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People

By Kirk Victor

Veteran antitrust litigator Chris Renner joins Davis Wright

Chris Renner recently jumped from Boies Schiller & Flexner, where he practiced for six years, to join Davis Wright Tremaine, where he is a partner in the Washington, DC, office.

Before making the move, Renner told *FTCWatch* that he got to know many of the lawyers there as part of a “relatively extensive interview process.”

Seeing that much of the firm leadership as well as the practice group leaders are relatively young, that the firm has a strong litigation practice, and that the client base would be “a very good fit,” he said, “if I was going to leave Boies Schiller, I figured out pretty quickly in the process that it would be for Davis Wright.”

The veteran antitrust litigator was impressed that Davis Wright has “a proven track record that was very appealing to me of identifying practice areas that they want to grow in and then making strategic investments, bringing lateral partners over, and investing in those lateral partners and helping them grow the practice.”

Renner, whose practice is focused on companies in the technology, healthcare IT, and medical supply industries, earlier in his career had worked for almost eight years at the Federal Trade Commission, during which he served as an attorney advisor to then-Chairman Jon Leibowitz, as well as acting deputy assistant director of the Bureau of Competition.

Asked about what he might do at Davis Wright that he couldn't do at Boies Schiller, Renner said, “I don't think there is anything specific ... except maybe hope over time to take more of a leadership role in the practice.”

“In terms of the platform and what we are trying to do at Davis Wright, where we are trying to grow the practice, it is not that dissimilar to what I was doing at Boies Schiller,” he said. “I'd like to help turn the antitrust practice at Davis Wright into a destination practice for antitrust litigation where clients bring their most challenging high-profile matters, whether it is litigation or whether it is a government investigation.”

Pressed on what he was proudest of during his time at Boies Schiller and in his lengthy tenure at the FTC, Renner recalled that one of many highlights at the firm was “doing a jury trial with David Boies.” It was a group boycott case involving SourceOne Dental that settled after about three weeks of trial.

“That was a professional and personal highlight, a terrific opportunity,” Renner recalled. “It is the sort of thing that, by definition, you can't do if you don't work at Boies Schiller.”

As for his time at the FTC, Renner pointed to the agency's successful case against McWane, which was accused of unlawfully using its rebate program to maintain its monopoly in the domestic iron pipe fittings market (see *FTCWatch*, No. 879, April 29, 2015).

He described working on that litigation as “a pivotal moment in my career. McWane is when I began to put the pieces together in terms of the professional tool kit of being able to identify anticompetitive conduct, officially investigate it, prove it, and explain it internally at the commission. I was very proud of the work I did in McWane, and I think it contributed meaningfully to the commission's law enforcement mission.”

Renner's departure from Boies Schiller comes at a time when the firm has seen the departure of at least a dozen partners in the last several months. *Business Insider* recently reported another 15 partners will be departing shortly for King & Spalding, prompted by unhappiness with the firm's merger with the California litigation firm Caldwell Leslie.

When asked about that exodus from the firm, Renner said his decision to leave Boies Schiller wasn't prompted by those issues.

“It reflected a curiosity on my part as to what else was out there,” he said. “Boies Schiller was the only law firm that I had spent a significant amount of time in in private practice. I thought it made sense to take a look at what the opportunities were, but ultimately when I made the decision to move, it was really about the strength of the opportunity at Davis Wright and not really reflective of a view of what was going on at BSF.”

Renner addressed the challenges he faces in joining Davis Wright. "We have a terrific opportunity to build a market-leading antitrust practice that has a national reputation. ... We still have work to do in terms of building out that reputation, gaining market share — that is a very competitive space. There are some terrific antitrust firms active in Washington and New York and San Francisco. We want to compete head-to-head with them, and that is going to take some time."

References:

<https://www.dwt.com/about/news/2020/04/dwt-continues-growth-with-addition-of-chris-renner>