

# Complexity drives new era for trusted advice in Asia

*Mark Smallwood explains why the timing is right to bring an offering like Confidentem Private Office to market – helping to work with HNW clients to source the right solutions to increasingly complex estate, succession and governance needs.*

Mark Smallwood believes he is on the right track with Confidentem Private Office, which commenced operations this month in Singapore. As the enormous transfer of wealth already underway in Asia gathers yet more momentum, HNW individuals and their families are searching for clarity as well as independent, trusted advice.

“Families are faced with fragmented, conflicted and often confusing choices from where to seek advice on how to deal with the challenge,” explains Smallwood.

In short, the aim of Confidentem Private Office is to be the trusted adviser to these clients. “We offer the solution to the market need for an open architecture firm providing wealth structuring, estate planning and aggregated wealth reporting without the conflict of being involved in the investment process,” he explains.

## AN ADVICE HUB

The specific goal of Confidentem Private Office is to be the central point of contact for clients to engage in the design and implementation of their estate, succession and governance needs. The company provides a full range of services, from the drafting and execution of wills, through to the establishment and management of complex family trusts, and aggregated wealth reporting. “We employ the considerable experience of our principals and internal specialists,

supplementing this with external legal, tax and fiduciary advisors as necessary to deliver an ideal outcome for our clients,” says Smallwood.

He is well-placed to spearhead this new initiative. Most recently, he spent 14 years in various roles at Deutsche Bank, including membership of executive and management committees of both the asset and wealth management businesses, as well as head of wealth planning for Asia Pacific and global head of insurance solutions. Before this, he owned and operated a multi-family office in the Caribbean that incorporated both a trustee and corporate services business, as well as an insurance company, selling these in 2003.

The timing for Confidentem Private Office appears ideal, given the accelerating focus of Asian and Asia-based families in trying to address the complexity of managing the inter-generational transfer of wealth. “With the first generation of wealth transfer underway, combined with increased transparency and globalisation, family heads have a significant challenge to set up the necessary structures and related governance to effect this transition for their family in an optimal manner,” says Smallwood.

This structuring requires time, impartiality, careful thought and communication. His role will be to provide the mechanism



**MARK SMALLWOOD**  
Confidentem Private Office

to initiate and manage the process for clients. “I am very much looking forward to working with both our clients and the broader professional community.”

The firm also recognises the need to stay current by using digital tools and the latest in fintech to enhance efficiency and the overall client experience. “We will work with the latest in fintech solutions to enable HNW investors and their investment managers to aggregate their financial holdings to formalise their investment oversight and conduct holistic portfolio analytics,” adds Smallwood. ■