



OUR PEOPLE

My White & Case story

Marcus Booth talks about his career to date.



Law was a natural choice for Head of Middle East Private Equity Marcus Booth. His grandfather was an inspiration having completed his legal education in a prisoner of war camp in the 1940s.

Marcus says: "Seeing what my grandfather did to become qualified, using books provided by the Red Cross while being held captive in Austria, was a big influence when I was growing up.

"I did some work experience in a legal firm to earn pocket money and my studies in medieval history taught me a lot of skills that prepared me for my career, such as analyzing and distilling information to work out what was relevant."

On leaving education, Marcus got a training contract with a UK firm before joining White & Case as an associate with the Corporate team in 2010.

"Seeing what my grandfather did to become qualified, using books provided by the Red Cross while held captive in Austria, was a big influence when I was growing up."

He says: "I felt there was more to law than just working on mid-market UK private equity deals and White & Case appealed because of its global network and opportunities.

"Apart from marrying my wife and having children, joining the Firm was the best decision I ever made."

The interview process wasn't quite as straightforward as expected though. Marcus explains: "The firm I was working for had launched a large IPO the day before my second interview and I overslept after a night of celebrations, so I was badly late.

"Thankfully, the interviewers, Philip Broke and Alan Burke, understood. They actually saw me working late on an IPO and coming in as a positive, so I got the job."

Marcus accepted the role despite colleagues at his previous firm warning that joining a 'US firm' would be a brutal environment.

He says: "I did start to wonder after my first day because it ended up being an all-nighter, but I've loved it here.

"The Firm is very entrepreneurial, plus I've had the opportunity to work on many exciting cross-border projects."

Marcus joined London's newly established Private Equity team in 2014 and was promoted to partner in 2015, but he had to overcome disappointments along the way.

"Apart from marrying my wife and having children, joining the Firm was the best decision I ever made."

He says: "I was put forward for partnership in 2014 but fell at the final hurdle, which was a big blow at the time. However, I was convinced by my long-term mentor, Partner Peter Finlay, who was a lifer at White & Case and a huge inspiration to me, to not even consider leaving.

"Peter was brilliant. I knew I could talk to him about anything knowing he always had my best interests at heart. I miss him but we are still in touch."

Marcus grasped another exciting chance in 2018 when he expressed an interest to experience more of the global opportunities available at the Firm.



He says: "I'd worked with other offices regularly and previously split my time between working for the Milan and London offices when we opened in Milan in 2011, but I was talking to my then boss about wanting to take advantage of the global network when he mentioned that the Firm was currently looking for an English qualified lawyer to head up the private equity team in the Middle East. So, I agreed to go."

Moving to Dubai was a big move for Marcus and his family but the opportunity came at a good time as his children were six and two, so their education wasn't disrupted.

He says: "The position was planned as a two-year secondment to get things established, but I'm still here four years later and, while you can never say never, I have no plans to leave.

"We've seen huge growth in the Middle East and the Dubai office has developed into a hub for local and cross-border work. It continues to expand and we've more than quadrupled our M&A and Private Equity practice.

"Around 40 percent of our work comes from outside the Middle East, but we're also growing our relationships with major local clients, including sovereign wealth funds.

"In the past year, we've worked on the two largest outbound investments to come out of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and have completed matters for some of the Firm's largest clients.

"The Firm is very entrepreneurial, plus I've had the opportunity to work on many exciting cross-border projects."

"Looking forward, I'm excited to continue building on these foundations by focusing on our continued integration into the wider Firm and in talent development."

According to Marcus, White & Case is well positioned to offer a client experience that sets us apart from our competitors in the Middle East because of our commitment to the region.

He explains: "Building trust and relationships in the Middle East is more important than anywhere, but many of our rivals still run matters from overseas, which gives us a big advantage.



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"The bar has been raised in the region generally and clients now expect the best, coupled with people on the ground and a global presence.

"We're particularly well positioned to provide all of these things in a way our competitors often can't."

During his time at the Firm so far, Marcus has been passionate about pro bono work. He was the London office's pro bono partner between 2015 and 2018 and is particularly proud of the ongoing work he's doing to help improve legal capacity in Sierra Leone with a team in the UAE.

He says: "We've been working with the Ministry of Justice and High Court in Sierra Leone to scope what's needed. I hope to travel over later this year to meet with the attorney general and Ministry of Justice to build on that.

"We're particularly well positioned to provide all of these things in a way our competitors often can't."

"That's been a highlight, along with the work we've done on human rights in Libya and in supporting organizations such as the Red Cross.

"Pro bono work is important to me. I was inspired by Partner David Eisenberg who did so much to establish a pro bono culture in the London office.

"David died shortly after his retirement and, to recognize his contribution, I set up the David Eisenberg Award for people in the London office who dedicate a lifetime service to pro bono work."

Looking back on his career at the Firm so far, Marcus offers this advice to anyone on reaching their potential. He says: "Remember that things won't always go well, but it's how you react that matters.

"I'd also say that, if you work hard and are willing to push your boundaries and be entrepreneurial, the Firm will reward you with opportunities.

"I've had the chance to work with so many great clients, colleagues and teams in London, Istanbul, Dubai, Milan, Paris and more, but one of the things that gives me the most pride is seeing associates who I remember as trainees now pushing on the door of partnership.

"I'd advise anyone to do their best, stick with it and grab opportunities as they come. Better still, create those opportunities by putting yourself forward. If you do those things at White & Case, you can achieve anything."

