Asia Women in Business Law Forum
Building the talent pipeline

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Report and findings
Introduction

Over four years ago, IFLR launched the Euromoney Legal Media Group Women in Business Law Awards in London, before introducing the awards in the Asia-Pacific in 2011 and then Australasia and the Americas in 2012. The awards have played an important role in recognising law firms that employ innovative practices around woman lawyers, as well as exemplary woman lawyers.

The inaugural Asia Women in Business Law Forum was intended to initiate dialogue around the best practice initiatives that we recognise at the awards. But while the awards recognise woman lawyers at the height of their careers, we also support the talent pipeline of woman lawyers at all levels.

While most conferences are aimed at those at partner and general counsel level, the event welcomed men and women at all stages of their careers.

Leading lights in Hong Kong’s legal industry discussed best practice around: building networks; mentoring within and outside the workplace; negotiating the path to partnership or to the board and diversity on boards and in the pipeline. In the last panel of the conference, some of Hong Kong’s leading woman general counsel shared their personal experiences with the audience. This report summarises the day and highlights our key findings.

I’d like to take this opportunity to thank all of our distinguished speakers and supporting organisations from the day. I’d also like to thank the Women’s Foundation, especially CEO Su-Mei Thompson, for their help throughout the conference planning process.

Also, the forum would not have been possible without the support of our sponsors. So many thanks to Gibson Dunn, Slaughter & May, Sidley Austin, Ashurst, Tongni Zhao, Mintz Group and AdventBalance.

I hope you enjoy the report and welcome any suggestions or comments

Ashley Lee
Asia reporter
IFLR

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The importance of building your network and business development

- Effective networking is a key factor for business development and career advancement. One of the most common oversights is to neglect the importance of internal networking and to focus too much on external networking.
- Networks are most successful when the relationship is cultivated organically over time.
- While social media is a useful tool for networking, a personal connection will always raise your network further and open more doors.
- Networking is a way to raise profile and curate self-brand image. It is important to remain genuine and honest to your own interests for effective business development.
- Learn to benefit from informal networks acquired from a young age. Remember that networking opportunities exist all around and not only within your identity as a professional.

Mentoring within an organisation and cross-company mentoring

- Mentoring is broader and more personal than both sponsorship and coaching. Sponsorship focuses on getting a sponsee promoted in the organisation, while coaching involves paying someone to improve a specific skill.
- Mentors and mentees have a mutually beneficial relationship. While mentees benefit from their mentors’ guidance, mentors also learn more about potential careers paths and the next generation.
- Both formal mentoring programmes within organisations as well as those outside workplaces are helpful. But it's unclear whether mentees are able to share as much information when their mentor is part of the same organisation.
- It's important for mentees to reach out to potential mentors. This is especially true in a small market like Hong Kong.

Negotiating the path to partnership or the board

- Leadership is a dynamic quality. It is a learned skill that needs to be acquired and refined over time.
- The foundation for good leadership lies in honing your professional skill and learning to be a team player.
- Small gestures matter in the long haul. Each task, however small, should be seen as an opportunity to build trust within your organisation.
- Women should question whether partners or the board within their organisation are even supportive of promoting diversity in the workplace. If not, women will often find they will never complete the path to partnership or the board and should perhaps consider switching organisations.
- Women have the advantage of being good at fostering trust and relationships.
- Developing soft skills to influence negotiations is increasingly important when working in a team with multiple disciplines.

Diversity on boards and in the pipeline: making targets meaningful

- Women make up only 9.8% of directors of companies listed on the Hang Seng Index. The Hong Kong Exchange introduced a board diversity policy in September 2013 to mitigate diversity concerns.
- The largest factor hindering the success of women is corporate culture.
- While lobbying for more women on boards is important, it should also be a priority to establish a pipeline of future talent in senior management.
- Women’s networks are prevalent across industries. But networks must consider role within their organisation or their sector and determine whether can play a larger part in decision-making.
AdventBalance is an innovative Australasian law firm, with its entire lawyer and consultant team working from its clients’ offices on secondments, transactions or managing projects. These assignments can range from one day a week to full time, on-going projects.

Its pioneering business model fosters flexible work practices and allows employees to dictate their own hours and how often they work, providing them with the ability to achieve true work/life balance.

The firm appreciates that flexibility means different things to different people. Some of the firm’s lawyers and consultants work part-time, some work full-time but only during certain periods of the year, and others work remotely. It has lawyers and consultants who work flexibly due to family commitments, some to manage other businesses or interests outside of the law. Whatever the approach or reason, AdventBalance’s mandate is that working flexibly should not hinder someone’s career or professional advancement.

In order to connect the workforce, the firm has practical ‘keeping in touch’ strategies for remote workers including an internal organisational social networking tool which allows lawyers and consultants to connect virtually from a work and social perspective regardless of their location or work pattern. Implementing cloud computing allows employees to access internal systems from anywhere via the internet.

