

# A moment with: Chris Appleby, Regional Head of TMT

June 2013

With over 20 years' experience in Technology, Media & Telecommunications law that has seen him travel from New Zealand to Hong Kong to Qatar, Chris Appleby settles in Dubai to take on his latest challenge - the role of Regional Head of TMT at Al Tamimi & Company.

Before discovering his interest in the law, Chris followed his passion for languages and studied German at university before moving to live in Germany for two years. Fluent in German but still seeking his ideal 'interesting and challenging' career, Chris moved back home to New Zealand where a conversation with a family friend set him on his first step towards the legal profession.

"Growing up, my mother worked at a law firm and so I got to know a number of lawyers socially through my parents" says Chris. This particular family friend was a lawyer and someone Chris had a 'great respect' for, as well as admiring his integrity and the passion with which he shared his knowledge of the law. Enthused with a new focus, Chris returned to university to study a law degree and was proudly admitted to practice in the High Court of New Zealand in 1992.

A boutique litigation firm in Christchurch is where Chris began his legal career and he has not-so-fond memories of staying up all night preparing for usually hopeless criminal cases. It was usually not difficult to see quite quickly which way the judge was thinking despite Chris's brilliant legal arguments! This saw a stirring of interest in the commercial, non-contentious side of law, especially what was known then as "Computer Law". Also, times were changing and the commercialisation of the internet and the evolution of the World Wide Web that came with it, piqued Chris' interest in the technology side of law and intellectual property. This saw him move to another firm in New Zealand, Philips Fox, where he was able to pursue his interest in this new and rapidly developing area of law.

After using this big firm experience to best advantage, working under two of New Zealand's top technology lawyers, Chris then moved across the Tasman Sea to join Australian magic circle firm Clayton Utz. Again working under recognised TMT and IP lawyers, Chris gained the expertise that was to lead him being offered a position with Linklaters in Hong Kong – a country experiencing exponential growth in the technology sector at the time and in the full throes of the 'dot-com bubble'. Unfortunately the 'Tech Wreck' of the early 2000s saw the dotcom stock market collapse and work dried up for TMT lawyers – "the bubble" as Chris states, "had well and truly burst".

Chris returned to his old firm Clayton Utz in Australia and for the next five years focused on large scale government IT/IP work advising heavy users of IT services including the Australian Department of Defence and Department of Immigration. However, the desire to travel remained and an offer in 2007 saw Chris pack up and move to the Middle East. He spent three years in Dubai as Partner and Head of TMT at an international law firm before moving to Qatar to join a Qatari firm. Chris also spent time on secondment to Dell and Vodafone Qatar.

Chris looks back on his Qatar experience fondly and remembers it as a happy time both professionally and personally. During this time he and his wife Julia also welcomed the arrival of their first son, Anthony. "Having children changes your priorities in life" says Chris and so he and Julia began thinking about where in the world they would like to settle to raise their family.

"The role at Al Tamimi came at a 'perfect' time", Chris says with a smile. "Professionally this was a

great opportunity for me and the chance to head the TMT team at the largest firm in the region was one I couldn't turn down." The move to Dubai was also one he felt was right for his young family. "I spent three years in Dubai previously and loved the city. Dubai is a great place for kids and has so many facilities for families." With their decision made, Chris, Julia and two year old Anthony moved to Dubai – to be joined a mere four weeks later by the arrival of their second son, Daniel. "To say it was a busy time is an understatement," laughs Chris.

With over a month in his new role now under his belt, Chris is convinced that his move to Al Tamimi was the right move. "It really is an honour to head a team of such talented individuals and I am genuinely excited to take on the challenge of growing and leading the TMT team."