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Magazine



TECH TALES WITH PAUL HASWELL

Does technology work for us, or do we work for technology?



AI IN THE PHILIPPINES

Latest Regulatory Developments and Challenges



THE LAST IN-HOUSE LAWYER

Ian White talks about what GC's want from external lawyers, and urges them to adapt and innovate



FROM SILO TO STRATEGY:
Creating Future-Ready Legal Teams



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Richard Henrick I. Beltran, Partner, Villaraza & Angangco

Richard Henrick I. Beltran a Partner at the Corporate and Commercial Law Department of Villaraza & Angangco. Richard heads the Banking and Finance, Capital Markets, Fintech and Financial Services practice groups of V&A. He also advises on foreign investments in the Philippines and has assisted multiple clients engaged in e-commerce.



Rachelle Ann L. Go, Associate, Villaraza & Angangco

Rachelle Ann L. Go is an Associate and a member of the Firm's Corporate and Commercial Law Department. Her practice primarily involves counseling individuals and companies in relation to their regulatory compliance and providing advice in the fields of general corporate and commercial law, competition, securities regulation, foreign investments, and immigration.



Paul Haswell, Partner, K&L Gates

Paul Haswell is a Partner at K&L Gates's Hong Kong office, specialising in Technology Transactions and Sourcing. With over 20 years of experience, he focuses on TMT matters, including data and cybersecurity, telecommunications, and emerging technologies like AI and blockchain. A tech enthusiast since childhood, Paul has handled major technology disputes and offers a blend of legal expertise and passion for innovation.



Sarah James, Partner, Simmons & Simmons

Sarah joined us in 2016 and is responsible for the leadership, strategy and growth of Adaptive. Sarah is an innovative, collaborative and ambitious leader focused on delivering smarter solutions for clients and re-imagining how clients engage legal talent. Sarah has a particular interest in the Future of Work in relation to legal teams.



Mark Dodd, Head of Middle East, Lawyers On Demand

As the Head of Middle East for Lawyers on Demand, Mark is dedicated to leading the team and growing the company's presence across this vibrant and strategic region. Mark's priority is to ensure that our clients and lawyers receive the highest level of service and support, focusing on helping in-house teams find new and better ways of resourcing work.



Karishma Riddell, Managing Director, Hong Kong, Lawyers On Demand

Karishma is the Head of Client Solutions in the Hong Kong office and joins LOD after 12 years of legal recruitment experience. She has extensive industry knowledge and a strong network of contacts across law firms and in-house legal teams throughout the APAC region.

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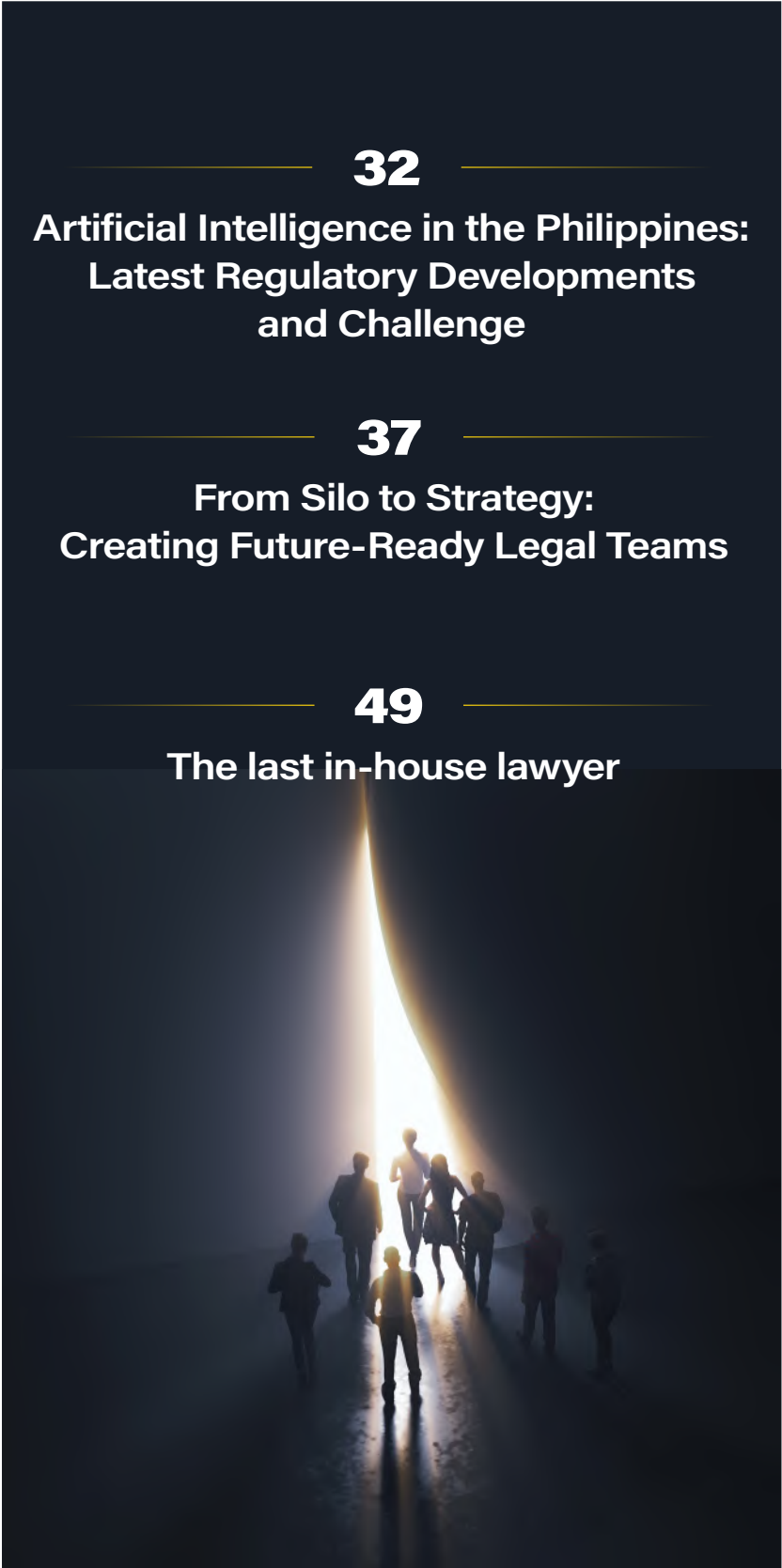
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PDLegal Enters Formal Law Alliance with Hill Dickinson Singapore



PDLegal has joined forces with the Singapore office of international law firm **Hill Dickinson** in a Formal Law Alliance, which received approval from the Singapore Legal Services Regulatory Authority and became effective from August 1 2024. It will operate under the name **Hill Dickinson PDLegal**.

Pooling the resources of the two firms, the alliance will be able to accept instructions on Singapore law, as well as foreign law matters. Both firms remain entirely separate entities, while being able to advise and assist clients jointly in an efficient and streamlined fashion.

PDLegal is a leading full-service regional law firm headquartered in Singapore. The firm's experienced team of lawyers have been consistently ranked and recognised by legal directories and publications, and are equipped to handle matters on a broad range of practices.

Opened in Singapore in 2009, Hill Dickinson has grown to become one of the largest and busiest Marine and Trade teams in the country. The team

is particularly well-renowned for its casualty, shipping and trade disputes work. It also has a growing reputation for commercial arbitration and marine-related transactional work, and commercial advisory services.

“Hill Dickinson is a global commercial law firm, and we are excited to join forces with them. This demonstrates our commitment to growing our capabilities in this globalised world. Being allied with a larger international law firm allows us to provide our clients with the holistic support needed to navigate the complexities of international law, while ensuring compliance with local regulations. The FLA further adds to our regional capabilities offered through our Thailand office, and our China, India, and Malaysia Desks,” said **Peter Doraisamy**, Managing Partner of PDLegal.

“Our decision to partner with a local law firm is in direct response to what our clients have told us they need,” explained **Andrew Lee**, Managing Partner of Hill Dickinson's Singapore office. “In the 15 years since we opened in Singapore, the key to our success has been to work closely with our clients, really listen to what they want and evolve our service offering to accommodate that.”

“Partnering with PDLegal comes the right time for us, as an established international law firm practising in Singapore. The alliance allows us to simplify the legal process for our clients by giving them a single point of contact for all their legal matters, whether subject to local or international law. Knowing that they can directly access Singapore law advice through Hill Dickinson, not only in respect of arbitration matters but in many more areas, gives our clients the added reassurance that we have responded to

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their requirements, and that they will continue to benefit from the very highest levels of legal excellence and client care,” Andrew added.

Rajah & Tann (Thailand) Names New Co-Managing Partners



Rajah & Tann (Thailand) (RT) has added **Melisa Uremovic** and **Supawat Srirungruang** as Co-Managing Partners with effect from August 27, 2024, marking a significant milestone in RT’s growth and strategic direction.

Melisa and Supawat both succeed Ajarn Surasak Vajasit, who handed over the reins after a decade at the helm. Ajarn Surasak will continue to lend his wealth of experience as the newly appointed Chairman and Senior Partner of RT.

Reflecting on his time as the Managing Partner, Ajarn Surasak shared, “It has been my privilege to lead a group of talented and dedicated professionals for the past ten years, and I am proud to have guided the Firm through its formative years. I look forward to my new role and being part of our Firm’s continued success. I am confident that everyone will be fully behind our new Co-Managing Partners, as they take our Firm forward to greater heights.”



Stepping into their new role as Co-Managing Partners, Melisa and Supawat bring with them extensive experience and knowledge. They continue to play a critical role in the growth and success of RT, and will continue to prioritise a balanced, inclusive, and people-first work environment, as well as building stronger relationships with valued clients, drive innovations, and lay a solid foundation in building a strong governance and industry expertise.

“I’m grateful for Ajarn Surasak’s years of dedicated service and visionary leadership. Having served as the Deputy Managing Partner of RT, I’ve had the pleasure of strategising and fostering RT’s vision and growth alongside Ajarn Surasak. I am excited to build on this strong foundation and lead RT into its next chapter,” Melisa commented on her new appointment.

Supawat added, “With the renewed focus on fostering a culture of excellence and collaboration, I am enthusiastic about the future as we navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead. Together with Melisa, we will continue to uphold the values and standards that have made RT successful.”

The appointments come at an exciting time for RT and Thailand, as the country appears poised

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for significant transformation and growth. With the ongoing implementation and adoption of digital technologies, regulatory reforms, and increased foreign investments, RT is committed to driving growth, fostering innovation, and delivering exceptional value to its clients, ensuring that they remain competitive and conducive to sustainable economic growth.

A&O Shearman Strengthens its Middle East Offering With New Corporate Partner

As part of **A&O Shearman's** ongoing investment into the UAE and the wider Middle East, Turkey & Africa region, corporate partner **Benjamin Crawford** has relocated from Beijing to its Abu Dhabi office.

Ben brings a unique skillset, having trained in A&O Shearman's London office and worked in its Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai offices. Admitted to practice both in Hong Kong SAR and Victoria, Australia, he is also fluent in Mandarin Chinese, so his expertise and experience having been based in Greater China for the last 15 years will be a significant differentiator in the region.

Ben's practice focuses on multijurisdictional cross-border M&A transactions, joint ventures and complex shareholder and commercial arrangements, with extensive experience advising on transactions involving the financial services, technology and energy & natural resources sectors. His arrival will strengthen the firm's ability to both support Middle East outbound activity in Asia, and also assist Asian clients with their investments into the Middle East.



Ben Ward commented: "Asia-Middle East investment flows have increased rapidly in both directions in recent years, underpinned by supply chain diversification, energy transitions, digitalisation and emerging technologies. The GCC's growing relationship with Asia is evidenced by many of the gulf sovereign wealth funds increasing their investments in Asia's markets and also opening offices in key hubs, so it's clear that this move will enable us to further capitalise on these strategic opportunities."

Ibrahim Mubaydeen, managing partner of A&O Shearman's Abu Dhabi office, added:

"Ben's legal expertise, coupled with his fluency in Mandarin, brings a unique and valuable perspective to our team. His arrival further strengthens our capabilities and will undoubtedly create new synergies and opportunities for our clients, both in the Middle East and Asia."

Unleash Your Inner Lawyer: New Mini Law Degree Programme for Teens

MB KEMP, a Hong Kong-headquartered law firm with offices in London, UAE and Milan,

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launches its groundbreaking “Mini Law Degree” programme designed to introduce bright young minds aged 12 to 15 to the fascinating world of law.



The Little KEMPies initiative offers courses or workshops for children who may be interested to learn more about law or a career in law. This innovative nine-week programme offers a unique opportunity for teens to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills, while exploring the fundamentals of legal principles.

