

Hong Kong's Legal Services

Interview with law firm Charles Russell Speechlys

Interviewees:

Tom Shaw, Partner, Charles Russell Speechlys

Jonathan Mok, Principal, Jonathan Mok Legal

Tom Shaw: Charles Russell Speechlys is a modern firm with a long pedigree. We've been around for 150 years. We combine business and personal advice. That's I think the thing that is slightly distinctive about us. Asia is expected to see, over the next eight years or so, nearly a doubling of ultra high net worths, and Hong Kong is going to be a great place from which to access that growing market.

Jonathan Mok: For the past two decades or so there have been a lot of overseas law firms wanting to join our legal industry. I think it is important for us to have a Court of Final Appeal. And I think of all the most essential things is to have an independent judiciary with overseas experience. So, with the arrangement of having non-permanent justices, we call them NPJs, they are usually very renowned lawyers from England, from Australia, that helps actually us in developing our jurisprudence. I mean, we are still very much a common law-based jurisdiction here, and it is very important to have that.

Tom Shaw: We looked at other places to set up in the region. We looked at Singapore. Hong Kong has got some really attractive qualities. One, I think it really is the gateway to China. You've got everything here. You've got, not only infrastructure, you've also got a very skilled professional services community here. Physically it is very easy to get around and everybody is close by in the business section. Second, there is an openness of approach to business here. You can set up and get through those check box exercise issues quite quickly. The third thing I think there are synergies with the UK, not only with the legal system, but a nice blend of the exotic and the familiar here.

Jonathan Mok: I suppose in Hong Kong we are used to the efficiency. We have to do things quickly because we are after all a very small place with a large population. So everything has to move expeditiously, and I think that helps as well.

Tom Shaw: Although it's a huge big bustling city, it doesn't take you any time at all to get out into the countryside, something that people may not realize initially. But you

can go off sailing, you can go off to the beach, you can go off visiting all the islands.
The food is stunning here. If you are a foodie, you are going to enjoy yourself.

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