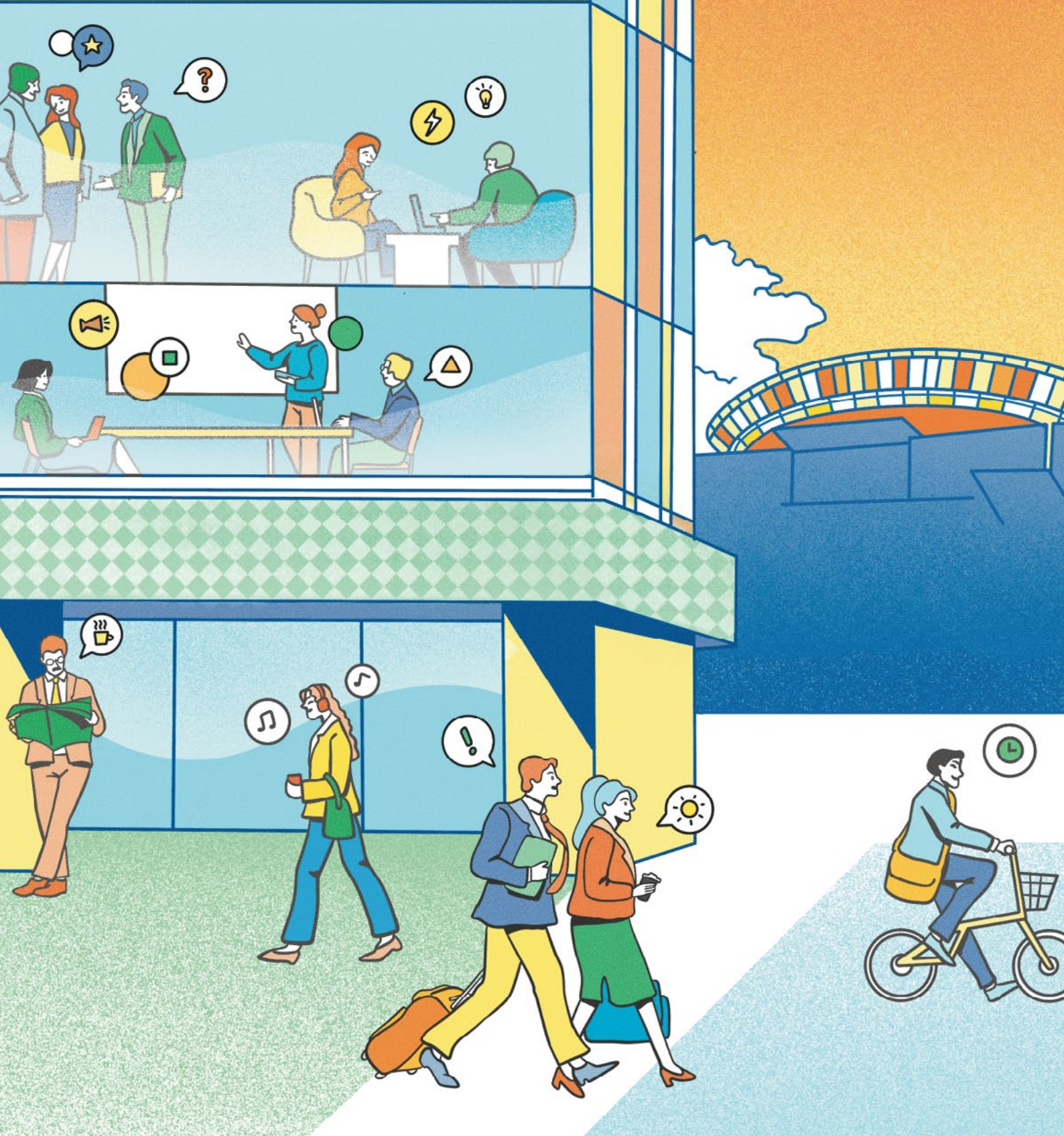


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# LAW GAZETTE

Mass Call Magazine 2023

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## WELCOME FROM Adrian Tan, Law Society President (January 2022–July 2023)

*This message was penned by President Adrian before his passing on 8 July 2023.*

My fellow lawyers, congratulations on being called to the Bar!