Led by experienced practicing lawyers, the programme is structured around core law subjects taught at prestigious UK universities, such as Cambridge, Oxford and LSE. Participants will delve into contract law, tort law and criminal law, culminating in a mock trial experience.

“We believe that exposing young people to the legal world can ignite a passion for justice and inspire future legal careers,” said Yeeling Wan, Lead Partner at MB KEMP. “Our Mini Law Degree programme provides a stimulating and engaging environment for teens to develop essential life skills while gaining a valuable understanding of the legal system.”

Beyond academic content, the programme emphasises the development of soft skills crucial for success in any field, including public speaking, persuasive reasoning, and teamwork.

Vietnam-Australia Strategic Vision for Trade and Investment

By, Vaibhav Saxena, Foreign Counsel and Quang Anh Nguyen, Associate

Australia and Vietnam have forged a robust and multifaceted relationship over the years, marked by mutual respect, shared interests, and strategic cooperation. On 7 March 2024, this partnership reached a significant milestone with the elevation to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, underscoring the depth and breadth of ties between the two nations.

Mutual Partnership

Vietnam and Australia have shared strong bilateral relations in terms of history. Ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1973, both countries have built a robust and broad relationship with the foundation of trust and deep understanding.

During the initial phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canberra emerged as Hanoi’s second-largest foreign donor, generously contributing 26.4 million vaccine doses. Additionally, Australia has extended substantial Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Vietnam, supporting critical areas such as human resource development, infrastructure, public health enhancement, and Vietnam’s participation in UN peace-keeping missions. These tangible examples underscore the robust bilateral ties between the two countries and highlight Australia’s genuine commitment to its relationship with

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Vietnam. Socially, Vietnamese Australians constitute the sixth-largest migrant community in Australia. Additionally, nearly 17,000 Vietnamese international students are enrolled in Australian educational and training institutions. The Vietnamese alumni, having graduated from Australian universities and subsequently returned to Vietnam for work, have forged a robust and meaningful connection between the two nations and their peoples.

Trade and Investment

Australia and Vietnam enjoy a dynamic economic partnership characterised by rapid growth in trade and investment. In the financial year 2022/23, bilateral trade surged to \$25.7 billion, reflecting a substantial increase of 75% from 2020. Vietnam's vibrant economy, with a GDP growth rate exceeding 8% in 2022 and surpasses 5% in the first half of 2024, presents significant opportunities for Australian exporters. Key export sectors include energy, dairy, meat, grains, and professional services, driven by Vietnam's expanding middle class and demand for quality imports.

Enhanced Economic Engagement Strategy, launched in November 2021, outlines a strategic roadmap to elevate bilateral economic ties, aiming to establish both countries among each other's top ten trading partners and double two-way investment. This streamlined approach underscores the commitment to leveraging economic synergies and fostering sustainable growth.

In the ASEAN region, Vietnam ranked as the second largest economy for goods export to Australia, accounting for more than two percent of the total value in 2023. In which, there are two outstanding categories, being coal and

cotton. For cotton, Vietnam is now Australia's largest export market, accounting for 40% of Australia's total exports. In addition, Australia also accounts for nearly 40% of Vietnam's cotton imports. The growth of trade from Australia to Vietnam is also demonstrated in the food sector, with \$170 million dollars worth of Australian beef and \$206 million worth of Australian live cattle to Vietnam. Besides beef, Vietnam also imports from Australia products such as coal, iron ore, cotton, wheat, metals, vegetables, and others.



From Vietnam's side, in the first quarter of 2024, many of the nation's key products made their ways to Australia, with one outstanding element being coffee. As provided by the General Department of Customs, in the first two months of this year, turnover from Vietnamese coffee exports increased approximately 1.5 times over the same period as recorded in 2023, reaching \$7.57 million and ranked as highest level in the past four years. Considerably, during the first 5 months of 2024, the key export products of Vietnam (machineries and equipment, phones and

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components, crude oil, computer, electronic products and components, textile) also witnessed a strong growth as well.

Education and Innovation

Australia is a preferred destination for Vietnamese students seeking quality education, with over 38,000 students enrolled in 2023. Collaborative initiatives in education and innovation, including the New Colombo Plan scholarships and the establishment of the Vietnam-Australia Centre, to facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity building. These initiatives strengthen institutional links and support Vietnam's development goals by harnessing Australian expertise in areas such as digital transformation and vocational training.

Investment trends

Over the last few years, Vietnam's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) landscape is positioned for robust expansion, offering numerous opportunities across various sectors. Notably, the technology, renewable energy, health-care, banking, and real estate sectors stand out. Investor-friendly policies, combined with tax incentives, create an appealing environment for foreign investors. Moreover, emerging industrial hubs beyond Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City enhance Vietnam's allure as a destination for those seeking sustainable long-term growth prospects.

Based on data from the Foreign Investment Agency (under the Ministry of Planning and Investment), Australian businesses currently have 631 valid projects in Vietnam, with a total registered capital of \$2.037 billion (accumulated as of February 22, 2024). To be specific, 18

industries and fields that Australian investors place their focus on are processing and manufacturing industry; accommodation and food services; agriculture, forestry and fisheries; health and social assistance activities; extractive; arts, recreation and entertainment; education and training; professional and scientific and technological activities; real estate business; wholesale and retail, car and motor-bike repair. These sectors represent the diverse interests and contributions of Australian businesses in Vietnam.

Investments are scattered throughout Vietnam, about forty-five provinces and cities have successfully attracted Australian FDI projects, including Ba Ria – Vung Tau being the top province with 16 projects with total capital of nearly \$400 million. Ho Chi Minh city also is one of the ideal places for investment from Australia with more than 300 projects and a total registered capital of \$231.12 million.

Looking Ahead

The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership will also involve an annual dialogue on minerals.

As Australia and Vietnam navigate the complexities of a changing global landscape, their cooperation stands as a testament to shared values and aspirations. With a focus on sustainable development, innovation, and regional cooperation, both nations are poised to chart a course towards a future marked by prosperity and mutual benefit.

Australia and Vietnam are well-positioned to harness their respective strengths and navigate future challenges together, ensuring a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

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Stephenson Harwood's alliance firm in Singapore, **Virtus Law**, has strengthened its corporate practice with the arrival of partner **Eunice Yao**. She has extensive experience advising on matters relating to capital markets, M&As and FinTech. Yao supports on IPOs, equity and debt fund raising for companies listed in Singapore, and company secretarial matters. As well as working in private practice, she also has notable experience working in-house with the largest consumer bank in Singapore.



JSA Advocates & Solicitors has added **Nisha Kaur Uberoi** as Chair of the Competition Practice. Uberoi joined with her team of 27 attorneys, including two retained partners, **Harshita Singh Parmar** and **Pranav Satyam**, to be located across Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore offices. To be based out of the Mumbai office, Uberoi will work closely with JSA's Delhi-based Competition Law specialist and Equity Partner Vaibhav Choukse and his team. Widely regarded as one of India's foremost competition lawyers, she brings with her an extensive expertise in complex areas like merger control, cartels, abuse of dominance and the digital economy. She represents clients before the Competition Commission of India, the NCLAT and the Supreme Court. Uberoi comes with more than two decades of experience. Before joining the firm, she was the National Head of the Competition practice at Trilegal. Previously, she co-headed the competition practice at AZB & Partners, and headed the Competition practice at Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas. She is an alumnus

of the National Law School of India University Bangalore and National University of Singapore.



DaHui has added two distinguished new partners to its growing firm. **Kevin Liu** joins with a decade of experience specializing in complex securities offerings, listings, M&A and other capital market transactions. His diverse background spans sectors such as advanced semiconductor manufacturing, new energy, and healthcare and life sciences. He has also advised leading investment institutions on private equity and post-investment management. Before joining the firm, Liu practiced at Fangda Partners and King & Wood Mallesons. He is renowned for his track record in major capital market restructurings, and he also represented investors in their strategic investment in a multi-billion-dollar bankruptcy reorganization of a major Chinese tech conglomerate. Liu guides companies through the entire capital cycle, and he has pioneered legal strategies for prominent Chinese companies to exit offshore stock markets and relist on China's A-share markets via interim privatization. Liu has extensive regional network ties in Shanghai, Shenzhen and beyond, and experience in outbound business transactions. He holds an LLM from the University of California, Berkeley, as well as both master's and bachelor's degrees in law from Southwest University of Political Science and Law. **Zhouwei (Wayne) Wang** joins as a partner in the Wuhan office's corporate team. Prior to joining the firm, Wang worked as in-house counsel for a leading ICT company, and for a prominent multinational automotive company. His extensive in-house

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experience gave him deep insights into bringing innovative product lines and new business models to market, and his strategic approach and keen understanding of industry trends help him deal with major market players and their complex legal issues. Some of Wang’s notable achievements include leading a multi-million-dollar trade secret crime prosecution, participating in negotiations with key semiconductor suppliers, and securing sponsorship contracts and other contracts in China for the 2019 FIBA World Cup. Originally from Wuhan, Wang’s deep connections to the region, his extensive experience with Wuhan-based companies and his understanding of industry-specific challenges make him a key asset to the firm. Wang holds an LLM from National Taiwan University, an LLB from Wuhan University, and a Certified Information Privacy Professional/Europe (CIPP/E) certification.



Phoenix Legal has added **Piyush Mishra** as partner in the firm’s Mumbai office. He joins



with two other partners, **Rohit Sharma** and **Shivani Sinha**, along with a team of four lawyers, from Luthra and Luthra Law Office India. Joining the firm as National Head of Bankruptcy and Restructuring, Mishra brings extensive expertise in insolvency, restructuring, finance, aviation finance and infrastructure. He specializes in Restructuring and Insolvency, Special Situation, Aviation Finance and Structured Finance. Mishra has acted on pre-IBC resolutions, CIRP process and liquidations, and has advised on acquisition

of infrastructure projects and cross border investments. He has also worked with AZB Partners, Cyril Amarchand & Mangaldas, as partner, and Allen & Overy (London) and Amarchand & Mangaldas as associate. Sharma has worked with Bharucha & Partners, as a partner, and AZB & Partners and Tier-I Kuwaiti law firm ASAR-Al Ruwayeh and Partners. He has also worked as Vice-President at IDFC. To be based in the firm’s Mumbai office, Sharma is primarily involved in the banking and finance, and advises on a wide range of financing matters, such as securitisation, debenture issuances, structured finance and ECB facilities. Sinha has joined the firm’s Delhi office. She is primarily involved in the restructuring and insolvency, banking and finance, and structured finance practices. Sinha regularly advises a diverse clientele on a wide range of financing matters. She also does court / MCA approved schemes of amalgamations / arrangements, and handles contentious matters related to her practice areas. Prior to joining the firm, Sinha has also worked with Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, Link Legal and Amarchand & Mangaldas & Suresh A Shroff & Co.

Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas has added **Manan Lahoty** as a Partner and Head of Capital Markets



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practice, along with a 48-member team of eight partners and 40 associates.



Well-respected for his legal expertise, Lahoty has advised on some of the largest and prestigious Indian transactions in the domestic and international capital markets. He is qualified to practice in both England and Wales, and India. He has been consistently recognised as a leading capital markets lawyer in India, and included in the top tier lawyers list by several independent surveys and directories.

The partners joining along with him in various locations are:

Abhiroop Lahiri (Delhi – NCR)

Abhyuday Bhotika (Bengaluru)

Anshul Roy (Mumbai)

Manshoor Nazki (Bengaluru)

Priyadarshini Rao (Mumbai)

Puneet Passi (Delhi-NCR)

Ravi Dubey (Mumbai)

Vishal Yaduvanshi (Delhi-NCR)

The team brings in a diverse range of experience and clients, and are well-recognised in their area of practice.

Yash J Ashar, who has recently been promoted to a cohort of Senior Partners at the firm effective April 1, 2024, will continue to be an integral and core part of the capital markets partners bench. He will also be member of the firms Partnership Council (managing committee), handling client matters and managing key

relationships of the firm within capital markets, besides supporting Manan initially with the transition.

On his joining, Manan Lahoty said, “Coming together of top two teams on such a massive scale is unprecedented. I believe this will have a striking impact on the Indian capital markets fraternity. For our clients, the combined scale will offer an unmatched quality and availability – key ingredients for large and complex deals. For our lawyers, this scale will offer unparalleled reputation and respect, and solid management and governance. Above all else, I am delighted to be a part of the CAM brand, and grateful to have been given an opportunity to extend my ethics, values and management style onto a larger team of lawyers.”

Managing Partner Cyril Shroff welcomes the development, saying, “We are excited about the significant growth and undisputed market leadership that our Capital Markets practice will assume with this development. Capital Markets, one of the four major practices of the firm, will be a significant practice of scale. I am confident that the Capital Markets’ leadership team will take this practice to new heights”.



Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas has added **Jay Parikh** as a Partner in its Corporate Practice

with his team. He will be working out of the firm’s Mumbai and Ahmedabad offices. Parikh has over 18 years of considerable experience in M&A, joint ventures, private equity, banking & finance, restructurings & insolvency, capital

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markets and general corporate advisory. His core practice area is Corporate Finance and M&A that involves structuring, negotiating and documenting financing transactions at all business stages. Parikh also advises Private Equity funds on investment transactions, including those involving listed companies. He graduated from NUJS, Kolkata in 2006, and had started his career at erstwhile Amarchand & Mangaldas & Suresh A Shroff & Co (AMSS) Mumbai. The firm has also added **Alok Sonker** as a Partner in its Corporate Practice, along with his team. They will be working out of Mumbai, Ahmedabad and GIFT City offices. With over 15 years of experience, Sonker focuses on general corporate advisory and transactional matters, which mostly include Private Equity (fund set-up and transactions) and M&A transactions. He has a keen interest in economics and geo-strategy, and has spent majority of his time in sharpening his knowledge and skills in relation to the same. Sonker graduated in 2006 from Lucknow University, and completed his LLM in 2008 from National Law School of India University Bangalore. Moreover, the firm has added **Mohit Gogia** as a Partner in its Corporate Practice. He will be based in New Delhi. Gogia has over 18 years of experience, and has been leading on M&A, private equity and cross-border investment transactions, and on general corporate matters. He is admitted to practice law in India and New York, and has worked with S&R Associates in New Delhi as an Equity Partner, and at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom in New York. Gogia graduated in 2005 from Campus Law Centre, Delhi University, and completed his LLM in 2006 from New York University School of Law. He is an Honorary Adjunct Professor of Law and Professor of Corporate Legal Practice at Jindal Global Law

School, and has previously been a visiting faculty at National Law University Delhi, where he taught a seminar course on “Transactional Mergers and Acquisitions”.



Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas has added **Ms Sowmya Kumar** as a Partner in its Employment Practice. She will be based in New Delhi – NCR office. Kumar brings more than a decade of experience

in advising clients on all aspects of India’s employment and social security laws. Her approach to human resource laws combines the depth of Indian jurisprudence, along with the pragmatism of market practices. A graduate of NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, Kumar also holds an LLM (with distinction) from University College London. She started her career at the erstwhile Amarchand & Mangaldas Suresh A Shroff and Co Mumbai.



Blumenthal Richter & Sumet has added partner **Promboon Sookatup** and her team to

the firm’s Tax & Customs and M&A Practice. With over a

decade of experience, Sookatup specializes in tax disputes, M&A-related tax structures and complex corporate set-ups across a variety of industries. Her active role in shaping Thailand’s tax policies through positions on key governmental and private sector committees further bolsters her impressive profile. Sookatup holds an LLB from Thammasat University, an LLM in International Commercial Law from Queen Mary University of London, and an MBA from Chulalongkorn University. She returns to the firm, where she began her legal career.

DEALS

Allen & Gledhill has advised **DBS Bank** and **United Overseas Bank**, as green loan coordinators and lenders, on the S\$680 million (US\$522m) term and revolving loan facilities to Holly Development (sponsored by CapitalLand Development, UOL Group, Singapore Land Group and Kheng Leong Company). The facilities are aligned with the Green Loan Principles, and will be used to finance the acquisition and development of a residential project at Holland Drive. Partners **Lim Wei Ting** and **Ernest Teo** led the firm's team in the transaction.



AZB & Partners is advising **RTX Corporation** on the Rs41.7 billion (US\$497m) acquisition by Signia Aerospace, a portfolio company of Arcline Investment Management, of the Goodrich Hoist and Winch business of RTX's Collins Aerospace division, including

the acquisition of its Indian company, Goodrich Aerospace Services, from Goodrich Corporation and certain affiliates, including the Indian company. Partners **Roxanne Anderson**, **Divya Mundra** and **Nishanth Ravindran** are leading the firm's team in the transaction, which was signed on July 1, 2024 and is yet to be completed.

Baker & McKenzie (Gaikokuho Joint Enterprise) has advised **The Bank of Fukuoka** on its ¥5.3 billion (US\$34m) green loan for the 31.65MW Maibara Solar Power Project under construction in Maibara, Shiga Prefecture, Japan. The power plant will be developed by Vena Energy, which will supply electricity produced from renewable energy sources to Mitsubishi Corporation Clean Energy through a corporate Power Purchase Agreement. The project is expected to generate electricity while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and water use, when compared to the use of thermal power plants, and is expected to contribute to the Japanese government's goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. Tokyo partner **Kosuke Suzuki**, supported by London partner **Luke Lightfoot**, led the firm's team in the transaction.

Christopher & Lee Ong, member firm of Rajah & Tann Asia, has acted for **AmInvestment Bank**, as the principal adviser and lead arranger, on the M\$1.85 billion (US\$423m) establishment of a medium term notes programme by Saracap Ventures. Partner **Jennifer Lee** led the firm's team in the transaction.

Clifford Chance has advised leading Asia-focused alternative investment firm **SeaTown**

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Holdings International on the formation of SeaTown Private Credit Fund II (PCF II), a US\$1.3 billion fund originating and making credit investments primarily in the Asia Pacific region. With over US\$2.5 billion in assets under management across its private credit funds, SeaTown has been investing in private credit for more than a decade. Partner **Kai-Niklas Schneider**, supported by partners **Daryl Liu** (private funds-Singapore), **Jefferey LeMaster** (US regulatory and ERISA-New York), **Paul Koppel** (US regulatory and ERISA-New York), **Richard Kalaher** (tax-London) and **Rebecca Pereira** (tax-New York), led the firm's team in the transaction.

Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas is advising **Kedaara Capital and Partners Group** on their sale of controlling stake in Aavas Financiers to CVC. CVC has entered into separate share sale agreements with Lake District Holdings, Partners Group ESCL and Partners Group Private Equity (Master Fund) for the acquisition of their respective shareholding in Aavas Financiers, aggregating to approximately 21 million equity shares representing 26.47 percent of the share capital of the company. The execution of the share sale agreements has also triggered an obligation on CVC to make an open offer to the public shareholders of Aavas Financiers under SEBI Regulations 2011. Partners **Anchal Dhir** and **Anshu Choudhary**, supported by partners **Aditi Manchanda**, **Abe Abraham**, **Pururaj Bhar**, **Gazal Rawal**, **Avaantika Kakkar** (competition head) and **Dhruv Rajain**, are leading the firm's team in the transaction, which was signed on August 10, 2024.

Davis Polk has advised **YXT.com Group Holding** on its SEC-registered IPO of 2.75 million American Depositary Shares for total proceeds of approximately US\$25 million. Each ADS represents three Class A ordinary shares of YXT. YXT has granted the underwriters an option to purchase up to an additional 412,500 ADSs. The ADSs are listed on the Nasdaq. YXT is a leader and disruptor of the digital corporate learning industry in China. It is the largest digital corporate learning solution provider in China, in terms of total revenue, subscription revenue and number of subscription customers in 2023. YXT has innovated an SaaS model that integrates software and content, effectively assisting customers in the digital transformation of corporate learning. Partners **Li He** and **Ran Li**, supported by partner **Gregory Rowland**, led the firm's team in the transaction.

Dentons Hong Kong has acted as international counsel for **Shandong Quanhui Industrial Development** on its successful offering of Rmb229 million (US\$32m) 3.2 percent credit-enhanced bonds due 2027, with the benefit of an irrevocable standby letter of credit issued by Bank of Nanjing. The bonds are listed in Macao. The joint lead managers of the offering include China Credit International Securities, Haitong International, Pulun International, CMBC Capital, Shanghai Pudong Development Bank Hong Kong Branch, China CITIC Bank International, Huatai International and China Industrial Securities International. A state-owned enterprise in China, Shandong Quanhui Industrial Development operates primarily

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in Zhangqiu District of Jinan City, Shandong Province. Its business consists of four major segments, namely products sales, hotel and catering, property management, and surveying and design. Capital market partner **Charles Yim** also led the firm's team in the transaction.



JSA has successfully represented **Tata Communications** on defending an award in its favour in the High Court of Delhi. In a decisive and swift ruling at the very first hearing, the Delhi High Court dismissed a petition under Section 34 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act 1996 filed by the Union of India. The High Court emphasised that the Union of India should never have approached the court with such a meritless challenge. The High Court also directed that the judgment be placed before the Secretaries of the Ministry of Woman and Child Development and of the Department of Legal Affairs of India for necessary administrative directions. The High Court held that there was no absurdity and arbitrariness in the conclusions

arrived at by the Ld Sole Arbitrator, which are sine quo non for interference under Section 34 of the Act. Partner **Padmaja Kaul** led the firm's team in the matter.

Maples and Calder has acted as Cayman Islands counsel to **Black Sesame International Holding** on its IPO of 37 million shares, and the listing in Hong Kong. Black Sesame is an automotive-grade computing system-on-chips and SoC-based intelligent vehicle solution provider, and is one of the first specialist technology companies listed under the Listing Rules. The offering, which closed on August 8, 2024, raised approximately HK\$1.04 billion (US\$133.5m). Partner **Derrick Kan** led the firm's team in the transaction, while **Clifford Chance** advised on Hong Kong and US laws and **Zhong Lun Law Firm** advised as to Chinese law. The joint sponsors, **CICC** and **Huatai**, and the **underwriters** were represented by **Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati** as to Hong Kong and US laws and by **JunHe** as to Chinese law.

Rajah & Tann Singapore has acted for **PARAGON REIT Management** and **DBS Trustee**, the manager and trustee of PARAGON REIT, respectively, on the S\$78.5 million (US\$60m) divestment of The Rail Mall, Singapore. Senior partner **Norman Ho** and partners **Gazalle Mok** and **Shaun Ng** led the firm's team in the transaction.

Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co has advised **Juniper Networks** on securing an unconditional approval from the Competition Commission of India for its US\$14 billion acquisition by Hewlett Packard

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Enterprise. Competition partners **Aparna Mehra** and **Ritwik Bhattacharya** led the firm's team in the transaction, which is one of the largest deals in the global networking solutions sector. **Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom** advised Juniper on the international aspects, while **Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer** and **Touchstone Partners** advised **Hewlett Packard Enterprise** on the international and Indian aspects, respectively.

Simpson Thacher is advising **KKR** on the intention of FK, an entity owned by investment funds managed by KKR, to make a tender offer to acquire all the outstanding shares of Fuji Soft. Tokyo M&A partners **Noritaka Kumamoto** and **Jonathan Stradling** led the firm's team in the transaction.

Skadden has advised **Consonant Investment Management** on an equity offering by Invincible Investment of 939,750 new units, including the over-allotment option shares. Invincible Investment is a Japanese investment corporation which owns and operates real estate properties and other real estate-related assets. The global offering of up to ¥60 billion (US\$411m) closed on July 30, 2024. Invincible Investment's units are listed in Tokyo. Tokyo partner **Kenji Taneda** led the firm's team in the transaction.

S&R Associates has represented multi-national telecommunications company **Vodafone Group** on obtaining the approval of the Competition Commission of India for Vodafone's strategic partnership with Accenture Holdings, pursuant to a proposed acquisition of shares of Vodafone Shared

Operations, which provides shared services to Vodafone group entities. Competition practice head **Simran Dhir** and partner **Akshat Kulshrestha** led the firm's team in the transaction.

Trilegal has advised **Continuum Green Energy Pvt Ltd, Continuum Green Energy Ltd** and the founders, **Mr Arvind Bansal** and **Mr Vikash Saraf**, on a fundraise by Continuum Green Energy Pvt Ltd from Just Climate unit Climate Asset Fund I. Just Climate will invest Rs12.56 billion (US\$150m) to support solar-hybrid energy generation and storage projects across India. Corporate partners **Amit Khansaheb** and **Rahul Chugh**, supported by partners **Amit Khansaheb, Vishruta Kaul, Rudresh Singh, Nayantara Nag** and **Siddharth Dang**, led the firm's team in the transaction.

TT&A has advised **United States International Development Finance Corporation** on its secured loan facility, via an external commercial borrowing, of up to US\$75 million to Home First Finance Company India for the financing of loans to low-income borrowers in India. Partners **Gautam Saha** and **Pallavi Meena** led the firm's team in the transaction.

WongPartnership is advising **DBS Bank**, as financial adviser to Thai Beverage (ThaiBev), on a proposed swap of its shares in Frasers Property for the shares of TCC Assets in Fraser and Neave. ThaiBev, Frasers Property, and Fraser and Neave are listed in Singapore. Partners **Quak Fi Ling** and **Chiang Yuan Bo** are leading the firm's team in the transaction.