The initiatives have paid off – staff retention is high and the firm has provided a way for senior female lawyers to remain in the legal services sector while working on challenging and varied assignments. These women then become mentors for junior female lawyers. With a focus on this flexibility and diversity, 65% of AdventBalance’s lawyers and consultants are women with 52% of them working on a part time or flexible basis. 72% of the management team is women and the firm appointed a female managing director for Australia, Sandra Gibson, in February 2013.

With 42% of overall employees working in a flexible capacity, AdventBalance is proud of the work it is doing in this space, providing a fresh, innovative and exciting way for lawyers and consultants to achieve flexible work practices without compromising on quality work or career ambitions. The firm has met the challenge head on, and is making a difference by implementing work practices which are realistic and achievable and which it hopes will assist in a shift in mindset and culture across the legal services sector. AdventBalance believes it has created an environment which empowers employees to get back the “life” in work/life balance.

“AdventBalance’s mandate is that working flexibly should not hinder someone’s career or professional advancement”

Community Business

As a thought leader in diversity and inclusion (D&I) in Asia, the non-profit Community Business is dedicated to progressing discussion on D&I in the workplace, understanding the challenges and issues faced by the companies operating in the region, and working with them to advance their D&I strategy.

Promoting the advancement of women has always been at the heart of its diversity work. With an aim to bring about change in the workplace as well as the wider community, Community Business has been driving the following key women-related initiatives:

Women on Boards in HK – recently published in March, this report update reveals the status quo of the gender diversity of HK’s boardrooms and identifies trends. By acknowledging good performance and highlighting poor via company rankings, the goal is to strengthen the case for change and encourage a greater women representation in leadership roles.

Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia - the flagship gender study providing companies with the data they need to initiate discussion and provoke change. The next update will be published in Autumn 2014.

Work-Life Balance Campaign - Providing work-life balance (WLB) is a priority to enable woman talent to fulfill their professional and personal responsibilities at different stages in their life and career. Community Business has conducted a survey on the state of WLB in HK annually since 2006, and the WLB Week since 2008, raising the awareness of WLB as a critical business issue and identifying best practices and effective initiatives for creating truly supportive workplaces.
Sheryl Sandberg devotes a whole chapter of *Lean In* to challenging the desperate pursuit by young women of a mentor. Sandberg posits that an entire generation is convinced that finding a mentor is the “fix-it” needed to propel us up the corporate ladder so that we can live happily ever after. Sandberg’s issue is not with mentorship, a relationship “crucial for career progression”, but with the difficulty women seem to have cultivating the right relationship – due in part to the current lack of women at the top. Sandberg is not the only cynic. Another wise woman, Anna Stephenson, COO at Sinopac and our SteerCo co-chair, once said with refreshing honesty: “I’m really cynical about formal mentoring programmes”.

**To boldly go where no mentoring programme has gone before**

Virginia Devereux-Wong, Wifa SteerCo member and founder of the programme, had a very refreshing vision. Rather than assigning mentors to mentees and directing strangers to Starbucks for a pastry and some life-changing insights into winning in the workplace, the organisation would supplement the traditional mentor-mentee relationship with quarterly group events hosted and subsidised by Wifa. These events allow all members to meet, share experiences, swap ideas and have fun. In turn the organisation receives live feedback to develop the programme.

**Scary bosses**

Deservedly or not, bosses are often perceived as scary, and female bosses especially so, particularly in Asia where the culture can be very hierarchical. While most welcome inspirational leadership, a good mentorship relationship requires trust and reciprocity. Accordingly, Wifa sought to design a programme of activities that would be conducive both to bridging the experience gap and building trust. In its first year mentors have swapped Chanel suits for tracksuits and hike in the woods while mentees, empowered in a new environment, have turned the tables and guided their mentors in new dance steps.

**Blind dates**

Formal mentoring programmes have great potential, but can often falter for lack of chemistry between the assigned mentor and mentee. The Wifa application process sought to identify objectives for joining the programme and in matching members it balanced their goals and expectations as well as industry and experience. That said, the success of pairings is more down to luck than anything else and Wifa has been very open with our members about that. The real science was in designing the group events, where all participants engage with each other, and additional mentorship relationships have developed organically alongside the traditional one-on-one coaching throughout the year.

“I am thoroughly enjoying participating in the programme”

The programme has been live for almost a year and there are close to 40 members. Like the members, the programme itself is developing and evolving in response to feedback.

“The programme has been live for almost a year and there are close to 40 members. Like the members, the programme itself is developing and evolving in response to feedback.”
Gibson Dunn is deeply committed to the advancement and promotion of women. Improving gender diversity is one of the top priorities of firm management, who together with the Gender Subcommittee of the Global Diversity Committee, is working to expand opportunities for women as they advance up the ranks and into the firm’s leadership structure. The firm created the Women of Gibson Dunn Initiative to provide women with: connections to thought-leaders both internally and externally; exposure to client and leadership development opportunities; support while on flexible work arrangements to help women lawyers maintain greater work life balance; and assistance in forging a deep connection to the larger community through engagement with various women’s organisations in Asia and across the globe.

