

Devin Heckman



Devin Heckman of Kirkland & Ellis LLP has advised clients on the tax aspects of several multibillion-dollar acquisitions involving technology and healthcare companies, forging ongoing relationships and earning him a spot among the tax attorneys under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

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Why he's a tax attorney:

Heckman said he has always loved to read and write and make convincing arguments, and back in his undergraduate days, he thought he might want to be a litigator. But he took a few tax classes in law school, and then, as a summer associate at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP in New York, one tax assignment had him researching how certain types of liabilities should be analyzed under the tax rules.

The assignment “really lit me up,” Heckman said, noting that he liked that the work was analytical, thoughtful and methodical.

Also, at Simpson Thacher, Heckman said, he started to appreciate the business necessity of lawyers, how closely the firm worked with clients, and how it relied on its lawyers for difficult judgment calls on the law on different matters. That kind of “trusted adviser role” was appealing, he said.

In Heckman's practice, he said, no two deals are alike, no two funds are the same, and each tax client has a different set of concerns. Funds have different investors, and companies may face various tax or regulatory requirements. A large foreign component, for example, could require special structuring and coordination

with local tax advisers. All those things can drastically change the end structure you might see in a deal.

“There's a lot of room for creativity in this job,” Heckman said.

The role of a tax lawyer with any client acquiring a company involves two essential but complex tasks, he said. First, they find out all there is to know about the company's tax history, including whether the company might owe taxes that could reduce the money it has to spend later. Second, they structure the deal in a way that maximizes future tax benefits and minimizes future tax liability.

“There's a lot of room for creativity in this job.”

“Our value is that there’s a lot out there, and not everything is applicable to any particular deal, and we’ve seen it all,” Heckman said.

His most notable deals:

Heckman pointed to a deal involving healthcare technology companies: Cotiviti’s completion of its acquisition of Edifecs this year.

Kirkland, he noted, represented private equity funds Francisco Partners and TA Associates when they initially invested in Edifecs back in 2020. The firm forged a relationship with Edifecs’ management and went on to represent the company in its corporate work.

Heckman said the transaction offers a great snapshot of what Kirkland and its clients do best.

“It’s great,” he said, “to see two of our biggest clients working together to invest in a high-quality company to develop it, work with management, and then eventually sell it.”

... when clients look back and say that they’re glad they worked with Kirkland, and that only Kirkland could have gotten what they needed done, “You’ve got to be proud about moments like that.”

“Clients value reasoned and trusted counsel and leadership, plus creativity and energy and the desire to get the deals done, and Kirkland’s clients view the attorneys as partners in their enterprise.”

Heckman also recalled having an active role advising Vitruvian Partners on its investment in capital and private equity fund administrator Aduro Advisors. In that deal, inked in 2024, both management and an existing private equity investor retained a significant interest in the company alongside Kirkland’s more internationally focused sponsor client.

“There was just a lot of energy that went into that deal” from the existing owners and their advisers, he said. “It was also very complex, so it was a challenge to match that level of energy while maintaining the more methodical and analytical practice and making sure everything was as efficient as possible from a tax perspective.”

What motivates him:

Heckman said he has always thought of himself as a problem solver. He recalled the dean of his law school saying that lawyers are fundamentally problem solvers, and he has thought about that a lot over the years.

“I feel very strongly, when you see an interesting or complex problem, it sort of begs for a solution,” Heckman said.

And that, he said, is at bottom what clients want from Kirkland.

“They want a trusted adviser, but they also want a problem solver, so there’s just a natural fit between me and their goals,” Heckman said.

The battles that private equity practitioners fight are written into the contracts they produce, he said. And when clients look back and say that they’re glad they worked with Kirkland, and that only Kirkland could have gotten what they needed done, “You’ve got to be proud about moments like that,” he said.

Where his practice is going:

While Heckman hesitates to predict the future, he said the most prized aspects of the business will remain the same.

Clients value reasoned and trusted counsel and leadership, plus creativity and energy and the desire to get the deals done, and Kirkland’s clients view the attorneys as partners in their enterprise, he said.

“Technical skills are necessary, but you really can’t do a job without any kind of personality, and I don’t see that going away,” Heckman said.

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