Annual Kuala Lumpur In-House Community Congress 2024:

Navigating ESG, Tech, and Legal Strategy for Tomorrow's In-House Counsel

The Kuala Lumpur In-House Community Congress 2024 was one of the largest legal gatherings in Malaysia, attracting over 150 in-house counsel and compliance professionals. Held at the Grand Hyatt, it featured leading law firms and industry experts, offering practical insights on the evolving legal landscape.

The event began with a panel discussion on “Beyond the Bottom Line: In-House Legal Department and ESG Leadership,” moderated by Rahul Prakash, Publishing Director of In-House Community. Esteemed panelists included Jia Yaw Kiu, partner at Kiu & Co., Dr. Syafrina Sharif, Global Head of ESG & Sustainability of Plaza Premium Group, and Vernon Samuel, General Counsel of Mercedes-Benz Malaysia. The discussion underscored

the crucial role in-house legal departments play in driving sustainability and corporate governance, sharing real-world case studies and actionable strategies to implement ESG initiatives effectively.

Following the ESG discussion, a mid-morning networking break allowed attendees to engage with one another and sponsors, including





Halim Hong & Quek, Trowers & Hamlins, Wei Chien & Partners, Zaid Ibrahim & Co. (in association with KPMG Law), and Robert Walters.

The Congress continued with a deep dive into the mechanics of Share Purchase Agreements (SPAs), led by Geoff Allen of Trowers & Hamlins. Allen's session offered a refresher on the key terms of SPAs and shared insights into how in-house counsel can ensure smooth transaction closings. Norinne Ira Dewal from Wei Chien & Partners followed with a presentation on "Red Flags in Transaction Due Diligence," which provided valuable advice on mitigating risk during transactions.



After a well-deserved lunch break, the focus shifted to technology with a panel on "AI, Fintech, and Everything In Between." Moderated by Nadarashnaraj Sargunraj of Zaid Ibrahim & Co., the session explored the transformative impact of technology on the legal sector. Panelists included Gan Zi Yang from KPMG Asia Pacific, Jonathan Lim of Zaid Ibrahim & Co., and Dr. Wan Khatina Nawawi of EconWorks, who delved into the legal challenges and opportunities arising from advancements in AI and FinTech.

Post the afternoon networking and refreshments break, the congress resumed with an insightful session led by Ong Johnson of Halim Hong & Quek on the Cyber Security Act 2024, covering its impact on Malaysia's National Critical Information Infrastructure (NCII) sectors. The session provided in-house counsel with a roadmap for compliance, focusing on the act's key provisions and outlook.



In closing, Rahul Prakash returned to the stage for final remarks, summarising the key takeaways from the day's sessions. To add a celebratory end to the event, Raja Ahmad Muzamir Shah from Robert Walters hosted a prize giveaway, offering a fun conclusion to what had been a highly successful and engaging Congress.



For sponsorship of the 2025 Kuala Lumpur congress, please email sponsorships@inhousecommunity.com

Getting to Know Bassem Daher

Bassem Daher, a seasoned corporate lawyer and partner at Galadari Advocates & Legal Consultants, reflects on his global career, major milestones, and insights into the evolving legal landscape in the UAE and beyond



YOU'VE HAD AN IMPRESSIVE CAREER IN CORPORATE LAW, INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENTS, AND TAX ACROSS UAE, LUXEMBOURG, THE UNITED STATES AND LEBANON. COULD YOU SHARE SOME INSIGHTS INTO YOUR JOURNEY IN THE LEGAL INDUSTRY AND THE MILESTONES THAT SHAPED YOUR CAREER?

My career began with a strong foundation that I gained in Boston where I had my solid legal formation, after which I moved to Luxembourg. Working in Luxembourg provided me with a robust understanding of cross-border deals both in Europe and worldwide. I was lucky to hit the ground running in the Grand-Duchy as my first deal was a major landmark banking M&A deal, BNP Paribas and Fortis Bank, an absolute milestone in my career: sleepless nights but worth every second! Another milestone is joining the world-leader in investor services, IQ-EQ group, where I joined as group head of MENA then promptly was promoted to Americas' CEO at age 27, the youngest by far between my peers. Based on this appointment I moved back to the United



Dahar with masterchef Akifumi Sakagami

States where I was exposed at a very young age to the highest level of professionalism and sophistication in local and cross-border deals, working directly with world leading companies and groups and practically living on a plane mostly in cross-Atlantic trips. That being said, I would say that the most important milestone in my life and career is moving to Dubai, where I wasn't too late to being part of these exciting times of building the most prominent jurisdiction of the future on all levels. I still enjoy being an ambassador of my host country around the world, working on advising and attracting the best leaders to our jurisdiction which overall score exceeds any other jurisdiction by far.

ARE THERE ANY RECENT TRANSACTIONS OR RESTRUCTURINGS YOU'VE WORKED ON THAT STANDOUT AS

PARTICULARLY TRANSFORMATIVE OR COMPLEX?

One particularly transformative recent transaction was advising on the restructuring of a multinational group, the largest in its field worldwide in terms of turnover but also jurisdiction coverage. I've worked on cross-border deals almost exclusively my entire career, but this one was on another level, as it involved "dozens" of jurisdictions. This deal involved intricate cross-border tax considerations and regulatory approvals, requiring coordination with legal teams in different countries. The complexity was heightened by the need to align the restructuring with both local regulations and international standards. Nothing very new in terms of my work, but the multiplicity of jurisdictions, some of them I was working with for the first time in my career, makes it the recent transaction that I can consider a significant milestone in my career.

THE UAE HAS SEEN SIGNIFICANT LEGAL REFORMS IN RECENT YEARS, PARTICULARLY AROUND CORPORATE AND BUSINESS LAWS. WHAT TRENDS OR CHANGES HAVE HAD THE GREATEST IMPACT ON YOUR PRACTICE?

In recent years, particularly since the pandemic, the UAE has indeed undergone significant legal reforms that have had a profound impact on corporate and business laws. The main goal of the legislator was and still is to enhance the “business friendliness” of the jurisdiction on the one hand, and to implement world best practices and standards on the other. Several key reforms stand out including but not limited to, the reform that “relaxed” foreign ownership restrictions, particularly allowing 100% foreign ownership in most sectors, which made the UAE even more attractive for international investors and businesses, significantly affecting how we advise clients on market entry and business structuring. Additionally, the introduction of corporate income taxation, while remaining the lowest corporate income tax worldwide, has positioned the UAE as

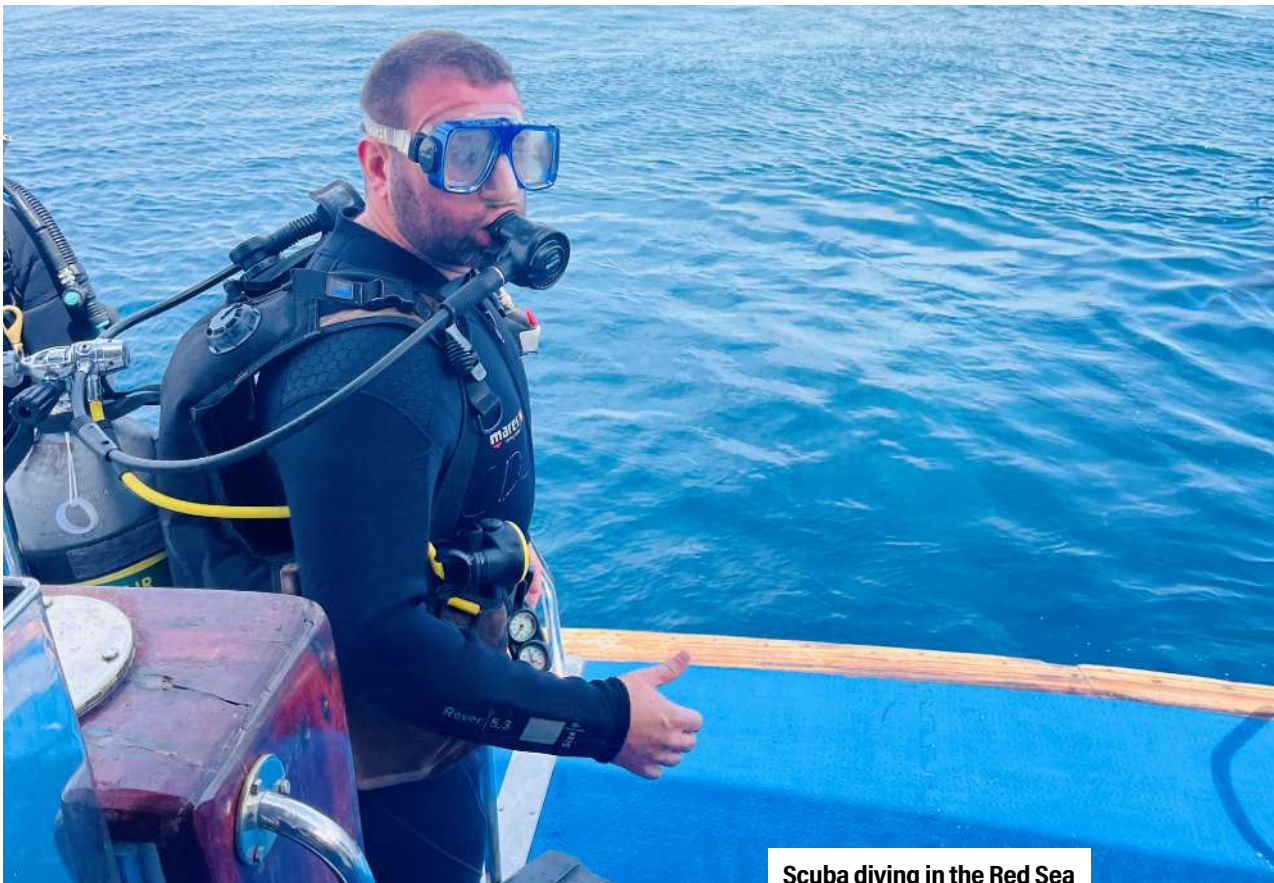
I would say that the most important milestone in my life and career is moving to Dubai

a world A-list player and has provided the jurisdiction with a major positioning in terms of benefiting from tax treaties and cross-border tax structuring, in addition to answering other concerns relating to best practices. In the same context, the

UAE has enhanced corporate governance requirements including more stringent disclosure and compliance requirements, which emphasises better transparency and accountability, and has led to more rigorous compliance practices. This has increased the focus on governance in our advisory work, ensuring that our clients adhere to these enhanced standards. In the same context but on a separate note, recent enhancements to Anti-Money Laundering (AML) regulations, including stricter due diligence and reporting requirements, have had a significant impact on financial and corporate transactions. These regulations have increased the emphasis on compliance and risk management in our practice, requiring us to integrate robust AML strategies into our advisory services.

YOU WORK WITH A DIVERSE CLIENT BASE, INCLUDING MULTINATIONALS, FUNDS, FAMILY BUSINESSES, AND HIGH-NET-WORTH INDIVIDUALS. HOW DO THE LEGAL NEEDS OF THESE GROUPS DIFFER, AND WHAT UNIQUE CHALLENGES DO YOU ENCOUNTER WHEN ADVISING THEM?

Working with multinationals, funds, family businesses, and high-net-worth individuals involves understanding and addressing diverse legal needs. Multinational corporations and funds often require rigorous regulatory compliance and complex structuring for investment vehicles. Family businesses might have a special focus on succession planning and maintaining family governance structures, both to be included and taken into consideration in most cases in any corporate or business legal work. High-net-worth individuals often seek bespoke solutions for estate planning and asset protection, and require a particular attention which is not always or easily understood and mastered



Scuba diving in the Red Sea

by many advisors. Each client, no matter their nature, presents unique challenges, and require a tailor-made approach in dealing with them. Communication, transparency and honesty between the client and their lawyer is always in my opinion the best common denominator to maintain a healthy, successful and long-term business relationship.

IN RECENT YEARS, THE UAE HAS CONTINUED TO POSITION ITSELF AS A GLOBAL BUSINESS HUB. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES LOOKING TO ESTABLISH A IN THE UAE?

My first advice would be: Do it sooner rather than later! The GCC region in general and the UAE in particular is offering a significant attractive positioning worldwide, with a peaceful and safe environment, a top tier infrastructure, world class education and healthcare, and the best professionals

competing to be here. Any international company has to be present on this market if it wants to maintain its international leading status. In this context, the UAE is offering sophisticated corporate and investment structures, both in mainland and the freezones, and the legislator doesn't fail to deliver. Another advice is to be properly advised and work with the right partners on the market: the UAE has its advantageous particularity which makes working with the right local advisers and partners a significantly beneficial journey.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU THINK EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES, LIKE AI AND BLOCKCHAIN, WILL PLAY IN CORPORATE LAW, PARTICULARLY IN AREAS LIKE FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS AND CONTRACT AUTOMATION?