As one example, Gibson Dunn has recently launched a Family Leave Mentoring Programme, which is designed to provide associates with resources and guidance during each stage of her Family Leave. The programme is open to all attorneys preparing to go on leave in anticipation of an addition to her family and is crafted to ensure their continued success as a Gibson Dunn attorney and parent. When an associate joins the programme, she is assigned to a mentoring group comprised of a partner and an associate who have successfully completed a Family Leave. The firm also ensures access to resources, which include Gibson Dunn’s Parental Leave and Flex-Time FAQ Guides, Parent Resource Lists, Tips for Going Out on Leave, and Tips for Coming Back from Leave. By providing guidance to lawyers who often struggle to immediately perform at pre-leave levels, Gibson Dunn believes that this programme helps avoid some of the helplessness and uncertainty associates may feel and ultimately keep them at the firm.

Since its establishment over 37 years ago by Elsie Leung (former Secretary for Justice) and Jacqueline Leong (former President of HK Bar Association), among other, FIDA has been working closely with local and international groups to improve matters relating to law and order, women, children and family.

Mission

“In union there is strength”, FIDA’s mission is to unite together, share resources, combine efforts, turn challenges into opportunities and strive towards a better world.

FIDA seeks to empower not only women lawyers, but also women at large. Its latest key initiatives include:

Supporting the community

Against human trafficking: It hosted a five-day summit “One World - Women Lawyers Summit in Hong Kong” in November 2013, focusing on human trafficking issues, with distinguished speakers and delegates attending from around the world.

Watoto: FIDA has an on-going focus in helping Watoto, which is a holistic programme to raise African orphans in Uganda. FIDA has organised a number of fund-raising concerts and dinners for Watoto.

Ripples Action: An initiative founded five years ago by FIDA and other dedicated women professionals including, among others, the Women Doctors Association and the Hong Kong Federation of Women Accountants, the Federation of

“FIDA’s mission is to unite together, share resources, combine efforts, turn challenges into opportunities and strive towards a better world”
Sidley Austin

At a time when other law firms did not hire women lawyers at all, Sidley added its first woman partner in 1956. The firm recognised that women bring unique perspectives, talents and experiences to the practice of law, which allow it to better serve its clients. This philosophy has led Sidley to become both a successful global law firm and a workplace where women thrive. At Sidley, women have cultivated careers, challenged their legal skills, risen to partnership, become leaders as well as role models, and given back to their communities throughout successive generations.

Since 1998, Sidley’s Diversity Committee and its Committee on Promotion and Retention of Women (CRPW), and its predecessor task force, has led firmwide diversity and inclusion efforts. The firm’s Chief Diversity Officer works in partnership with firm leadership and the Diversity and Women’s Committees to advance Sidley’s diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Sidley strongly supports the families and family life of all its lawyers. Any Sidley lawyer may work a reduced schedule for proportional compensation: 14% of women lawyers at the firm do so. The CRPW tracks the pipeline of women associates at the firm and works with firm management and practice groups to ensure the promotion of women associates into partnership at an equitable rate. The CRPW also works with the firm’s management committee to ensure that women are moving into leadership of the firm. Women are on both the executive committee (18%) and management committee (10%). More broadly, 29% of women partners serve as chair or co-chair of firm committees.

Woman and ISS, FIDA has been actively reaching out to migrant and needy women in different districts of Hong Kong to provide mentoring and support for them and their families.

Art: Partnering with the Society of Rehabilitation and Crime Prevention, FIDA organised the Le French May charitable art exhibition “One Love Exhibition” for the French graffiti artists, Kongo and Ceet, to raise funds for ex-offenders and to develop their artistic talents.

Law Reform: FIDA contributes to law reform especially relating to the rights of women and children, such as the Hong Kong Government’s recent consultation on changes in law relating to “Rape and other Non consensual Sexual Offences”.

Empowering members

Mentoring and Fellowship: FIDA serves as a platform for the mentoring and support of women lawyers (including university students, fresh graduates, trainees and practicing lawyers) in their career development and general fellowship. It sponsors the Helen A Lo Family Law Scholarship for the University of Hong Kong and maintains its support for law students at a number of universities in Hong Kong.

Fashion and Beauty: FIDA has hosted numerous private talks, classes and receptions covering fashion, jewellery, make-up and other life-style events which seek to equip its members with a more learned approach to enhancing their image and life-style.

Dance: The FIDA dance team has been collaborating with the NGO, Youth Outreach, in participating in the Sedan Chair race at the Peak, culminating in two award winning hip-hop dance performances and on-going dance training.
Slaughter and May

Slaughter and May is committed to the values of gender diversity, inclusivity and equality. The principles of equal opportunity are fundamental to continuing success and are part of our philosophy and an essential feature of the firm’s practice.