You may be young, but you are the equal of every other advocate and solicitor, in terms of hearing rights.

Now, you need three things.

First, hard work.

The bad news is that we can't avoid hard work. The good news is that while you must work hard at the beginning, as you get older, the job becomes, if not easier, then more logical.

Second, a willingness to learn.

You may wonder: haven't I learnt enough in the past years? I've studied countless cases, passed numerous exams, and trained under senior lawyers. You're right, of course. You have accumulated knowledge. That's a crucial first step in becoming a competent legal professional.

But lawyering is, ultimately, not a knowledge game. It is a skill game. It is something that you can improve only by doing. It is just like swimming: you can read books and watch videos of the best Olympic swimmers, but the only way you will swim better is if you keep doing it every day.

So, as a young lawyer, jump into the water with both feet. I promise you that you will struggle, just as I did. I guarantee you that you will sink, just as I did. I'm sure that you will feel overwhelmed, just as I did. Stay calm, be confident, and swim. Many have done what you will do, and you can do it too.

The third and final quality you will need is empathy.

You are a lawyer. Your role is to serve your client. To do so, you must understand who your client is, where your client comes from, and what your client wants. Whether your client is a tech billionaire, or an impoverished orphan accused of serious crimes, you must try to find the humanity in your client, so that you can become your client's advocate. Even if your client is a large multinational, you should locate its corporate values, read its history and study its business. Only then will you be able to contribute practical solutions to serve your client's needs.

My fellow lawyers, work hard, be hungry to learn, and develop your sense of empathy. You will become great lawyers.

The Law Society welcomes each and every one of you.



## WELCOME FROM YLC Chairperson

Good day my newly-called Learned Friends!

On behalf of the Young Lawyers Committee (YLC) of the Law Society of Singapore (LSS), congratulations on being called to the Bar! Having heard the term “Learned Friends” countless times, you are now one of us.

I am excited that you have joined us. Before the significance of this moment is lost, I invite each and every of you to pause to savour this significant milestone.

To help kickstart your journey, I wish to share some A-to-G tips which I found helpful in my own journey:

**1. Ask** – Don’t be afraid to ask for help. We have been (and still are) in the same boat. There are plenty of friendly seniors who are happy to provide guidance. If you are feeling confident, speak up and ask for more opportunities.

**2. Be confident but humble** – Have confidence in yourself but stay grounded and focused. Be open to constructive feedback. You do not need to win every battle.

**3. Consider your journey** – Remember why you chose law or what you hoped to achieve. These motivations or goals will help you through difficult times.

**4. Development** – Legal practice is a marathon with various skill sets to master. Do each assigned work with an open mind. It is okay if you are unsure of your destination or if you stumble. We are bound to make mistakes; but it is more important to learn from them and improve. Remember that development includes learning how to manage personal and professional relationships.

**5. Enjoy** – Plan your breaks, and take control at a semblance of a decent work-life balance! It's untrue that young lawyers have no breaks. Start each year thinking about your breaks/holidays, and schedule (at least try) your work around it. This gives you periodic breaks and rewards to look forward to.

**6. Friends, not enemies** – Make friends with your colleagues and opposing counsel. If your colleagues need help, offer it. The "every man for himself" mentality does more harm than good. Opposing counsels are also not your personal enemies. Thinking back, I made plenty of good friends with my opposing counsels after having bonded through "suffering". We now even collaborate with, or seek help/advice, from each other!

**7. Give** – Find purpose by giving back to the community, e.g. volunteering, mentoring juniors or even something as simple as treating your interns/trainees to a meal/drink. Just as how we wished for a mentor, always remember that there will be juniors who hope for the same. As young lawyers, we are the future of the profession and have the power to shape the culture we wish to see.