Emerging technologies such as AI and blockchain are poised to revolutionise corporate

law. AI can streamline due diligence processes and enhance contract analysis through advanced data analytics. Blockchain offers significant potential in ensuring transparency and security in financial transactions. Implementing these technologies can lead to more efficient and accurate legal processes, but it also requires adapting to new legal challenges and ensuring compliance with evolving regulations. That being said, and as we've seen since the second technological revolution, the "human touch" has never been more important in decision making, orientation and leadership needed to wisely use these technologies.

Each client, no matter their nature, presents unique challenges, and require a tailor-made approach in dealing with them

FOR YOUNG LAWYERS ASPIRING TO SPECIALISE IN CORPORATE LAW IN THE UAE, WHAT SKILLS OR AREAS OF EXPERTISE WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THEY FOCUS ON TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL AND IMPACTFUL CAREER?

For young lawyers aiming to specialise in corporate law in the UAE or MENA, I recommend focusing on developing strong analytical skills and gaining expertise in cross-border transactions and international

regulations. Additionally, proficiency in both English and Arabic can be a significant asset, given the region's diverse legal environment. Building a network of professional relationships and staying abreast of legal and market trends are also crucial for a successful career. That being said, in this extremely competitive market, focusing on enhancing their soft skills is also crucial as their legal knowledge is not sufficient to compete under the circumstances.

WHEN YOU'RE NOT SUBMERGED IN CORPORATE DEALS AND LEGAL STRUCTURING, WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU? HOW DO YOU UNWIND FROM THE DEMANDS OF YOUR PRACTICE?

In most cases I will also be literally "submerged" as my best way to unwind is scuba diving. I am a certified deep diver, and I enjoy the beauty of the aquatic world, along with its meditative quiet pleasures and stunning visuals. Other than scuba diving, I can dare to call myself a foodie. I do enjoy trying new restaurants, meals and cuisines in the UAE or abroad. In part being a foodie makes me enjoy traveling to new destinations, of course along with discovering new cultures and the beautiful diversity that our planet offers. I also enjoy the simple pleasures, such as attending social, artistic or cultural events, or spending time with my family and close friends. These activities help me unwind and maintain a balanced perspective. "Recharging" helps me approach my work with renewed energy and focus, which is absolutely needed in our industry.

Does Technology Work For Us, Or Do We Work For Technology?




Join Paul Haswell, a partner at K&L Gates in Hong Kong, as he explores the transformative impact of technology on the legal profession in his new column for IHC Magazine. Paul offers insights into the challenges and opportunities for in-house and external counsel, providing thought-provoking perspectives on the future of law in the digital age.

At the time of writing, summer is coming to an end here in Hong Kong. That means a number of things. Firstly, the city tends to be quieter, as many people go away for the summer. Secondly, it's far too hot and humid in Hong Kong, which is probably precisely why so many people who can, decide to spend summer elsewhere. And thirdly, summer intern season is about to conclude. This means that for the last few months, the office in which I work is graced by a series of university students eager to get their first taste of life as a lawyer, and for those few months, I feel old as I tell the students what the job of a lawyer involves, as well as what it involved way back when I was at the very beginning of my legal career.

I qualified as a solicitor in the UK in the early 2000s, meaning that I was able to be a tech lawyer during a fascinating period of history. I witnessed the dot.com boom and

then the dot.com crash first-hand, and I can see its similarities with subsequent and significantly more recent booms in tech, such as cryptocurrency and bitcoin, social media, artificial intelligence (AI), and even the metaverse. But the students I speak to are often not interested in this so much as they are fascinated by the technology we use as lawyers, as well as the tech we used to use and how it shaped the profession.

Generative AI is one of the biggest developments in technology in years and is already being used by lawyers to assist in research, drafting and the automation of tasks that used to take lawyers hundreds of (possibly chargeable) hours. Presumably in a matter of years, we will take it all for granted, which made me think of the technology advances we take for granted now that have changed the profession during my career. Did they make the lives of lawyers easier, or more challenging?



As a trainee solicitor, I shared an office with a supervisor who was struggling to grasp the revolution that was e-mail. It seems hard to believe now, but every day I would watch my supervisor receive an e-mail, then have her PA print out the e-mail for her to read, then dictate a reply to the e-mail using a dictation machine (with miniature cassettes!), which her PA then typed out in hard copy for multiple rounds of amendments, only for the e-mail to finally be sent electronically by the PA. It was a daily circus, but it showed how a simple revolution we take for granted now was as new then as AI seems today.

A few years later in my career, I first discovered, then coveted, a Blackberry, which then were for senior partners only and out of the reach of a mere associate. Forget my mobile phone (a humble Nokia 3310 for those who remember them); imagine the convenience and time saving one would gain by having a Blackberry! Imagine being able to not only call and text but also receive and respond to e-mails anywhere and at any time. Just imagine the time we would save!

We know how that played out. Being able to send and receive e-mails anywhere and at any time meant that we soon began doing exactly that: responding to e-mails anywhere and at any time. We all have horror stories, whether it's responding to e-mails received on Christmas Day, keeping one's Blackberry or phone next to the bed to ensure you respond to e-mails no matter when they arrive, or spending an entire vacation feverishly tapping away on our phones. This typically resulted not only in us ruining holidays or special occasions, but also having to placate a grumpy friend, travelling companion or spouse as we missed a party, excursion, or anniversary.

The interns' response to my stories of tech revolutions gone by was one mixed with surprise (at how we worked before we had e-mail and smartphones) and horror. They noted that

somehow, we'd managed to use technology not to help us be more efficient and to save time, but to instead to make our lives more demanding, our work more time-consuming, and in some cases, potentially more challenging. I have to admit, they had a point.

All too often when we start using technology which should add efficiencies in our roles, we end up allowing that technology to make our lives more challenging. Whether that's as a result of the billable hour, or demands of our stakeholders, the industries in which we work, or our mindsets as lawyers. This needs to change, and indeed, the embrace of technologies such as AI should accelerate this, but one should never underestimate the ability of a lawyer to make their own job more difficult.

The good thing is, I think the next generation of lawyers may well change this approach, and the rollout of new AI based legal tech solutions should only increase efficiencies and encourage us to work smarter as well as harder. But then, perhaps our predecessors thought this when they were sending and receiving faxes at 5.30pm on a Friday in order to cause maximum inconvenience in a litigation or even a contract negotiation...

Only time (and tech) will tell.

Paul Haswell, Partner, K&L Gates

Paul Haswell is a Partner at K&L Gates's Hong Kong office, specialising in Technology Transactions and Sourcing. With over 20 years of experience, he focuses on TMT matters, including data and cybersecurity, telecommunications, and emerging technologies like AI and blockchain. A tech enthusiast since childhood, Paul has handled major technology disputes and offers a blend of legal expertise and passion for innovation.

Outside of his legal work, Paul is a tech and law podcaster and a DJ. He co-hosts the "Sunday Escape" radio show on RTHK and the podcast "Crimes Against Pop." A music lover with an extensive vinyl collection, Paul enjoys discovering and sharing new music. He's also a sci-fi fan, particularly of "Doctor Who."

Jolly Li of Boston Scientific on Leading in a Fast-Evolving Legal Landscape

In this Q&A, Jolly Li, General Counsel for Boston Scientific Greater China, discusses leading her 15-member legal and compliance team in a rapidly evolving market. With over two decades of experience across various industries, she reflects on talent development, work-life balance, selecting the right external legal partners, and Beagles.



COULD YOU PROVIDE OUR READERS WITH AN OVERVIEW OF YOUR TEAM'S SIZE AND STRUCTURE?

My team is responsible for providing comprehensive legal and compliance support across Boston Scientific Greater China. We have a total of 15 team members, including myself. The structure of the team is quite dynamic, allowing us to focus on both the legal and compliance aspects across a broad range of business activities, ensuring that we meet the regulatory and commercial needs of the region. Each member brings a diverse set of skills to the table, enabling us to work efficiently across different functions and deliver value in multiple areas, from regulatory compliance to contract management. Together, we form a cohesive unit that ensures the business is supported by strong legal frameworks.



Jolly Li with her team

COULD YOU SHARE A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY IN YOUR CAREER SO FAR AND HOW YOU ENDED UP IN YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

With over 20 years of experience in the legal field, I've been fortunate to work across a variety of industries and within different types of organisations, including state-owned enterprises, start-ups, and multinational corporations. These experiences have helped shape my understanding of both the legal landscape and the business world, enabling me to navigate the complexities of different organisations. I've been with Boston Scientific for 10 years now, and during this time, I've had the opportunity to handle a broad range of responsibilities, including legal and compliance matters, project management, and team leadership. Moving into my current role as General Counsel has given me the chance to take a more strategic view, focusing on how the legal function can proactively

support business goals and ensuring that our strategies are aligned with the company's long-term vision.

WHAT ARE SOME WORK CHALLENGES WHICH KEEP YOU UP AT NIGHT?

I often find myself thinking about the future, particularly about how we can continuously improve and bring the team to the next level. One of the areas I focus on is ensuring we have long-term sustainability in terms of talent development and leadership, especially as we serve a market as dynamic as Greater China. Adaptability is key, and I'm constantly thinking about how to ensure the team not only keeps up with market changes but also anticipates them. While these aren't "challenges" in the traditional sense, they are strategic goals that require thoughtful planning and consideration. It's about staying ahead of the curve and making sure the team is well-positioned to support the business as it evolves.

IN TODAY'S FAST-PACED LEGAL ENVIRONMENT, MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS PARAMOUNT. HOW DO YOU PERSONALLY PRIORITISE WELLBEING AMIDST THE DEMANDS OF YOUR ROLE AS GENERAL COUNSEL, AND WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU ADVOCATE FOR PROMOTING A HEALTHY WORK-LIFE BALANCE WITHIN YOUR LEGAL TEAM?

In a role as demanding as General Counsel, maintaining a healthy work-life balance is essential, both for personal wellbeing and for the long-term success of the team. Personally, I focus on promoting a culture of high efficiency within the team, where well-organised workflows and effective communication are key priorities. This not only boosts productivity but also helps to prevent burnout by ensuring that team members are working smarter, not just harder. I advocate for fostering a digital-first culture, where technology is leveraged to streamline processes and reduce unnecessary administrative burdens. This allows team members to focus on more strategic tasks and helps to create a balance between work demands and personal wellbeing, ensuring that no one is overburdened.

WHEN SELECTING A LAW FIRM FOR OUTSOURCING WORK, WHAT SPECIFIC QUALITIES DO YOU PRIORITISE? COULD YOU ELABORATE ON YOUR DECISION-MAKING PROCESS WHEN ENGAGING WITH EXTERNAL LEGAL PARTNERS?

When outsourcing legal work, the expertise of the external law firm in the relevant field is absolutely crucial. However, it's not just their technical expertise that matters—I also place great emphasis on the firm's understanding of our industry and the specific business challenges we face. Typically, when we encounter a new or particularly complex matter, we hold

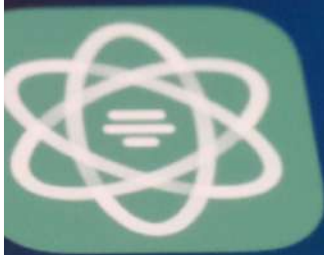
interviews with several reputable law firms that have proven experience in the relevant area of law. We evaluate not only their legal knowledge but also their approach to problem-solving and their ability to align with our business objectives. Once we engage a firm, we carry out an annual review process, where we assess the quality of the work delivered, gather feedback from internal stakeholders, and evaluate the overall efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the partnership.

OUTSIDE OF YOUR PROFESSIONAL ENDEAVOURS, WHAT ARE SOME PERSONAL PASSIONS OR HOBBIES THAT YOU ENJOY PURSUING?

Earlier this year, I became aware of a charity initiative run by a Beagle Commune that rescues beagle dogs retired from pharmaceutical clinical trials and facilitates their adoption. This cause struck a chord with me, as it aligns with my personal values of giving back and contributing to society. I'm considering how I can become more involved in similar charitable efforts in the future, possibly using my legal skills to support animal welfare organisations.

Adaptability is key, and I'm constantly thinking about how to ensure the team not only keeps up with market changes but also anticipates them

In terms of hobbies, I have a strong passion for photography. It's a pastime that allows me to disconnect from the demands of work and immerse myself in the beauty of the world around me. Photography offers a way to explore new perspectives, and it has helped me appreciate the finer details in life, which can often be overlooked in the hustle and bustle of day-to-day business.



Chat Smith



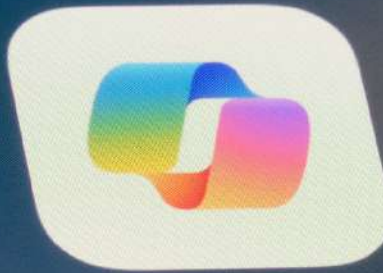
AI Chat



AIChatChatBot...