In 2013, it won Best gender diversity initiative by international firm at the Europe Women in Business Law Awards.

Slaughter and May’s initiatives include:

- **Women at Slaughter and May**: Founded in 2013 and supported by senior female partners who are prominent champions of female professional advancement. It aims to increase recognition and awareness of the career challenges faced by women, both at Slaughter and May and in the professional sector more generally, and regularly organises events of various kinds, for both sociable networking and more formal skills development purposes.

- **Supporting and encouraging women in business**: Member of the 30% Club in London and Hong Kong which consists of Chairmen and CEOs committed to better gender balance at all levels of their organisations with particular focus on bringing more women onto corporate boards and given more senior executive roles and supporting their various initiatives.

- **Diversity and Inclusion leadership**: A designated partner and various committees focused on issues relevant to women in the workplace. We run client focused events and use specialist providers to run internal innovative diversity and inclusion training.

- **Sponsorship and mentoring**: The firm participates in a number of professional services initiatives to create impactful and sustainable change on increasing the number of women in partnership and provide sponsorship and mentoring.

“The principles of equal opportunity are fundamental to continuing success and are part of our philosophy”

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The Women’s Foundation

The Women’s Foundation is one of Hong Kong’s leading non-profits dedicated to the advancement of women and girls. It undertakes ground-breaking research, run impactful community programmes, and conduct advocacy and education in the pursuit of three main goals. These are: challenging gender stereotypes; empowering women in poverty; and increasing the number of women leaders in Hong Kong.

An important part of TWF’s work is building the pipeline of future women leaders. Relevant TWF initiatives include:

- the highly acclaimed Mentoring Programme for Women Leaders, which has paired 500 mentors and protégés and is now in its fifth cycle
- a joint project with McKinsey and 43 companies in Hong Kong to identify and promote organisational best practices to drive gender diversity
- the launch of the 30% Club of mostly male chairmen members committed to bringing more women onto corporate boards alongside a range of initiatives to boost the demand for, and supply of, women directors
- the TWF/Bloomberg Leading Women Speaker Series, which shines a spotlight on women leaders working in male-dominated industries
- a raft of scholarships and initiatives to support women entrepreneurs, women in STEM subjects and executive education for women

At The Women’s Foundation, there is a belief that the time has come for Hong Kong to send the right message to the world by asserting itself as a modern, sophisticated economy that nurtures talent across the workforce. To learn more and get involved, visit www.thewomensfoundationhk.org or www.30percentclub.org.hk.

“The time has come for Hong Kong to send the right message to the world by asserting itself as a modern, sophisticated economy that nurtures talent across the workforce”
Togni Zhao
Making the most of your meeting with a recruiter

As recruiters, Togni Zhao meets candidates on a daily basis. The company has reflected on these experiences and would like to offer a few tips on making the most of your meetings with recruiters and with prospective employers.

- **Know your career objectives.** Contemplate your career objectives prior to the meeting. Togni Zhao can best help you if you are clear about the general direction you want to take your career.

- **Project confidence.** Be aware of your body language. Sit tall, hold your head up and make eye contact. Be aware of what your hands are doing. People will view you as you portray yourself. If you project confidence, others will believe that you are confident.

- **Make time for a job change.** Finding the right role requires commitment and focus. Unexpected work commitments can get in the way, but do your best to allocate time for your job search and keep to your scheduled appointments.

- **Approach the meeting as you would a job interview.** Togni Zhao’s role in the search process is to evaluate candidates and introduce those who best fit our client’s need. The company is the gateway to the client, so convince our representatives that you are the best person for the role.

Thoughtful preparation and focus produce results that extend well beyond your meeting with Togni Zhao. Time and again, the company has seen these basic points translate into success in interviewing, in professional settings and beyond.

“Know your career objectives”
Kelly Austin is the partner-in-charge of Gibson Dunn & Crutcher’s Hong Kong office. Austin’s practice focuses on government investigations, regulatory compliance and international disputes. She has extensive expertise in corporate internal investigations, including those involving the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, and in creating and implementing effective compliance programmes.

From 2001 to 2010, Austin served as the compliance and litigation counsel for General Electric in Asia. In that role, she coordinated litigation, alternative dispute resolution proceedings, government and internal investigations, and compliance matters for the GE businesses throughout the region.

Before moving to Hong Kong in 2001, Austin practiced in Washington DC, representing individuals and entities in a wide variety of criminal and civil matters in federal and state courts around the United States. Her practice focused on government investigations, including a host of Congressional and Independent Counsel investigations. She also served as general counsel to non-profit organisations, providing guidance on a variety of legal, regulatory, and strategic matters, and regularly counselled individuals on government ethics and regulatory issues.