The reality is that practice is tough. It will test your character, perseverance and mental resilience. We cannot run away from putting in the hours and hard work; but looking back on my 5-year journey thus far, I am glad to share that you can survive. In fact, you will be amazed at what you can achieve through sheer determination. So please do not throw in the towel!

That being said, if you encounter any difficulties or have any suggestions, please feel free to reach out to us. We, as YLC, are here for you!

By way of background, YLC is focused on organising programmes, activities and events for the benefit and welfare of young lawyers. Our core goals can be classified as the 3 C's: Community, Competence and Contribution. As a special event this year, having heard feedback of how the Covid-19 pandemic has reduced face-to-face time with fellow lawyers, YLC will be organising our inaugural mass call party to facilitate the building of the camaraderie between us young ones. Details will be released via an eblast, so please do keep a lookout!

Besides YLC, I am glad to share that the LSS has a range of support schemes which can be found on LSS's website (<https://www.lawsociety.org.sg/the-law-society/support-schemes/>).\* Some of these were specially designed for young lawyers. Please do not shy away from asking for help if you need it.

Once again, congratulations on your admission. I look forward to meeting you at YLC's inaugural mass call party!



**Darryl Chew Zijie**  
Chia Wong Chambers LLC  
Chairperson  
Young Lawyers Committee 2023

\* See also page 35.



# THE FUTURE *of* Lawyering

When I was a lad, we knew what the future would bring.

It was going to involve piloting our flying cars to the office, holidays on Mars and taking our dinners in the form of nutri pills, because everyone would be too busy to do something as stone aged as cutting up vegetables. We also thought those nifty new digital watches from Japan would kill the Swiss watch industry.

What we got instead was hundred thousand dollar COEs, work by Zoom, and *roti prata* delivered to our homes by a fellow on an electric scooter.

Also young associates blowing their bonuses on Swiss watches.

It seems we were right to think the future would bring great changes, but were laughably bad at predicting what those changes will be.

With that caveat firmly lodged, I will now offer some thoughts on the future of lawyering. Just remember these are the thoughts of a fellow who was spectacularly wrong about the future of *roti prata*.

## **The billable hour goes plastic straw**

There is an old adage in the common law; maternity is a fact, but paternity is an opinion. It means who a child's mother is can be proved with certainty, but the identity of the father is at best an inference based on circumstantial evidence. Of course that proposition is no longer valid now that we have DNA evidence.

Another old adage is that only two ancient professions charge by hour. Lawyers being one of them. That saying also has been overtaken by events. The billable hour alas, much like the plastic straw, has become increasingly rare. Today, the "rack rates no caps" file is as hard to find as an empty seat on the MRT on a weekday morning.

This might all seem very non-relatable to you right now, but it has a very great effect on the staffing requirements of law firms. With the billable hour system, the firm does well if many lawyers work many hours on a matter. In a world of capped fees or fixed fees, the priority is to reduce the cost of production. That means the pressure is to do the work with fewer hours, fewer lawyers and cheaper lawyers. Outsourcing begins to make sense. So does automation.

## Zoom and doom

The legal profession is usually slow to adopt new technologies. A train moves only as fast as its slowest coach. In a law firm, that slowest coach was usually the most senior lawyer in the firm. The Covid pandemic changed all that. It compressed 10 years' worth of technological acceptance into 10 months. Almost overnight, we all had to accept technologies that enabled us to work from home. The pandemic is over, but the genie won't go back into the bottle. Today, work from home is accepted by law firms, to varying degrees.

Is this a good thing for junior lawyers? The advantages are many to be sure. There is also danger. Once the bosses get used to working with associates who are not physically there with them, there is no particular reason why the associate has to be living in Singapore. She could for example be living in a much lower cost country, with a much lower salary.