ChatGPT



Copilot

Artificial Intelligence in the Philippines:

Latest Regulatory Developments and Challenges

RICHARD HENRICK I. BELTRAN, RACHELLE ANN L. GO

When news of the use of Artificial Intelligence (“AI”) in everyday tasks broke, people from all over the world had mixed reactions. Some welcomed AI as a means to level-up their day-to-day activities and took this as an opportunity to innovate the processing of their usual tasks. Meanwhile, some feared that AI would render some matters as useless, decrease job opportunities, and pose threats to people’s safety and their fundamental rights. As AI rapidly changed the world and how the world operated, the need for a comprehensive legislation that would regulate the use of AI and protect each nation became more apparent.

I. The EU AI Act

The European Union (“EU”) heeded the call for regulation by advocating for the enactment of the Artificial Intelligence Act (“AI Act”). Published on 12 July 2024 in the Official Journal of the EU, the AI Act came into force on 01 August 2024 and will be fully applicable in 2026. The AI Act was a welcome development not for the users of AI in various fields. By addressing the potential risks associated with AI, the AI Act helped to ensure that AI is developed and used in a way that benefits society as a whole.

Highlights of the EU AI Act

The AI Act is the first comprehensive regulation aimed at establishing a common legal

framework that will govern the use of AI systems not only within the EU but also in other parts of the world. It aims to ensure that measures for transparency, traceability, non-discrimination, and environmental sustainability are in place.

The AI Act classifies AI systems into four (4) risk categories:

1. **Unacceptable risk** - AI systems that are deemed to pose a significant threat to safety and fundamental rights are banned (e.g., classifying individuals or groups based on social behavior or personal traits);
2. **High-risk** - AI systems that can be used in applications that pose a significant risk to the health, safety, or fundamental rights of individuals are subject to strict requirements (e.g., those used in critical infrastructure or law enforcement). These AI systems must be properly regulated by ensuring that risk assessment systems are put in place;
3. **Limited Risk** - AI systems that do not pose a significant risk but should nevertheless be subject to transparency obligations, i.e., users interacting with the application must be aware that they are interacting with an AI; and
4. **Minimal Risk** - Systems that do not fall within the three (3) categories above and are therefore, unregulated.

Most of the obligations indicated in the AI Act falls on providers (or developers) of AI systems that may be considered as “high-risk”. The provisions of the AI Act shall apply to providers/developers that intend to place or put into service in the EU market the AI system, regardless of whether the provider or developer is based in the EU or in another country and to providers who are not in the EU or have not placed the system

in the EU market but where the high-risk AI system’s output is used in the EU. On the other hand, users that use AI in a professional capacity also have obligations under the AI Act. The obligations apply only to users located in the EU and to users outside of the EU but where the AI system’s output is used in the EU.

Meanwhile, General Purpose AI (“GPAI”), i.e., AI systems that have wide ranges of uses and can perform generally applicable functions, are also regulated under the AI Act. GPAI model providers must provide technical documentation, instructions for use, comply with copyright laws, and provide a summary about the content. Unless free and open license GPAI models present a systemic risk, its providers only need to comply with copyright laws and provide the training data summary. All providers of GPAI models that present systemic risks must conduct model evaluations, testing, track and report serious incidents and ensure that cybersecurity measures are in place.

II. AI Regulation in the Philippines

A. Pending Legislation

The Philippines does not currently have any principal law governing the deployment and use of AI. However, the following pending bills aim to increase research on AI and its potential in helping improve Filipinos’ lives:

1. **House Bill No. 7396 or the proposed “Act Promoting the Development and Regulation of AI in the Philippines”** seeks to create the Artificial Intelligence Development Authority (“AIDA”), which will oversee the development and deployment of AI technologies, ensure compliance with AI ethics, principles, and guidelines, and protect the rights and

welfare of individuals and communities affected by AI.

2. **House Bill No. 7913 or the proposed “Artificial Intellection (AI) Regulation Act”** aims to establish the Philippine Council on Artificial Intelligence, which is a policy-making and advisory body of experts under the Department of Sciences and Technology which will conduct an evaluation on the impact of AI systems and development of AI economies in the country, review existing policies on AI, and determine structures or parameters under which AI systems may operate in the country
3. **House Bill No. 7983 or the proposed “Artificial Intelligence Development Act”** aims to pursue the development of AI for workforce development, and research and development with the end goal of harnessing the potentials of AI for the benefit of the Filipinos, local industries, and the Philippine economy.
4. **Bill No. 9448 and Senate Resolution No. 791 or the proposed “Protection of Labor Against Artificial Intelligence Automation Act”** prohibits the replacement of human workers, displacement, loss of security of tenure, or diminution of existing salaries and/or benefits because of the adoption and use of AI and automation technologies in the workplace.
5. **House Bill No. 10385 or the proposed “AI Regulation Act”** seeks to establish the Artificial Intelligence Bureau, which shall have the power regulate the use, governance, and development of AI in the Philippines.
6. **House Bill No. 10460** proposed an amendment to the Labor Code of the Philippines by inserting new articles on the effects of AI in the workforce.

B. Current Laws Governing AI

While there are currently no laws that specifically regulate AI in the Philippines, the uses and effects of AI are generally covered by the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (R.A. No. 10173), and the Intellectual Property Code (R.A. No. 8293).

1. Data Privacy Act of 2012 (“DPA”)

The use of AI Systems may involve the collection and processing of personal data (i.e., sensitive personal information and personal information) system through automated processes. The DPA governs the protection and processing of personal data in the Philippines in three (3) ways:

- a. There must be a lawful basis to use or process personal data. Before any entity may be able to collect or use personal data, the data subject must either give express consent or there must be some legal obligation the information is going to be used for.
- b. Entities that maintain personal data have certain obligations, such as confidentiality and integrity of such data. Such entities are required to have appropriate and reasonable measures to prevent data breaches or possible loss of data. They are also required to notify data subjects in case there is any data breach.
- c. Data subjects have certain rights with respect to their personal data, such as the rights to access and erasure of their personal data, and the right to damages for any violation of their rights.

2. Intellectual Property Code (“IP Code”)

Under the IP Code, original literary and artistic works, such as computer programs, belong to the author of the work and are protected from the moment of creation. A “computer program” is defined as “a set of instructions expressed in words,

codes, schemes or in any other form, which is capable, when incorporated in a medium that the computer can read, of causing the computer to perform or achieve a particular task or result.

“While companies are able to innovate and continually address the gaps in its systems using AI, its consequences on the workforce may have serious effects”

The author of the copyrighted work shall have the exclusive right to carry out, authorise or prevent the following acts, among others:

- a. reproduction of the work or substantial portion thereof;
- b. the first public distribution of the original and each copy of the work by sale or other forms of transfer of ownership; and
- c. rental of the original or a copy of the computer program.

Moreover, the IP Code provides the “decompilation” or the reproduction of the code and translation of the forms of the computer program to achieve the interoperability with other programs of an independently created computer program is considered fair use and not copyright infringement.

III. Pressing Concerns On the Use of AI

A. AI in the Workplace

The use of AI in the workplace may lead to more efficient production lines and operations management. By way of example, some leading companies in the Philippines have already deployed AI systems to handle

collections from its users. The use of AI systems allow companies to effectively remind users with overdue accounts, address customer issues, and increase efficiency in its collections.

While the use of AI sounds promising, concerns as to its effect on the workforce have been raised. By installing AI systems, tasks that are usually delegated to laborers may now be performed by AI systems, removing the need to maintain a large workforce. Thus, while companies are able innovate and continually address the gaps in its systems using AI, its consequences on the workforce may have serious effects.

The legislation on the use of AI in the workplace should therefore seek a balance with the rights of labourers.

B. Use in Law Enforcement

AI has the potential to transform how our law enforcement agencies prevent, investigate, and solve crimes.

In line with the President Marcos’ drive for digitalisation of government services, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (“MMDA”) has established a state-of-the-art command center that aims to promote a safe and smart metropolis using smart technologies and data analytics (i.e., AI). Facial recognition and behavioral analytics will be used by MMDA officers to monitor vehicle classification, car counter, license plate, and drivers’ facial recognition thereby allowing the MMDA to monitor traffic more efficiently.

However, concerns relating to the infringement in civil liberties and privacy rights have been raised by the public. While AI may potentially allow crime prevention, the use of

AI in law enforcement must be balanced with the basic rights of citizens.

C. Education

The use of AI in education has the potential to address some of the biggest challenges in education. Students may receive personalised learning programs that will cater to their individual needs, leading to enhanced engagement and motivation levels in studying. However, this has also raised concerns on how teachers are able to detect that the students have turned in AI-generated homework or quizzes. AI-generated essays threaten to undermine learning and foster cheating issues.

IV. The Need for a comprehensive AI Legislation

While some Philippine laws like the DPA and the IP Code address some of the risk that comes with the use of AI, there is a need to enact a law that would specifically govern the use, development and risks associated with AI. A bill that comprehensively addresses the use of the AI in every sector is yet to be proposed in the Philippines. Similar to what legislators have done when they patterned the DPA from the General Data Protection and Regulation, Philippine legislators may draw inspiration from the AI act by adopting a risk-based approach and providing safeguards and measures against possible breach of privacy, safety, and fundamental rights while promoting innovation and efficiency.

Overall, the benefits that AI may bring to every aspect of the society must be balanced with the need to protect the people who will be affected by AI. This can be achieved by having a comprehensive AI law in the Philippines similar to the legislation passed by the European Union.



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From Silo to Strategy:

Creating Future-Ready Legal Teams

The role of in-house legal teams has expanded impressively in recent years, moving beyond providing legal counsel to becoming strategic business partners. Thriving in this environment requires agility, diversified skills and willingness to engage with technology.

The problem is that lawyers aren't exactly known for these characteristics. Lawyers are trained to follow the law, which, by definition, isn't meant to change regularly or cope very well with "agility." Nevertheless, with the world moving so fast, especially post-Covid, the more observant lawyers are certainly focusing on developing a love for continuous learning, setting up cross-departmental collaboration and finding new ways to integrate technology – all in the effort to create a future-ready legal department.

John Alexander Gregorio, head of compliance APAC at Roche, emphasised the number one key for fostering a growth mindset within legal teams is that team members must regularly reflect on their personal and professional goals:

“What future do you see? Where do you want to be? How do you want to get there? These are



John Alexander Gregorio, Roche

the questions my team asks itself regularly,” Gregorio said.

Gregorio champions a culture of continuous learning and feedback, comparing the legal team to a relay race where success depends on each member’s contribution and overall learning from experience. By encouraging a growth mindset, legal departments can become more adaptable and resilient in the face of change, he said.

Are the robots to be feared?

Part of this growth mindset is embracing technology to improve efficiency and streamline workflows. Noon’s general counsel Dhruv Paul recommended using technology, including AI, to reduce a team’s dependence on routine work by implementing playbooks and templates.

Paul cautioned against creating white elephants and suggested that legal departments should avoid overloading expectations by trying to build all-encompassing solutions right from the start, focusing instead on identifying the “low-hanging fruit” of the small, repetitive tasks that can be automated first and incrementally building out solutions in line with increased adoption within the organisation.



Vijaykumari Karunakaran,
Gerab National Enterprises

“Identifying the most repetitive ‘standard’ contract and letter requests and finding a management solution that enables automated template generation can streamline approval and signing processes.

“Use the free time technology gives you to focus on solving complex matters, keeping abreast of the ever-changing regulatory environment, and learning how to leverage AI to increase efficiency,” Paul said.



Dhruv Paul, Noon

By taking incremental steps with technology, legal teams can build confidence and manage change more effectively, which is often a stumbling block for larger organisations.

Innovative technology was equally crucial for Vijaykumari Karunakaran, group legal counsel at Gerab National Enterprises. She agreed that legal teams can find a lot of extra depth when using AI tools to handle routine tasks more efficiently, which means they can focus on more complex and value-added activities. She said the potential benefits of AI are vast, including enhanced efficiency, reduced human error and the ability to handle more complex tasks.

Konexo head of technology and transformation at Babar Hayat emphasised the need for legal teams to take a measured approach to AI adoption.

“Generative AI has intrigued legal departments, but before adoption, teams must assess benefits, understand limitations, and develop responsible implementation approaches,” he said.

Hayat advocates for using technology consultancy services to assist in identifying where AI can make the most significant impact.



Sandeep Chokshy, Expro

Such a thoughtful approach ensures that AI adoption is purposeful, rather than just the “cool” new thing. Rather than be wooed by AI, legal teams must be rational in first understanding their pain points and how AI can best help (if at all). By doing so, cutting-edge technology will be used to solve real problems rather than implemented simply for the sake of innovation, Hayat said.