From 1993 to 1994, Austin served as a law clerk for The Honorable Joyce F. Martin, Jr, Chief Judge, United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. In 2000, she served as special counsel to the Executive Office of the President, representing the White House in federal litigation.

Austin has a BA from the University of Virginia and received her law degree from Georgetown University. She is a member of the bars of Virginia and the District of Columbia, and is admitted to practice in a variety of district and appellate courts in the United States. She is also admitted to practice in Hong Kong. Austin was named the best lawyer for the second year running in the corporate governance category of the 2012 Asia Women in Business Law Awards; is ranked as a leading lawyer (top tier) in the category “Anti-Corruption: China” by both Chambers Global 2013 and Chambers Asia Pacific 2013; is recommended by PLC Which Lawyer? 2012 as a leading lawyer in the field of “China and Hong Kong: Corporate Crime, Fraud and Investigations”; and was named to the Global 2013 and Chambers Asia Pacific 2013; is recommended by PLC

Jocelyn Cho is a US-qualified corporate finance and capital markets lawyer. She is currently responsible for covering and providing legal advice to the Investment Banking Division of Barclays in Asia Pacific, and works on a range of transactions involving equity capital markets, fixed income, mergers and acquisitions and proprietary investments.

Prior to joining Barclays in 2009, Cho was a managing associate at Linklaters in both London and Hong Kong for a number of years, where she worked with international financial institutions and blue chip corporations in various emerging and developed markets. She began her legal career with Jones Day in the Silicon Valley as a corporate associate where she worked with private equity and venture capital clients as well as start-up and listed technology companies.

Cho is involved with a number of non-profit organisations in the region. She is a member of the diversity and inclusion committee at Barclays and she is responsible for spearheading the corporate sponsorship and partnership between Barclays and the Hong Kong Refugee Advice Center. Cho was also recognised for her pro bono contribution to the San Mateo County Legal Aid in California.

She graduated from Cornell University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Economics and she received her JD from the University of Texas School of Law. Cho speaks Mandarin and is a member of the California Bar.

Jocelyn Cho, IBD legal Asia-Pacific, Barclays

Alice Chan is the general counsel of Prudential Corporation Asia (PCA). PCA is the Asian arm of financial services group Prudential UK. PCA has insurance and asset management operations in 16 jurisdictions and around 75 in-house legal counsel lawyers. Prudential is listed on the London, Hong Kong, New York and Singapore Stock Exchanges. Since joining PCA, among other things Chan has led the legal work on the following projects:

- acquisition of Thanachart Life Insurance in Thailand and bancassurance partnership with Thanachart Bank;
- acquisition of UOB Life Insurance in Singapore and bancassurance partnership with UOB Bank in Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia;
- disposal of Prudential’s Taiwan agency business to China Life Insurance of Taiwan;
- disposal of Prudential’s insurance business in Japan to SBI Holdings;
- domestication of Prudential’s insurance business in Hong Kong (from a branch to a subsidiary of the UK insurance business) by way of a court sanctioned scheme of transfer;
- establishment of insurance operations in Cambodia and bancassurance partnership with ACLEDA Bank;
- re-branding of PCA’s asset management business to “Eastspring Investments” that involved trade mark and company registrations in 24 jurisdictions;
- partnership with Cartoon Networks and the creation of a financial education cartoon series for children (“Cha-Ching”) that involved trade mark registrations in 14 jurisdictions; and
- establishment of the Prudence Foundation as the vehicle for undertaking PCA’s corporate social responsibilities.

Chan joined PCA in February 2009 and was appointed to Prudential’s Group Leadership Team in September 2010.

Chan is a qualified solicitor in Hong Kong (1990), England & Wales (1991) and Australia (1991) and was elected an associate of the UK Institute of Chartered Secretaries in 2008. She has worked in Hong Kong, Singapore and Bangkok and is fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese and English. Chan was an associate and then partner of Clifford Chance between 1995 and 2002 and prior to that she had been with Slaughter and May and other firms, specialising in cross-border M&A and capital markets work.

Alice Chan, general counsel, Prudential Corporation Asia

Jocelyn Cho, IBD legal Asia-Pacific, Barclays
William Hay, general counsel, Baring Private Equity Asia

William Hay is general counsel of Baring Private Equity Asia, a leading Asia-based private equity firm with $5 billion under management. He has served as Asia general counsel for Colony Capital and for GE Capital, and has been a partner in leading law firms in Hong Kong and New York City.

He is a graduate of Harvard Law School and is fluent in Mandarin Chinese. Baring Private Equity Asia specialises in mid-market growth equity investments targeting businesses with enterprise values up to $1 billion that require capital for expansion, recapitalisation or acquisition.

It has been investing in Asia since 1997 and currently have more than 30 active portfolio companies with 80,000 employees and 2010 revenues of $6.7 billion. It has more than 50 investment professionals at headquarters in Hong Kong and regional offices in Singapore, Shanghai, Beijing, Tokyo and Mumbai.