When I was called to the Bar Singapore had only one law school and my competitors were my classmates. Today, your competitors are anyone in a similar time zone who can perform the same function as you. Consider the English speaking common law jurisdictions that fit that description. Malaysia, Brunei, India and Perth being the most obvious.

An Iphone is designed in the USA but the production is outsourced to Asia. Is that dynamic very different for a pleading or a mortgage deed?

### ChatGPT stole my job

If you have just been called, you likely know just how powerful and useful ChatGPT is. It will only get more powerful and useful. My advice to young lawyers is this: do not let the old guys find out about ChatGPT. Keep it a secret from them as long as you can.

I assume of course, that no young lawyer reading this has ever used ChatGPT to produce a draft which he later passes to his partner. However, the time is already in sight when a lot of the work now done by junior lawyers can be done by ChatGPT or similar programs. Providing the first draft of a pleading or advice, doing a first cut of a research memo, these are the tasks traditionally done by junior lawyers. When that becomes automated, how many junior lawyers will a firm need?

True it is, a human associate will still be able to do certain things a program cannot, but a program is much cheaper, plus it does not mock its bosses on *singaporelawmeme* or complain about its bonus.

Is this going to be a good thing or a bad thing? Getting in the inevitable *Star Wars* quote now, you will find that many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view.

On one view, ChatGPT takes the drudgery out of lawyering, in the same way that electric light took the drudgery out of having to start a fire every time you needed to find your way to the bathroom at night. On another view, ChatGPT is going to lead to widespread joblessness, in a manner not seen since Covid caused mass unemployment amongst night club bouncers.

Both views are correct. The best analogy is what happened to secretaries in law firms in over the last 30 years. There are those still in practice who can remember when lawyering was done via typewritten paper, every piece of which was manually typed out on a typewriter. To support this, every lawyer had a dedicated secretary, and companies had typing pools, employees whose only job was to interpret your chicken-scratching-like handwritten draft and type it out.

All that changed when computers came in, and lawyers learnt to do their own typing. Today, law firms still have secretaries, but they employ far fewer secretaries than they used to. Secretaries today have a different job function compared to 30 years ago. It will be quite hard to be employed as a secretary today if your only skills were typing and answering the telephone.

The same will happen with junior lawyers. When many of the functions that used to be performed by junior lawyers become automated, firms will still need junior lawyers, but firms will need fewer of them, and the job description will change. On the plus side, those junior lawyers that are left won't have to do as much boring stuff like legal research, or due diligence, or turning up at the office on time.

### Everything, everywhere, all at once

We have looked at the death of the billable hour, work from home technologies and AI writing programs. We have considered each of these drivers of change in isolation. In the real world, drivers of change do

not work in isolation. Everything works everywhere and all at once. That is why it is so difficult to guess the future from this swirling minestrone soup of change drivers. One thing that does seem likely to emerge is that the structure of law firms will change quite radically.

## The pyramid becomes a ladder

The typical big law firm today is a pyramid. Many junior lawyers at the bottom, far fewer senior lawyers at the top. Their bean counters use words like "gearing". That structure made sense in the world of the billable hour.

In a world where cost of production becomes the key driver to profit, where the technology exists to lower production cost by automation or outsourcing, law firms will evolve to look more like ladders than pyramids. Roughly the same number of lawyers at each rung of seniority.

For the young lawyers, it means law firms will have fewer available starting positions; there is much more space at the bottom of a pyramid than on the bottom rung of a ladder. However, once you are on that bottom rung, a higher percentage of these lawyers will stay in the firm compared to the pyramid model.

## So a big firm or a boutique firm for me?

I have heard it said that when you work in a big firm, you have to worry about gossiping secretaries, useless juniors, backstabbing peers, oppressive seniors and your crazy boss.

When you work in a boutique firm you only have to worry about your crazy boss. The fellow who told me this has since migrated, so infer from that what you will.

Anything I say about the big firm/boutique firm question is necessarily based on past experience. Having predicted that the structure of law firms will change radically in the future, I am not sure any statement based on past experience would be helpful to you when you consider your options. What I can do is to make some observations which I think have a decent chance staying relevant to your future.

