 2013 and has returned in excess of 22% p.a. As of Q1 2017 Astra manages over \$800mm, with approximately \$400mm.....within its credit strategy for high net worth individuals, family offices and institutional investors both in Europe and the US.

In addition to discretionary capital management, Astra provides portfolio advisory services to its clients, often beyond the initial interest in the Astra pooled vehicles. The team applies its expertise in the credit markets, and its wide network of relationships across investment banking and asset management industry to provide a broad range of potential investments, both in securities format or physical assets.

Astra's team spends a significant amount of time with individual clients to understand their investment objectives, taking into account liquidity requirements, risk appetite and return targets across their portfolio'. This approach has earned us investors' trust and unwavering faith in Astra's capabilities, as Anish explains.

"Like most asset managers in the credit space Astra achieves returns through holding credit risky instruments. Where Astra differs from our competitors is our ability to monetise complexity. A significant portion of our returns derives from bespoke structural features of the assets we invest in that only very few managers can put a price on.

As a result, we often invest in assets that have a much shorter duration than typical credit products – which helps to manage volatility. On the other hand, our approach in many instances requires a longer holding period to reap full benefit of the investment. Transparency is a sine qua non with this investment strategy. This is why we strongly encourage and practice an ongoing and open dialogue with our investors."

Success in any industry, particularly one as diverse and competitive as the investment market, relies

upon highly trained, dedicated staff, and as such Astra works hard to attract and retain the best talent, as Anish highlights.

"Given Astra's boutique character we are fortunate in that we have been able to grow utilizing relationships of existing team members both at senior and junior level. Junior staff go through a twelve-month training program during which time they get exposure to different areas of the business; they do not have a mentor, but all members of the management team are very approachable. We are careful to ensure that new joiners are a good fit personality-wise to maintain the family style atmosphere at Astra.

"In addition to an intellectually stimulating environment, Astra offers a performance and success based compensation scheme. As such we have an excellent track record of retaining talent."

Within the wider financial market, the hedge fund industry faces many challenges which result from distortions of the macro-economic environment: QE programs by central banks around the globe have been a driver of asset prices in a number of sectors, forcing asset managers into riskier investments and/or accepting lower returns on their portfolio.

Opting for a higher risk profile has in many cases resulted in higher volatility of returns, occasionally beyond what is acceptable to investors. Either way, pressure on fees has definitely picked up, and consolidation in the hedge fund industry, especially among managers with a mid-single digit return target should not come as a surprise.

Overall, despite these various challenges faced by everyone in the investment market over the coming years and months, Anish is confident that Astra will continue to flourish and build upon its current success.

"Ultimately, Astra has the ability to respond to challenges and the flexibility to adapt to a changing market and macro-economic environment, which will be vital moving forward as we face many challenges and uncertainties. Astra's asset class focus will evolve given the changes in the primary market for structured credit and asset backed securities after the financial crisis; many investors have to cope with a new regulatory environment, and Astra has been able to provide solutions through a new platform we created. There is definitely room to grow and we are excited by this prospect."