Tobey Hill, Asia head of tax, Citigroup

Tobey Hill is based in Hong Kong and heads the Asia regional tax group of 44 professionals for Citi. Her responsibilities cover corporate tax planning, tax reporting, transfer pricing and tax controversies for 18 Asian countries. She also coordinates and advises on the US tax aspects of various business transactions and restructurings. Prior to joining Citigroup in 2010, Hill worked as a tax associate at a NJ-based law firm, a consultant at AT&T in tax controversies, a US and international tax manager at Atlas Copco and a tax manager at Deloitte & Touche.

Hill is an attorney admitted to practice in New Jersey and New York and a Certified Public Accountant. She has a bachelor’s degree in Accounting from Rutgers University and a masters in Taxation and Law degree from Seton Hall University.

Jasmine Karimi, director & associate general counsel, Coach

Jasmine Karimi is the director & associate general counsel at Coach (dual listed on NYSE and HKSE), with oversight of legal and compliance in Asia (ex-Japan). She also sits on the Operating Group of the Asia operations.

A seasoned in-house legal professional, Karimi’s 20-year experience spans across multiple industries and jurisdictions. Her broad experience has enabled her to develop a multi-faceted approach to reputational and risk management, combining both business practicalities and legal know how. A pro-active moral compass of her organisation, she has established herself as a pragmatic commercial savvy counsel at Coach.

A frequent speaker at industry and professional forums globally, Karimi has won scholarships from the Canadian Women in Communications and other accolades. She has an LLB (Hons) from the UK, and an LLM specialising in IP law from Canada and is admitted to practice law in England & Wales, Singapore, Canada, and Hong Kong. Karimi speaks several Asian based languages with varying degrees of fluency.

Outside Coach, she serves on several committees, and is the president of the Hong Kong Corporate Counsel Association (HKCCA), the premier association representing in-house lawyers in Hong Kong, which has affiliations with sister organisations internationally.

Ferheen Mahomed, general counsel, CLSA

Ferheen Mahomed is currently group general counsel for CLSA Asia Pacific Markets after spending 14 years as Asia Pacific general counsel for Société Générale. Mahomed is both a UK and HK qualified lawyer having previously worked in Slaughter and May in HK and London. She is a member of the product advisory committee of the SFC, member of the Asia Pacific legal and regulatory Committee of ISDA and vice chairman of the banking and finance committee of the French chamber of commerce. Mahomed is a Rhodes Scholar and holds a BCL from the University of Oxford.

Gill Meller, legal director & secretary, MTR Corporation

Gill Meller has been MTR Corporation Limited’s legal director & secretary since September 2011. She is responsible for the provision of commercial legal support to all aspects of the company’s rail and property operations in Hong Kong and the mainland of China, the company’s new rail and property projects in Hong Kong and its international growth business.

Meller is also responsible for the strategic management of the company’s insurance programmes and its enterprise risk management, corporate responsibility and company secretarial functions and for overseeing the Company’s procurement and contracts department. Meller is qualified to practise as a solicitor in Hong Kong and England and Wales.

Rendy Ng, director, legal counsel, Bee’s Diamonds

Rendy Ng is one of the directors of Bee’s International Group and founder to Arien Jewellery. Prior to joining the diamond wholesale company, she worked as a qualified solicitor at Baker & McKenzie in London and Hong Kong. She received her BA in history from the University of Toronto, followed by her Bachelor of Laws with Honours at the University of Birmingham and Masters of Law in corporate and financial law at the University of Hong Kong. At the same time, she has been a graduate gemologist and accredited jewelers professional of the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) since 2003 and 2001, respectively. In addition to her occupation as gemologist and diamond investment consultant, Ng regularly speaks as guest speaker on diamond investment, diamond appreciation, antique jewellery and jewellery design.

Ng is actively involved in community service and her contribution to society was recognised by the lieutenant governor of Ontario Community Volunteer Award and the serving sister of the Order of St. John. She has also recently received the Hong Kong Professional Elite Ladies Award for her professional achievements and social contributions. She currently sits on the Arts and Recreation Committee of the Wan chai District Council and holds several positions, including: chair of the Youth Committee of the Hong Kong Federation of Women Lawyers; and committee member of the Hong Kong Law Society Pro Bono Committee. She is also: a director of the Hong Kong United Youth Association; director of the Hong Kong Association of
Fern Ngai, chief executive officer, Community Business

Fern Ngai is chief executive officer of Community Business, a Hong Kong based non-profit organisation dedicated to advancing corporate responsibility. Community Business’ mission is to lead, inspire and support businesses to improve their positive impact on people and communities.