First, whether you will be happy in a big firm or a boutique firm depends more on your personality than it does on the firm. Some fellows do better in a more structured environment while others do better with more freedom. Not everyone can be happy at the same place.

Second, looking at those in practice today, we find it is more common than not for a person to change firms in the course of a career. Sometimes several times, and to change between big firms and boutique firms. Joining your first law firm now is no longer the feudal oath of lifelong fealty it was in decades past. So don't worry about type of firm you should start your career in. The stakes are not really that high.

Compared to past times, today there are many more ways to participate in the legal industry. The choice is not just between a big firm or a boutique firm. In house lawyering is a big part of the legal industry. Gig type work is increasingly popular with those that like the independent lifestyle, and structures now exist to enable that. The variety of options will only increase in the future.

The future of lawyering is that it will be different. Change does not only bring danger, change also brings opportunity.

My last word about the future is that having a sense of perspective will be good for mental health. Your careers will be a long ride of over 40 years. Not every stage of this ride will be equally wonderful, but everything will be alright in the end. If it is not alright, it is not yet the end.

*Salamat datang* to the new batch.



**KCLye**  
Counsel  
Breakpoint LLC





# CLIMBING THE PRIVATE PRACTICE “Ladder”

Getting called to the Bar is much like getting your driver’s licence. You can legally operate your vehicle on a road, but you are now probably the most dangerous thing on it. You will face many challenges in your legal career. Some will be significant, some less so. But it is a career you have started, and this journey needs some direction and guidance.

Perhaps the single largest factor that will influence how your legal career will pan out is the difficult choices you will make on *where* you work. A related query is *how* you want to work.

Formal requirements mean that you have likely just completed a training contract with a law firm. You are likely to have already signed an employment contract and are waiting to receive your “Associate” or “Junior Associate” name cards. You will (rightly) be wondering: *What is the point of all this?*

## Tip #1: Don’t chase Yusof Ishak – chase after mentors who can and are willing to teach you

Practising law is a job. Naturally, the first point of this is to earn money. Barring some exceptions, the wages you will earn in the first few years of practice are not likely to be very different wherever you may go. Of course, that doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t check *singaporelawmeme’s* IG account for the latest wage data points; it just means that this should be a less significant factor.

Associates, by whatever name called, are the proverbial “bottom of the food chain” in the traditional private practice pyramid. Many see this as a downside. I disagree.

While the peak of the pyramid structurally amounts to the prestigious upper echelons where you (supposedly) sip champagne while dining on caviar in the back seat of your Rolls-Royce, the sobering reality is that your height within the pyramid equates proportionately with your level of responsibility and risk. She who tops the pyramid, takes the greatest risk, and also falls the furthest when things go wrong.

Conversely, down at the base, you are given space to make mistakes, learn, and be better. Understanding this role, and its expectations, will be the key to success.

You will naturally ask: *How do I achieve this success?*  
The answer: *Learn Things ... Efficiently, Completely and Quickly.*

This goes back to my first tip, which is to find your mentors. I say mentors (plural), because your legal career appetite will be fed by more than just the lead partner. You will need guidance from the middle tiers of seniors as well. Search out these mentors and your journey to progress will be fruitful.

## **Tip #2: Actual progress is not about title but acquiring more proficiency in more aspects of lawyering**

When you are done as an Associate, you will be re-titled a Senior Associate. You may also see a variation of this in some international practices as "Managing Associate". Regardless of the nomenclature, the term refers to a more experienced Associate. Here's where the differences in the types of private practices emerge.

### **Not all Senior Associates are equal**

In large domestic law firms, the promotion to Senior Associate is mostly a factor of the passage of time; you will spend about 3+ years as an Associate and then between 31 December and 1 January, "BOOM", you become a Senior Associate.

