

ON SECONDMENT

Making client connections with Microsoft

Beijing Associate Mark Chu talks about his secondment with tech giant Microsoft.

Beijing-based Associate Mark Chu's secondment with world-famous tech giant Microsoft has continued to develop our relationship with this Key Client.

The secondment saw Mark spend 12 months at Microsoft's Beijing HQ where he joined their Business, Regulatory and Investigations team.

Mark, who joined the Firm in January 2020, explains: "I'd done a lot of work for Microsoft before and, when I was asked if I'd be interested in a secondment, it really appealed.

"I've not had any experience working on the client side, so it was a great opportunity to get a better insight of how they work and what matters to them."

Mark's secondment started in May 2021 and was initially expected to last six months, but it was so successful that he stayed on for a full year.

He says: "The team is very small and, when I joined, they only had a regional compliance director who is responsible for compliance for Greater China, and one senior attorney, who retired weeks later, so I was given a lot of responsibility from day one."

The team's job is to investigate recent allegations of misconduct and, where necessary, report them to Microsoft's audit committee for highly sensitive or high-cost, high-risk cases.

"At any one time, we could be dealing with around 50 cases, so with such a small team it was always busy."

They also have a disclosure committee because Microsoft signed a non-prosecution agreement with the US Department of Justice three years ago and have reporting obligations under that agreement.

Mark says: "Cases range from potential misuse of confidential company information to investigations into whether Microsoft business partners are properly passing on discounts intended for the company's end customers.



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MARK CHU,
ASSOCIATE, BEIJING

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Mark was well prepared for the secondment having worked on Microsoft investigations with and Sponsoring Partner Darryl Lew in Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles Partner Courtney Andrews, both of whom have extensive experience working with the client.

He says: “The work was similar to what I do in my regular job in the white collar team in Beijing, so I was able to get up to speed fast.”

Mark’s secondment was mainly completed at Microsoft’s HQ in Beijing’s Haidian district with some hybrid working due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

He says: “It was great to get to know people and put faces to names. There’s no substitute for being in the business and getting to talk to people from different functions, including the wider legal team and other departments such as finance, HR and compliance. I benefited from a broader picture of the issues they face and what matters to them.

“For instance, I got a better appreciation of the volume of investigations the Greater China region has to deal with and the pressure they are under to manage that volume.”

As well as working on cases, Mark’s work during the secondment should also help Microsoft to lower the number of cases and improve efficiency in future.

“I’d recommend a secondment to anyone. It’s an invaluable chance to get to see the inner workings of a client, learn new things and build relationships.”

He says: “One of the things I led was an audit of employees who travel a lot for their jobs, so we could identify potential problems in the way they submitted their expenses.

“This identified areas where the company could clamp down and hopefully reduce the number of cases of misconduct.

“I also developed a template report for expense cases that the team could use, rather than having to start from scratch on straightforward cases. This should create efficiencies in the future.”

Mark finished the secondment in May and feels his time with Microsoft will benefit him, the Firm and the client.

He says: “For me, it was a great chance to work with a major tech company in an industry that is ever changing and dynamic.

“As Microsoft is a Key Client, we’re always looking for ways to build trust and develop the relationship and I hope it will lead to us winning further work in the future.

“I’d recommend a secondment to anyone. It’s an invaluable chance to get to see the inner workings of a client, learn new things and build relationships.

“Having a close understanding of our clients can only help us deliver an experience that sets us apart from our competitors.”