For example, AI’s role in contract management has been one of its most impactful contributions to legal workflow. Sandeep Chokshy, managing regional counsel for Expro in MENA and ESSA, said AI-powered platforms have made the contract management process seamless across different departments.

“The AI-powered contract management platform speeds up the review process by automatically tagging data and offering redline suggestions. They also store contracts in a centralised location, making them easily accessible for future use,” Chokshy said.



Mai Massoud, DHL Express MENA

In addition to faster contract review, Chokshy pointed out the platform’s ability to remind a legal team when contracts are up for renewal, reducing the risk of missed deadlines and improving overall efficiency. Not to mention that it saves a lot of money.

A notable success at DHL was the automation of its gifts, hospitality and donations management system. The process used to be managed manually but was “time-consuming and error-prone,” explained DHL Express MENA head of compliance Mai Massoud. The new system not only streamlined operations but also improved decision-making by delivering data-driven insights from multiple regions.



Jolly Li, Boston Scientific

“A successful strategy pairs automation with human expertise,” she noted, adding that integrating technology just for the sake of it can lead to inefficiencies.

YBA Kanoo senior legal advisor Alan Edgar said AI-powered tools have already transformed contract management processes by automating routine tasks like drafting and review and dropping the risk of human error to negligible levels.

Edgar said compliance aspect is crucial in industries like logistics, where regulations are constantly evolving. In that respect, AI is already doing wonders for helping legal teams stay ahead by automating compliance monitoring and

**Alan Edgar, YBA Kanoo**

document management, freeing up legal teams to keep an eye on the big picture for their firms.

Because AI is proving to be such a versatile tool, it has already become a strategic asset. Boston Scientific general counsel Jolly Li said the integration of digital tools in their legal department has led to faster and more informed decision-making.

“We use data-driven decision-making to manage risks and develop effective legal programmes,” she said. Her team can now better anticipate risks and adjust their legal strategies accordingly.

While the benefits of AI in legal workflows are evident, some professionals have raised concerns about the ethical implications of using AI. Ahmad Zaki, senior vice president at AI Hamra, warned of the potential risks associated with AI, such as data privacy and cybersecurity threats. He said in-house lawyers must be vigilant about understanding the limitations of AI and conducting regular audits of AI-generated outcomes, and they should be involved in any AI rollout to ensure transparency and accountability in AI algorithms.

Zaki also pointed out that AI systems could inadvertently perpetuate biases present in their training data. In legal departments, where decision-making must be objective and fair, this is a major concern. Zaki stressed the need for ethical frameworks and careful monitoring to ensure that AI is used responsibly.

It’s a similar story at Nestlé Malaysia & Singapore, said Timothy Lim, Nestlé’s Director of Legal & Compliance for Singapore and Regional Businesses. Automation has significantly reduced Nestlé’s time spent on drafting and reviewing, starting with confidentiality and extension agreements.

“AI allows our team to focus on strategic decision-making, so we can handle a higher volume of contracts and improve turnaround times without compromising quality,” Lim said.

Looking ahead, AI is best seen as a tool, not a replacement for lawyers. As Kaidrian Yu, chief executive of Makebell Ltd, explained the future of AI in legal workflows will involve collaboration between humans and machines.

**Ahmad Zaki, AI Hamra**

“The ability of AI to offer substantial gains in legal productivity is finally available, but legal users must competently train AI to ensure it aligns with their needs,” Yu said.

However, Yu echoed the warnings from Ahmad Zaki that there are still concerns about data security and the reliability of cloud services. For this reason, some legal departments may opt for smaller AI models hosted on local servers to maintain greater control over their data. But it truly does seem that the winners will be those who integrate AI into their legal workflows.

Don't stop learning

A consistent theme among legal leaders was the need for continuous learning. Indeed, Yusuf bin Ahmed Kanoo Group senior legal advisor Alan Edgar said that “continuous learning is the currency of future readiness.”



Wesley Wang, Valmet China

He advocated for every legal team to nurture a culture of ongoing professional development, including workshops, seminars and certifications, to make sure everyone remains informed about the latest trends and is equipped with the skills necessary to navigate a rapidly changing legal landscape.

At Boston Scientific, general counsel Jolly Li highlighted the importance of employee enrichment, which includes regular training on new regulations and best practices, as well as knowledge-sharing initiatives within the department. Li said legal teams must stay informed about regulatory changes and develop a robust compliance strategy that includes risk assessments and trend analysis.

A big motivation in continuous learning is to help legal teams move away from being viewed as mere “deal killers” and adopt a proactive role within their company.

Valmet China legal director Wesley Wang said it is imperative that legal teams position themselves as business enablers by offering practical solutions that align with business goals while



Kapil Kirpalani, Peak XV (formerly Sequoia Capital)

managing legal risks effectively. To get there, every mistake must be seen as a learning opportunity and team members need to be encouraged to tackle challenges.

A better understanding of the full picture of a company will also help legal teams to navigate regulatory changes, particularly in highly regulated sectors. Kapil Kirpalani, Global Head of Compliance at Peak XV (formerly Sequoia Capital), stressed the importance of having an adequate compliance programme that goes beyond written policies.

He suggested implementing “hard stops” in databases to prevent business with sanctioned entities, providing targeted training to high-risk employees and ensuring that financial controls are in place for high-risk transactions. This can only be done if lawyers can understand the company at a holistic, 30,000ft level.

Dag Ove Solsvik, head of legal (Maritime) at DNV, advocated for a proactive approach to regulatory



Sesto Vecchi, Russin & Vecchi

Why technology can be a lawyer's best friend

Technology changes affect everyone, even lawyers. So, how can in-house legal teams stay ahead of the game while juggling their day-to-day responsibilities?



Karishma Riddell, Managing Director, Hong Kong, LOD Consulting (Hong Kong) Limited
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Karishma Riddell, Managing Director at LOD Law in Hong Kong, said demonstrating the strategic value of the legal department is the first step toward fostering a culture of continuous development since in-house legal teams are often seen as cost centres. To counter this perception, teams should implement key performance indicators (KPIs) that track not just legal outcomes but also prove that their work truly does align with the broader goals of business.

"Measuring the adoption of self-serve tools, cost management and collecting internal feedback and time saved provides valuable insights into the efficacy of the legal team. And, in turn, these new efficiencies frees up time for training and development," Riddell said.

Her colleague Mark Dodd, Head of Middle East, Lawyers On Demand (LOD) added that efficiency in legal departments is not simply about doing more with less; it's about doing the right things with precision, foresight and strategic alignment, he explained. Collaboration is key here. Embedding themselves within other departments creates a proactive legal team that can anticipate challenges before they arise.

"A proactive approach helps resolve potential problems before they escalate, allowing the legal team to focus on strategic growth rather than being trapped in reactive problem-solving," he said.

Simmons & Simmons Partner Sarah James took a different angle and noted that continuous learning in legal teams starts and ends with people. Success, she said, hinges upon an ability to attract, develop and retain the right talent.

James suggested that legal departments invest in teaching their teams a diverse range of skill sets, from technological proficiency to strategic thinking, while also fostering a culture of continuous learning.

"After all, the success of any technology relies on people's openness to change and how well an organisation fosters a learning mindset. There is a huge need for a structured approach to professional development, with training programmes, mentoring and recruitment strategies that



Mark Dodd, Head of Middle East, Lawyers On Demand (LOD)
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She also underscored the importance of flexibility in staffing. Interim legal professionals, for example, can bring fresh perspectives and best practices to an in-house team. This blending of permanent and temporary staff helps in-house departments stay agile, while encouraging knowledge transfer and continuous learning.

New developments in technology also make it easier than ever to get back to the basics. The higher up the food



**Sarah James, Partner, Head of Adaptive
Simmons & Simmons**
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chain a lawyer rises, the more their days will include the task of helping the company bring in more work. In-house lawyers should be leveraging the many available digital tools to assist in becoming better salespeople as well.

Coach and trainer for lawyers, Stephen Hopkins said one challenge that often flies under the radar is the gap in leadership and business development training for lawyers transitioning into management roles. With the rise of hybrid working and the pressure to meet billable hour targets, on-the-job training in these crucial areas has significantly decreased.

changes. “In today’s complex environment, we must anticipate regulatory trends and turn challenges into strategic opportunities” Solsvik said. He further emphasized that “by closely collaborating across functions, with external law firm partners and by using the opportunities provided by AI and Data Analytics to actively engage with regulators, legal teams can help their companies shape the regulatory landscape. This proactive approach transforms legal departments from cost centres to value creators, driving innovation and competitive advantage in an increasingly regulated world.” This combination of formal and informal learning helps build a well-rounded and future-ready legal department. Promoting continuous learning will help legal teams to not only stay ahead of regulatory

“Some firms have identified this gap and are running programmes to plug it. For legal teams, offering relevant training that focuses on practical skills—like building client relationships or managing teams—is key to preparing lawyers for leadership,” Hopkins said.

Tools like AI are already excellent dojos for testing ideas, strategies and pitches – and getting decent feedback. Hopkins said role playing a virtual client or a phone meeting using these tools is a great way to apply new skills in a safe environment.

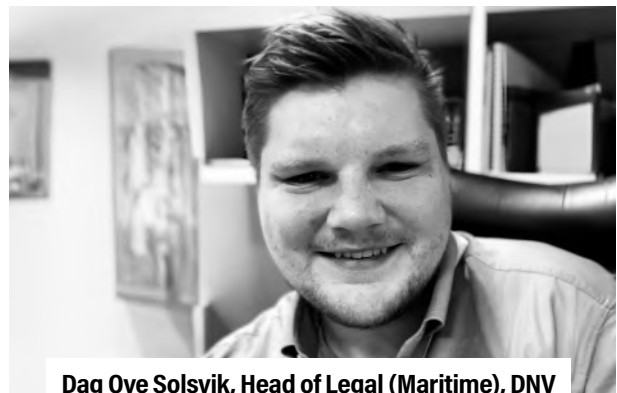
“For some lawyers this exercise is life changing!” Hopkins said.



Stephen Hopkins
Stephen Hopkins Coaching & Training
Stephen@stephenhopkinscoaching.com

changes but also position themselves as proactive business partners who don’t say “no” all the time.

According to Russin & Vecchi founding partner Sesto Vecchi, internal cross-training is often overlooked in companies, which is a shame because



Dag Ove Solsvik, Head of Legal (Maritime), DNV



Khalid Khan, Seddiqi Holdings

informal communication between teams can be highly effective in passing on skills and ideas.

“People with certain skill sets should be persuaded to share their skills,” Vecchi explained, adding that this helps break down silos and broadens perspectives.

Lawyers can also drive change by presenting new initiatives, such as whistleblowing systems, which are often underused in mid-sized companies. “In-house counsel can step up and present new options,” Vecchi says, stressing the importance of legal teams as agents of innovation.

It’s all about teamwork

Khalid Khan, group senior legal director at Seddiqi Holdings, said good continuous learning should also include finding new ways for lawyers to boost collaboration between their teams and other departments in a company.



Faith Wong, Kuala Lumpur Kepong Berhad

Khan said that legal professionals must build strong relationships and actively engage with non-legal teams to better understand the wider business. He is spearheading this approach with initiatives like “Business 4 Legal” talks, where senior leaders from non-legal departments educate the legal team on the business’s operational aspects, and “Legal 4 Business” talks, where the legal team explains legal processes to their colleagues.

Cross-departmental collaboration is essential for legal teams to stay agile and relevant, said Kuala Lumpur Kepong Berhad legal counsel Faith Wong. Breaking down silos and actively engaging with other departments can only lead to a situation where in-house counsel provides better and more tailored advice, she said.



Vanessa Ziea, Steelcase

Wong shared her personal experience of traveling to remote areas to better understand her company’s operations. This hands-on approach helped her build stronger relationships with colleagues and provided her with valuable insights into how she could add value.

Steelcase Asia Pacific senior corporate counsel Vanessa Ziea said cross-departmental collaboration is about keeping legal teams relevant.

“In these times of change, we are constantly trying to reposition and find our way,” she noted. For legal teams, it’s no longer sufficient to rely solely on their expertise. The ever-changing

nature of business requires legal departments to depend on other teams to navigate new challenges.



Yajing Gu, BNP Paribas China

Ziea shared a compelling example where her team collaborated with IT departments across different markets to promote sensitive information awareness. This collaboration allowed them to tailor their messaging to suit each office's unique setup, ensuring a more significant impact with the awareness campaign. The success of this project showed how essential collaboration was for achieving desired outcomes.

Efficiency is a cornerstone of any successful legal department, and collaboration is a key strategy in achieving it. Alan Edgar at YBA Kanoo advocated for treating efficiency in legal work as a "team sport" and collaboration as the "winning strategy."

Edgar explained how his department's collaboration with finance, compliance and operations enabled legal risks to be integrated into broader business strategies. This ensured that legal advice is not only sound but was also aligned with the company's objectives.

