

MARITIME PROFESSION – Maritime Legal Services

Host : When I was a student
many of my friends wished to become lawyers
Perhaps influenced by TV dramas
they felt dealing with criminal cases was exciting
and lucrative
They had already pre-shaped themselves
But in fact how could the legal industry be so narrow?
If you want to go a bit wider and challenge yourself
why not try something special
and go for a different path?

Host : In Hong Kong, there are not many maritime lawyers
and not many of them are from local
How did Devin find his way to become a maritime lawyer?
(Devin, Maritime Lawyer)

Host : Devin, why particularly is there a profession
of lawyer in the maritime industry?
The other industries
e.g. the catering industry, does not specially have lawyers
What does a maritime lawyer do?

Devin : Maritime industry is one of the pillars for Hong Kong's economies
Maritime lawyers are professional lawyers
who support these economic activities
For example, a shipment from Hong Kong to Italy
will correlates with a lot of legal documents
such as the charter agreement and bill of lading
Maritime lawyers provide legal services exclusively for these documents

Host : Devin, as a barrister specialised in maritime disputes is your work different?

Devin : There are some differences
Where there is a maritime related business
possibly disputes may arise
A lawyer might be required to deal with these disputes
Barristers specialised in maritime disputes
are experts specialised in maritime related litigation
For example
Hong Kong International Arbitration Center
is an international arbitration center in the Asia Pacific region
One fifth of the cases are maritime related

Host : What are the differences between maritime cases and ordinary cases?
Can you tell me the cases you have dealt with?

Devin : Have you ever tried the king crab?

Host : Of course

Devin : I have dealt with one case related to the king crab
There was one client in Shanghai who bought
fifty tonnes of king crabs from Russia
There were twenty-five thousand king crabs in total

Host : Do not ask me the weight of each one

Devin : There was an accident during the transportation
Some king crabs died, which caused a loss
Here came the problem:

Who should be responsible for the loss?
Should it be the buyer, the seller
the shipping company or the insurance company?
This is a very typical maritime arbitration case

Host : It is very challenging to be a maritime lawyer
What qualifications are required if I want to join the industry?

Devin : If you want to be a maritime lawyer
first of all, you have to be a lawyer
In general, there are several ways
While you are a trainee solicitor
you can work in a maritime specialised law firm
Afterwards, you can keep working to gain experience
to become a maritime lawyer eventually
Another way is to become an ordinary lawyer
and further study the maritime law thereafter
which can make you become a maritime lawyer

Host : Devin, how did you start?

Devin : I did not major in law either
My first degree is in Business Administration
Then I further studied the Master of Law
Afterwards I became a barrister
I hope to be more competitive after graduation
so I decided to be more specialised
I have the habit of reading the Policy Address
It enables me to understand
the Hong Kong Government's direction on future development
At the time, I knew the maritime services
would be further developed in Hong Kong
In addition, there was a maritime law scholarship scheme

So I applied
And I became a maritime lawyer

Host : It sounds that the threshold is still very high
If I really do not have any law related qualifications
in this field
what other positions can I consider?

Devin : In fact, the scope of maritime legal services is quite broad
Apart from being a lawyer
many shipping companies and insurance companies
will also recruit executive staff or clerks etc.,
You will also learn some laws, regulations
and the other rules of the industry
Though you are not a lawyer
it is considered as professional
Of course, if you want to be a maritime lawyer in the future
you can further study law-related programme

Host : Are there many maritime lawyers in Hong Kong?

Devin : Compared with the United Kingdom
there are not as many maritime lawyers in Hong Kong
But along with the development of Hong Kong maritime services
I believe there will be more maritime lawyers
Hong Kong previously relied a bit much
on the maritime lawyers from the United Kingdom
Hong Kong could have more talents in this field
For now
we require talents who know both bi-literacy and tri-lingualism
and the Chinese culture
So, people who can have good proficiency
in both Chinese and English like us

are whom the market really thirsts after

Host : If I am really interested in the industry
is there any way to find maritime law firms
which recruit maritime lawyers?

Devin : Nowadays, the easiest way is to go online
I can give you two websites with relevant information
The first one is the Shipping Directory by the Marine Department
It lists the Hong Kong maritime law firms
(Hong Kong Shipping Directory, Marine Department
http://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/pub_services/shipdir.html)
The other one is the member list
of the Hong Kong Shipowners Association
The website also lists the maritime law firms
(Member List, Hong Kong Shipowners Association
<http://www.hksoa.org/members.php>)
You can refer the lists when looking for a job

Host : As long as you are determined, you will make it
Although it is a long way to become a maritime lawyer
if you have planned ahead
set a clear target and move on step by step
it will not take you long to achieve

(Special Thanks: DES Chambers, Hong Kong Maritime Museum)

(Hong Kong Maritime and Port Board)