



Investigations & White-Collar Crime

2021



PROFILED:

CHRIS FORDHAM

Alvarez & Marsal Disputes and Investigations Limited





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Managing Director

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PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY

Chris Fordham is a managing director of Alvarez & Marsal's disputes and investigations team in Hong Kong and China. He brings 30 years of forensic and related accounting experience, specialising in investigations of fraud, bribery and corruption, and financial crime and regulatory issues, including anti-money laundering and sanctions risk consulting, fund flow and asset tracing, cyber response and investigations, as well as litigation support and expert witness services in both criminal and commercial proceedings at court or before arbitration tribunals.



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Q&A WITH CHRIS FORDHAM

**Could you provide an insight into how you approach your work? What drives and motivates you?**

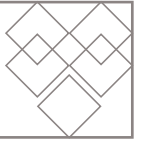
◆ While there will always be some similarities in the themes or trends of our projects, what excites me with every new case is that circumstances are unique. This immediately challenges you to quickly understand the background to the matter and the objectives of the assignment. Thereafter one starts to formulate and propose the approach to be adopted and the most effective work plan to achieve the objectives. Whether it is the urgency and challenge of getting up to speed on a new investigation or immersing oneself in the cerebral challenge of an expert witness case, the desire to achieve the client's objectives always provides a strong incentive to get the job done, and done well.

What strengths and characteristics do you, your team and your firm strive to demonstrate to clients?

◆ A&M works as one team globally and we support our clients with local resources and the ability to mobilise them quickly. Many of our projects require urgent help and having a team on the ground gives our clients across the Asia-Pacific region access to the support they need. We take a senior-led, hands-on approach to problem solving and put the needs of clients first, without competing interests or audit-based conflicts. Clients have confidence in the quality, independence, objectivity and integrity of our advice, given by our team of senior experts who have many years of experience in respective practices. And finally, we are not afraid to tell our clients what they need to know, even if it may not be what they want to hear.

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Reflecting on your area of expertise, how do you see this sphere of the market shaping up over the coming months? Are any exciting trends or developments on the horizon?

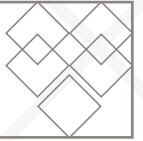


◆ 2020 has been a difficult year for businesses everywhere, struggling to deal with an unprecedented global pandemic and an uncertain economic landscape. We have seen before that difficult times may push some management to resort to unethical practices in order to stave off financial pressures and keep businesses afloat. However, recent compliance breaches have put regulators on guard, demonstrated by a bumper year of fines in 2020, as well as leading to renewed focus on the audit industry. Meanwhile, the first full year audit and financial reporting season since the pandemic began has started and will culminate in results being published Q1 2021. The concatenation of these factors should make for a very interesting year for forensic accounting. ■

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 REPRESENTATIVE ENGAGEMENTS

- ◆ Conducted a sales manipulation investigation at a US wireless communications company in Shanghai. Investigations identified weaknesses in internal controls and corporate governance, and found evidence of revenue manipulation, unrecorded rebates and fictitious sales inventory at the PRC operations.
- ◆ Conducted various investigations at a multinational cosmetic company in the Asia-Pacific region in response to whistleblower reports from employees of their subsidiaries in Guangzhou, Taipei, Bangkok and Manila, alleging certain manipulations of procurement processes and potential vendor relationships with senior management.
- ◆ Appointed by the audit committee of a Hong Kong-listed company to undertake an investigation on transactions due to suspicions that a director and controlling shareholder of the company had abused his position to divert payments to a company that he controlled.