Moreover, by working closely with other departments, legal teams can streamline workflows, eliminate redundancies, and improve decision-making processes. Edgar's team has implemented regular inter-departmental meetings and workshops to ensure that legal concerns



Penny Koo, AIA Singapore

are discussed in the context of broader business goals, enhancing their strategic value.

This concept of business partnering was echoed by BNP Paribas China head of legal Yajing Gu who noted that the business department should be viewed as more than just a client of the legal department.

"In-house legal counsel must function as part of the team," Gu explained, adding that the ultimate goal of both legal and business departments is to strengthen the company's governance and drive growth. Building trust and effective communication between departments creates a virtuous cycle of collaboration, Gu said.

The evolving role of legal departments has placed in-house counsels in a more prominent position within organisations. As Penny Koo, General Counsel and Company Secretary at AIA Singapore, explained, the counsel's role has expanded beyond technical legal advice to



Nguyen Le Bich Dao, Manulife Investment Management Vietnam

operating as strategic business partners. This includes providing counsel to other business teams on strategic business direction, corporate governance and risk management. Fundamentally, an in-house counsel's role is to empower the workplace to make informed and risk-conscious decisions. Koo shared that by fostering early, open dialogues during strategic planning, legal professionals can guarantee their advice is not only legally sound but also commercially practical. Koo's insights reflect the broader trend of legal departments moving away from reactive "fire-fighting" and towards proactive, enterprise-wide risk management that drive long-term business success.



Edward Tung, ORI Capital

Cross-departmental collaboration also allows legal departments to shift from being reactive to becoming proactive, said Nguyen Le Bich Dao, head of legal and compliance at Manulife Investment Management Vietnam

She shared a case where her team collaborated closely with operations, product development, IT and marketing to implement a mutual fund project. The teams were able to expedite the process of obtaining necessary licenses while ensuring compliance. This close coordination led to the project's success, significantly increasing the number of investors.

Cross-departmental collaboration is not just about improving efficiency or achieving short-term goals; it is about building a future-ready legal



Abdullah AlGhamdi, Saudi Telecom Company

department that can adapt to the complexities of modern business.

To achieve this, legal departments must foster a culture of open communication, trust, and mutual respect with other functions. Whether it's collaborating with IT teams to manage sensitive information, working with operations to streamline processes, or engaging with finance to integrate legal risks into business strategies, collaboration is the key to success.

But is it all 'green'?

Change is all well and good, but there's no certainty that it will lead to a more sustainable world. Over the years, sustainability has become an integral part of corporate strategy, with in-house lawyers playing a critical role in navigating and embedding Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles into business operations.

As legal departments take on greater responsibility for sustainability, their influence now extends beyond traditional compliance and risk management. They are at the forefront of shaping corporate policies and ensuring that companies not only meet regulatory standards but also contribute positively to society and the environment.

For some companies, the primary focus of sustainability lies in social impact rather than environmental considerations. ORI Capital head



Jeffery Tan, Jardine Cycle & Carriage

of legal and compliance Edward Tung said his team tracks and reports social impact metrics for biotech startups.

With a focus on diseases targeted by the firm's portfolio companies, as well as the potential and current number of patients benefitting from new treatments, Tung's team focuses on accuracy and transparency by using rigorous due diligence and monitoring processes.

"Beyond just collecting and reporting on these figures, we ensure their accuracy through rigorous due diligence and monitoring, while providing guidance to portfolio companies on tracking their own social impact," he said.

This emphasis on social sustainability extends to diversity and inclusion within the company's portfolio. The legal team regularly reviews hiring policies and reports on gender and ethnic diversity, a key element of ORI Capital's efforts to boost long-term value creation while adhering to ESG practices.

In many organisations, lawyers are seen as strategic partners who help embed sustainability into the company's core operations. Abdullah AlGhamdi, senior governance consultant at Saudi Telecom Company, said legal specialists are business partners who understand the company's challenges and provide guidance that contributes to long-term growth.

This role continues the conversation in the previous section about cross-departmental collaboration in that legal departments must have a deep understanding of the business if they are to implement sustainability measures.

In some cases, in-house lawyers are now taking on dual roles, stepping into positions like Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) as businesses realise the overlap between legal expertise and sustainability leadership.

Jeffery Tan is the group general counsel and CSO at Jardine Cycle & Carriage Ltd. He discussed how lawyers are increasingly well-suited for the CSO role.

"Protecting a corporation's value requires the creation of a transparent and robust management process," Tan said. His legal background gives him a unique advantage in navigating the complexities of ESG, especially with the ever-changing landscape of regulatory reporting, sustainability disclosures and activist stakeholders.

Tan's dual role reflects the morphing, adapting and evolving expectations of corporate sustainability leaders, particularly as ESG principles become more embedded in corporate governance. In-house lawyers, with their experience in managing compliance and navigating litigation, are often in a prime position to handle these challenges.

In-house lawyers find themselves at the centre of these efforts, using their skills to enhance social impact, improve diversity and contribute to sustainable growth strategies. As the legal, technology and sustainability landscapes continue to converge, in-house legal teams are well-positioned to lead the way in creating meaningful, lasting change for their companies and society at large.



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The last in-house lawyer

Ian White

Will the last in-house lawyer turn the lights out please?

Oh, not another depressing missive you ask? Well not really just some practical advice. Part of the advice I often give to business lawyers is to read about business. One of my favourite business writers is Charles Handy. I like Handy because he trained as a classicist but had a career in business which, while it is very far removed from classics, also has similarities and Handy often uses stories from classics to illustrate his points. It kind of makes business interesting. It also reminds me of my own background (I am not claiming to be in the same league as Handy you understand) as I decided late in my time at school to become a lawyer. Before this I was going to be an actor yah know! Anyway, I was lucky enough to listen to a young lawyer – John Denniss (now HHJ Denniss) – who advised me if I wanted to be a lawyer not to read law but to study something interesting (apologies in advance to the many, many law graduates whom I have just offended and who are on the whole interesting souls). Sitting on a beach in Ibiza sipping beer not

yet being available as a degree subject, I studied history instead. It hopefully broadened my mind. It has made me think and reflect.

Anyway, you get the point.

Back to Handy. His excellent book is *The Second Curve: Thoughts on Reinventing Society*. What is the Second Curve I hear you ask? Basically, it is the principle that you should change before you hit a peak as it is much harder to do so once you are on a downward spiral. Handy is a prime example – he has been an executive, academic, consultant and author always changing at the right time or just before. The book contains some scary facts for all of us: for example, the prediction that half of all the jobs today will cease to exist in just 15 years; by 2035 47% of all roles will be performed by computer. Oh, that's just another wild prediction you say. Well not really. It is happening now. To illustrate the point: the big corporations that employed thousands of people are changing – for example, while a big company like Kodak employed 145,000 people an even 'bigger' organisation like Facebook employs just 6,000. The definition of what

means 'big' is changing – rapidly. Big no longer means lots of employees.

Lawyers – external and in-house – are not immune from this. Quite the reverse – as Handy rightly points out much basic legal work will be performed by computers in the future without the need for you and me. The legal world will be radically different in five years and possibly unrecognisable in fifteen. Yet we still train more and more lawyers. That wouldn't be so bad in itself but we are training them very much in our own image – to have the type of career we have had – the only one we have known. But legal careers in the future will be very different. We must create a new future for ourselves – we have to imagine what the new world will be like and create a place for ourselves in that new world. Those who survive are those who best adapt to change. We all need to be able to do this if we are to survive in this new world. However, I wonder if adapting alone may now be enough – maybe we have to imagine and create that new life at the right time or just shortly before as Handy would tell us.

So what's your point? Very simply don't be afraid to imagine what the future will be like or to adapt. Try new things – whether that means working abroad or going on secondment to a department other than the legal one. Maybe you will return to Legal, maybe you won't. But you'll be more easily able to adapt to change and to imagine or create your future. Timing is of course everything and knowing when the second curve has arrived is a challenge. However, keep an open mind – both in business and in life – and maybe you will reach it. Sometimes at least!

Which reminds me I must imagine my future – maybe a sunny beach in Ibiza with a cool beer.

What the GC wants from external lawyers

A group of CLOs has shared for the last three years thoughts on what the in-house team wants from

external lawyers. This is my brief summary on these perspectives:

- **Understand my business.** If you are to be any use to me, you must understand my business. And that does not mean, if I manufacture widgets, that you understand the process of widget making (though that might be useful if you decide upon a change of career!). I want you to understand the culture, know the people – those to trust, those to avoid (hopefully not the CLO!), the risk appetite, the internal workings, and the external market. I am viewing you as an extension of the internal legal team and that has to be seamless as possible and so you must know my business – not as well as me perhaps but well enough to be a trusted adviser.
- **Like my business.** If I make paperclips, it may not be a sexy operation but I probably don't get out that much as CLO so it may be my life (I am writing this point as a piece of fiction you understand!). I have to be enthusiastic about the business to my peers at work even if at times that is difficult, so you need to share my enthusiasm.
- **Remember I'm human.** Well, most of the time. The CLO role is stressful and lonely at times. I have few people to talk to and fewer friends. So, if you are the most brilliant lawyer in the world but arrogant and aggressive it is not going to make for the best of relationships. I like to work with people I..like. A little bit of charm helps; a kind word or two when I have just been into see the CEO who is like a bear with a sore head (and that is on a good day!). If you are the type of person I can go out for a beer with then you have passed my compatibility test even if you don't drink alcohol (though I reserve the right to revisit that one).
- **Listen – really listen.** Few lawyers do. As Peter Drucker (see below) once said about managers: "The good manager listens first, speaks last." Well, it was something along those lines. It applies equally to directors, lawyers, HR officers, accountants – particularly accountants. Seriously, try and really listen to what your client – the CLO

– wants. It may not be what he or she says. That's the challenge.

- **Do what you say you will when you say will.** Or let me know well in advance if you cannot and have a good reason. I once reported to a US GC who was both a great lawyer and business-person. Unlike many of the people I have reported to who have made the Stasi appear *laissez faire* he just said, “I can I ask just one thing: no surprises!” It is as good a mantra as any. You only get one chance on this.
- **Be transparent.** The matter speaks for itself. Or as lawyers pretending they are Latin scholars would say *res ipsa loquitur*.
- **Find yourself a mentor.** Who do you admire and respect? How did they get to where they are? Find out. Ask them if they will be a sounding board for you – there is nothing like speaking to someone who has faced the same situation before. And don't just stick to lawyers – some of my best mentors have actually been normal people!
- **Don't get it wrong and if you do own up.** Actually, I think this is perhaps too lofty an ambition – the best lawyers get it wrong from time to time. They are good lawyers because they own up to it. So, if it does happen be open, transparent and act ethically. And these are qualities about which I could write pages but won't because it is late.
- **Remember it's all about relationships.** In engaging you as my external lawyer, I am looking for a long-term relationship – you get to know my business (and me) and I get to know you and your firm. Like all relationships there are good and bad times – the key is to have more of the former than the latter! But every time you advise me, have this at the back of your mind. And remember that the more senior you get, the more important your people skills become and less apparent your technical ones should be – the same is true of the Chief Legal Officer (or so my CEO tells me!)
- **Shadow the CLO.** One way of finding about the challenges (and joys of course!) which I

face is to come and work with me for a couple of days. You won't get paid (and don't bill me!) but you will appreciate my work environment. You might even decide to become a CLO yourself (don't worry I will talk you out of it!)

- **Read about business.** Read as much about business as you can and frankly anything is better than reading law books! You're in business be interested in business! If I had to recommend anyone to read on business then there are two people: Peter Drucker – an Austrian who became an Englishman and ended his life as an American – someone who began his life as a journalist, became a banker and finally a business academic. His vision was great, his insight vast. Secondly Charles Handy who sees business as being far more than simply profit – it has to lead to a better society. If corporate governance followed Handy rather than numerous codes, corporate scandals would be a thing of the past. Anyway, that's enough of my soapbox speech! A recent book well worth reading is *Consigliari: Leading from the Shadows* by Richard Hytner which is an excellent outline of working with leaders.
- **Finally give something back!** Even if you don't get to be Senior Partner you'll probably do pretty well compared with most of the population. So, remember those not so fortunate by helping those people too (and I don't mean unemployed lawyers although I can give you some names if you want to help!). Become a trustee of a charity – your business skills may be of real help to a small organisation that is doing something great in the community but has no money. Or be a volunteer or support for an organisation. The list of what you can do is endless.

Good luck!



Ian White

Ian White has been the chief legal officer and company secretary for both listed and major private companies, primarily in the United Kingdom. While much of his career has been as a lawyer, he has also gained experience as a strategy consultant. Currently, Ian works as a consultant, coach, trainer, and facilitator.

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