My Benesch My Team – Columbia Pacific Advisors, LLC

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Will Nelson
Director of Real Estate Lending
Columbia Pacific Advisors, LLC

Based in Seattle, Columbia Pacific Advisors, LLC manages alternative investment vehicles in real estate investment, real estate lending, business lending, and opportunistic investments. The firm performs fundamental research and structures transactions and portfolios as it seeks to generate consistent risk-adjusted returns for its investors.

The following is a testimonial from Will Nelson, Director of Real Estate Lending at Columbia Pacific Advisors.

Tell me about Columbia Pacific Advisors.

What began as a multigenerational family office out of Seattle has grown into an alternative investment firm with strategies across 15-20 different business verticals. These strategies include real estate lending, business finance lending, real estate investment, opportunistic investment, and wealth management.

How did you start working with Benesch?

I brought Benesch into the circle through our debt and equity strategies, which my partners and I run for the firm. Benesch has since become our primary counsel for everything from the business formation, documentation, and negotiation of deals all the way through deal execution and, if needed, litigation. Benesch is our "go-to" law firm for our most complex matters.

What attorneys are you working with?

Michael Barrie is my primary point of contact and is the primary point of contact for all of our teams. Given the dozens of concurrent matters Benesch handles, we also work extensively and have wide exposure to Benesch's full real estate, corporate, tax, litigation, and bankruptcy teams. I've gotten to know Gregg Eisenberg, Jeff Wild, Jacob Marshall, Leah Beitner, Erin O'Brien, and Mike Swearengen, among others.

What does Benesch do for you?

The Benesch team are some of our most trusted business advisors. Benesch acts like outside general counsel for the fund strategy side of our business, and then provides additional resources in their different legal practices depending on the typical needs involved in our lending activities and equity investments. Benesch also exceeds the typical attorney-client paradigm through their value-add services. Although we're based in Seattle, we routinely see Benesch attorneys in our offices each month as they work through complex matters with us or provide legal training for our team. Benesch attorneys also join our team members on their site visits and sponsor meetings. Annually, Benesch co-sponsors various retreats and events that have helped us excel and become industry leaders. No doubt, Benesch is an important and integrated member of the Columbia Pacific Team.

What do you like about working with Benesch?

Flexible, customer-facing, not afraid to jump on airplanes, transparency…it really has become a relationship that has far exceeded traditional client-attorney boundaries. We operate nationally and have a variety of different counsels, but Benesch is by far our largest relationship, mostly because they leverage their extensive experience to quickly solve complex issues with business-friendly, practical solutions. We also enjoy working with the Benesch team because they love what they do, and their enthusiasm to help us is contagious. I've gotten to know each member of their team, forging deep business relationships and lifelong friendships.

What value does Benesch bring?

It's a very customized, personalized approach to the individual business and strategies and your particular questions. If they don't have the services or expertise in-house, they've developed a wide network. And on top of it, they're growing in a majority of the major markets, creating a wider and wider net that allows us to continue to work with the familiar faces and the relationships we've established. Benesch knows our needs, our history, and even our baggage, and that continuity helps prevent missteps or other shortfalls that can happen if you're using counsel ad valorem. And, if you're using counsel in a sporadic way, how much are they really counseling? It's often more reactive than proactive in those cases. And that's not the case with Benesch. They are every bit as invested in our success as we are.

What's challenging about your work?

Every deal is a new adventure. That's where Benesch's diversity of services and offices and geographies has been helpful. Today, we have deals in 37 different states. We do everything from business lending to debt to equity. Given the broad lens and application we have with our capital and different strategies, Benesch's breadth of capability is where you find the foothold in the relationship. The easier you make it for us, the more problems you can answer real-time, the better the access-that's really how you grow the relationship, and that's what Benesch has done. A number of the partners on our team feel the same way, as do the Benesch clients I've met independently as well as through Benesch.

It's rare to have the level of rapport and connection and overlap that we do with Benesch. But they're working really hard to deliver that. It's been a great partnership for sure, and we feel very fortunate to have Benesch in our corner.