Working across Asia with some of the world’s leading companies, Community Business focuses on the areas of community investment, diversity and inclusion, work-life balance, and corporate responsibility strategy. Ngai joined Community Business in October 2012 and is responsible for leading the organisation into its next stage of growth. Over the last decade, Community Business has established itself as a thought leader and catalyst for change through its pioneering research, networks, campaigns, and client-centric services.

She has been actively involved in and passionate about corporate social responsibility and diversity and inclusion for the last 10 years, in her voluntary role as chair of the board of KELY Support Group, a local charity dedicated to supporting young people, and in her previous roles at Standard Chartered Bank.

During her 25-year career at Standard Chartered, Ngai held leadership roles at both local and regional levels, in the human resources, technology and operations, Asia governance and strategic initiatives, and corporate affairs functions. She was also the bank’s diversity and inclusion champion in Hong Kong, a Living with HIV ambassador, and director of programme Care, an employee-led community care and volunteering organisation. Prior to Standard Chartered, she worked in the information technology field in Canada.

Jacqueline Tan, associate principal, McKinsey & Company

Jacqueline Tan is an associate principal with McKinsey & Company and a leader of the Asia strategy and corporate finance practice. As a junior partner of the firm, she advises management of leading global and Asian companies as well as sovereign wealth funds across the region on issues relating to portfolio growth strategy and value creation, in particular in the telecommunications, media and technology industry.

Prior to joining McKinsey, Tan was as an associate in the global mergers & acquisitions group and emerging markets capital markets group at JP Morgan in New York. She received her MBA from MIT Sloan School of Management and graduated with a bachelor of commerce degree with first class honours in Finance from The University of Western Australia.

Tan was honoured to be one of the women featured in Janet Hanson’s book More Than 85 Broads. Last year, she received tremendous energy from being a mentor in The Women’s Foundation’s Mentoring Programme for Women Leaders. She also led a research collaboration effort with The Women’s Foundation on best practices for companies looking to establish an ecosystem to support gender diversity. This culminated in two workshops attended by representatives from over 40 leading companies in Hong Kong.

Michelle Taylor, partner, Jones Day

Michelle Taylor has been in Asia for 16 years and has focused her practice on cross-border banking, finance, and debt capital markets, representing lenders, borrowers, issuers, arrangers, trustees, rating agencies, and swap providers in a wide range of industries such as airline, insurance, consumer credit, commercial finance, energy, semiconductor manufacturing, and real estate. Her experience involves sophisticated transactions in Asia’s most developed financial markets, as well as in Asia’s emerging financial markets, including Japan, Korea, China, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Since joining Jones Day in 2013, Michelle has advised on a number of high profile transactions including advising Standard Chartered Bank and DBS Bank as arrangers and swap providers in a $250 million BMW Korean auto loan and lease receivables securitisation, which was named as “Securitisation and Structured Finance Deal of the Year” at the IFLR Asia Awards 2014.

Taylor has been recognised as a leading individual and lawyer for capital markets, securitisation and structured finance in Chambers Asia and Chambers Global, IFLR 1000, Asia Pacific Legal 500 and Asialaw Leading Lawyers. She was also recently recognised in Euromoney’s Asia Women in Business Law Awards 2013 as a winner in the structured finance category.

Peter Siembab, managing director & associate general counsel, Bank of America Merrill Lynch

Peter Siembab is a managing director and associate general counsel at Bank of America Merrill Lynch leading the investment banking legal team for the Asia Pacific Region. Previously he was managing the legal team at Nomura covering its investment banking division in Asia ex-Japan.

Prior to Nomura, he was with Citigroup where he managed litigation matters for Citi in Asia and, in a prior role, advised Citi’s investment bank on transactional and regulatory matters in the region. Before going in-house, Siembab was in private practice advising on corporate cross-border transactions in Asia at...
Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom and advised on communications transactional and regulatory matters in Washington DC. Prior to his legal career, Siembab worked at Jim Henson Productions and Showtime Networks on motion pictures, television productions and theme park attractions. He graduated cum laude and order of the coif from Loyola Law School Los Angeles and has a degree in cinema-television production from the University of Southern California.

**Poh Lee Tan, partner, Baker & McKenzie**

Poh Lee Tan is a consultant with the Hong Kong office of Baker & McKenzie. She served as managing partner of the Firm’s Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai and Vietnam offices from November 2010 till October 2012. Tan has also held a number of other significant firm management roles, including being a member of the firm’s global executive committee and also served as the chairman of the firm’s Asia Pacific regional council.

Tan’s practice focuses on M&A and PE transactions across the Asia-Pacific region. She has advised on numerous multi-jurisdictional deals and has extensive experience in representing clients seeking to invest in Asia, and representing Asian clients seeking to invest globally. She has been consistently recognised as a leading lawyer in Hong Kong and China. She graduated from London School of Economics with an LLB and from Cambridge University, Queen’s College with an LLM. Tan is admitted to practice in England and Wales, Hong Kong, Australia and Singapore.