Though a product of this myself, I harbour doubts on whether time passing should be the key factor to warrant an outward re-designation to the world at large. I am, of course, over-simplifying the matter. Obviously, in a large organisation there is utility in having promotion windows at defined periods. There is also the inward utility of having signposts within a firm structure signalling who is senior and who is junior to them.

Plus, it's nice to tell that annoying auntie who asks when you are getting married at the CNY gathering that you're now a "Senior Associate", before she puts you back in your place by saying her son is a neurosurgeon working on a cure for Alzheimer's. The structure also promotes certainty, and as lawyers, we love a bit of certainty.

The Senior Associate title tends to be more merit-based in smaller or boutique domestic law firms, and in international firms. One could wait many more years before it is bestowed. This also means that if you moved laterally from a local firm to an international firm, you could "lose" your Senior Associate title, because of different organisation criteria – and you should not be disheartened by this.

None of this is to criticize any firm's practices, but to

drive home the point that less emphasis ought to be placed on *when* you attain the title, but instead one should focus on attaining the *substance* of what the title represents.

To me, she who is a Senior Associate must *already* have the core skills of research, drafting, and presentation preparation at high competency levels, and is ready to hone the next set of lawyering skills.

Think of it as growing circles of competence. As you mature in legal practice, you move out to the next ring of proficiency, though never slacking on the previous.

What these next set of lawyering skills are will depend on your areas of practice. For example, in dispute resolution, it would include competency in written and oral advocacy in *difficult situations*, and *holistic* case theory development. Performing as a Senior Associate therefore requires you to identify these skills, and actively learn and practise your proficiency in them.

## **Tip #3: To be a partner or director you must learn the business of legal practice**

Traditionally, when you are done as a Senior Associate you are elevated to become a Partner. This isn't actually fully traditional; on the rare occasions when you sit down with a very senior lawyer, they will tell you that they were Associate for 2+ years and became a Partner thereafter. That's only because Senior Associates weren't a thing back then. The modern era has also led to modern intermediate stages. *Brace yourselves.*

First, "Senior Associates" were invented so that lawyers could be maintained for longer as Associates (therefore delaying partnership), but nevertheless give them a feeling of seniority.

Second, and sitting between "Senior Associates" and "Partners" are "Salaried Partners". For completeness, the term "Partner" and "Director" can be used interchangeably in this context, where the former is applicable when the law firm is a partnership, and the latter when the law firm is a corporation.

Third, the *real* distinction is whether one has equity. The real tip of the hierarchy pyramid is the partner/director who holds equity. Every other partner/director howsoever named, is, in truth, a "Salaried Partner".

What makes things especially confusing is that not all law firms openly broadcast which of their partners/directors have equity and which do not. This makes

sense from a business development perspective, since potential clients will view all lawyers as of a certain uniform standing, but it can make identifying the actual tiers quite difficult.

Fourth, and further adding to the confusion, is the existence of other intermediate levels or different paths. One of which is the title of "Of Counsel". The title finds its roots in US law firms, and generally describes an attorney of partner-calibre or vintage, but is nevertheless not a Partner and perhaps undertakes a lesser workload or responsibilities.

To resolve the confusion, I would personally delineate it as follows: Salaried Partner version 1 is a lawyer who aspires to be an Equity Partner. Salaried Partner version 2 is a lawyer who has reached his personal summit, without the need to go further.

As was the case before, in large domestic law firms promotion to become a Salaried Partner is usually a factor of time – around 3.5 years after you become a Senior Associate. I repeat my thoughts on this above *mutatis mutandis*. In smaller domestic practices, the promotion is less defined by time. In international practices, the intermediary designation may not even exist, and one could only rise from Senior Associate to full-fledged Equity Partner.

*Regardless of the title wordplay, the true transition comes with the further responsibility circle encompassing the business of legal practice.*

The business of legal practice is the way that you actually make money for the law firm. It stretches far beyond just doing the work placed in front of you. It demands that you find clients, maintain client relationships, do the work, keep the client and get paid. Basically, a whole host of additional burdens that neither law school nor bar school prepared you for.