**Samantha Thompson, partner, Linklaters**

Samantha Thompson is a partner in Linklaters’ corporate group in Hong Kong, and has significant experience in Hong Kong, Asia and the UK in a variety of corporate finance transactions, including cross-border public and private M&A, and advising on corporate governance and company law. Her clients include international investment and commercial banks and corporates. Thompson is also one of Linklaters Global TMT Sector Leaders.

Her recent experience includes advising China Gas Holdings on its successful defence of the $2.2bn hostile takeover bid made for it by Sinopac and ENN Energy Holdings, the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on various matters including the establishment of its OTC clearing platform, L’Oreal on its bid for Magic Holdings, and ASMI PT on its acquisition of the DEK business from Dover Corporation.

Thompson has written and presented on a variety of occasions on corporate governance matters and Hong Kong’s Companies Ordinance, and is on the Hong Kong 30% Club advisory committee. She has also been a mentor in, and on the steering committee of, The Women’s Foundation’s mentoring programme. Sam is the Asia partner representative on the steering committee for Linklaters’ 2014 Women’s Leadership Programme.

Thompson is qualified in Hong Kong and England.

**Su-Mei Thompson, chief executive officer, The Women’s Foundation**

Su-Mei Thompson joined The Women’s Foundation as CEO in 2009. Her responsibilities include strategic planning, donor relations, overseeing grants and programmes, as well as government relations and community outreach. In 2013, she co-founded the 30% Club Hong Kong - a group of chairmen who are champions for more women on corporate boards.

Previously, Thompson held senior management positions at The Walt Disney Company, the Financial Times and Christie’s. She started her career as a corporate finance associate at Linklaters in London and worked for the firm in London, Paris and Hong Kong. She was recently appointed by the chief executive of Hong Kong to the Equal Opportunities Commission. She is also an external advisor to the Chinese University of Hong Kong’s proposed undergraduate gender studies programme.

An alumnus of Cambridge and Oxford Universities and IMD where she was the first woman to graduate on the Dean’s List, she is a non-executive director of HKEx-listed Natural Beauty Bio-technology, an advisory board member of Intelligence Squared Asia, a board member of Opera HK and a council member of The Cheltenham Ladies College, her alma mater.

Thompson writes on women’s issues for the South China Morning Post. Her recent speaking credits include the Women’s Forum in Myanmar in 2013 where she chaired a panel on developing future leaders, the UN Regional Forum on Women’s Economic Empowerment through Entrepreneurship in April 2013, and the IMF & World Bank Annual Meetings in 2012 where she chaired a panel on women in the private sector.

**Wanda Tung, general counsel for Asia (ex-Japan), Nomura**

Wanda Tung is a managing director and the general counsel for Asia ex-Japan (AEJ) of Nomura. She manages a team of lawyers and legal professionals supporting the full spectrum of Nomura’s businesses across AEJ. She is also a member of Nomura’s AEJ executive management committee as well as the chairperson for the firm’s reputational risk, suitability and conflicts committee and the new products review committee. Tung also serves as a key member of several of the firm’s transaction approval and risk oversight committees and the executive sponsor for AEJ’s Women In Nomura (WIN) Network.

Prior to joining Nomura, she was a managing director and the head of legal, Asia-Pacific (ex-Japan) of Lehman Brothers. She was also one of the key lawyers on the Lehman Brothers team that worked on the Lehman-Nomura transaction and later moved over to Nomura in 2008. Prior to joining Lehman Brothers, Tung was assistant general counsel at JP Morgan Chase Bank, where she served for more than 10 years in the Hong Kong Branch. She started her legal career with Baker & McKenzie in the USA and Hong Kong. She holds a BA from the University of California, Berkeley and a JD from the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law.
Speakers
For full speaker biographical information visit www.iflr.com/WomeninBusinessLaw

Christine Wong, head of legal services & chief counsel, Hong Kong Exchanges & Clearing

Christine Wong joined Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing as chief counsel and head of legal services in June 2010. From 2001 to 2010, she worked as a corporate lawyer at Linklaters as consultant and was a member of the takeovers and mergers panel and the takeovers appeal panel of the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) from 2005 to 2010. Prior to that, she was a senior director of the corporate finance division at the SFC. From 1992 to 1995, she was an associate in the corporate group at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer.

Benita Yu, partner, Slaughter and May

Benita Yu has substantial experience in securities transactions, including cross-border listings and share offerings by overseas corporations and PRC state-owned enterprises, corporate finance transactions, mergers and acquisitions and joint ventures. She also advises on banking and international debt securities transactions.

Yu read law at Oxford University and worked with another major city law firm in London before joining Slaughter and May. She is admitted as a solicitor in England and Wales and in Hong Kong, and speaks fluent English, Mandarin and Cantonese.

She has a wealth of experience in bringing PRC and foreign corporates to market and secondary fund-raisings and has advised on a number of groundbreaking capital market transactions.