In truth, the full gamut of these responsibilities will already be observable when you are an Associate. Those nights (and mornings after) when you lament your team leader for being unable to clear your draft because she had a dinner (which turned into drinks) from a visiting CEO from Japan from a case concluded 4 years ago, will be one such example. The awkward telephone conversation your team leader had with an aggressive matrimonial client about an invoice unpaid for 4 weeks will be another example.

The real skills you *must* identify to work on to be ready for partnership are team-facing, client-facing and public-facing.

The team-facing skills involve managing juniors and

staff to maintain growth and morale. It requires understanding the people you work with, and customizing and refining work styles and methods to achieve optimum productivity.

The client-facing skills involve uniquely customizing your interactions to match the needs of the client. Some clients need to be *sayang-ed* with words of empathy. Others may have the need to feel intellectually stimulated and respected. Identifying what is needed, and delivering it permeates through every client update and conversation. It builds the trust between lawyer-and-client that develops long-term relationships that will survive any bad outcomes or mistakes.

The public-facing skills involve business development courage. In this modern world, the expectation is for every lawyer to consistently come across as up-to-date, eminent and learned. This takes substantial preparation, a commitment to being involved (whether in publication or public speaking), and to do all the above with consistency.

As for promotion to equity, there are no law firms that (should) offer this on any criteria other than merit. In truth, calling it a promotion is something of a misnomer. Equity (or directorship) is offered, and one must then buy into the partnership, or the shares. The cost may be high.

The rewards of partnership can be substantial. But not more substantial than the inherent risks. It is easy to speak of the good times, but one must always remember that when collections are low, it is the top of the pyramid that feels it the most, when continuing to approve salaries and (modest) bonuses, rent checks and utility bills, without any assurance of when the good times may return.

Though seemingly bleak, one should remember that these are the same concerns of any business owner in any industry. In that context it's really not that bad.

#### **Tip #4: The greatest skill you need now is to be self-aware**

When I was invited to pen this article, I suspect the implied intention may have been to suggest to the reader that they should seriously consider being and staying in private practice.

*I'm not going to say that.*

The evolving landscape of opportunities for those who are legally trained is a reality. I am also a firm believer that everyone ought to choose their own unique path, particularly for something as lengthy as an entire career.

What I will suggest is that if you have a desire to be in the professional services field, and serve a range and variety of different clients, then private practice may, in fact, be for you. That's not all. I would also suggest that if private practice is for you, that you give it a *genuine and wholehearted attempt*.

Having delivered my 2 "put" questions, I have to explain what I mean by "genuine and wholehearted".

We have all heard the stories of private practice lawyers having very difficult times, particularly as juniors. Often, this is used as justification to exit private practice. I am not certain that such a decision is always correct.

Our decision-making process is, empirically, a combination of our objective and subjective evaluations of conditions and/or situations. Confronted with a difficult circumstance, it may seem logical to extract yourself from it. In my view, there is nothing conceptually wrong with that, *so long as you have accurately understood what created that situation*.

To me, it all comes down to honest, objective self-awareness.

The private practice life, consistent with any other profession that deals with multiple different clients, will inevitably be a roller-coaster of issues, wins, losses and frustrations. Some will thrive in such conditions finding satisfaction in their ability to overcome difficulty and find answers where no one else can. Others, will not.

Having a keen awareness of yourself will likely be the key to figuring out which camp you will fall in. This is, regrettably, an area where we humans are weak in. And the confusion that a lack of self-awareness creates tends to get compounded if our echo chambers are in a similar situation.

I cannot tell you how to develop self-awareness. I would only ask that if you find yourself doubting the private practice path, be truly objective with why you feel that way, so that you do not mistakenly rob yourself of the opportunity of a career that you are well suited for. A cure for a hostile environment could be an internal transfer, or a lateral move. A cure for frustration at work ability could be an agreed absence for further study. You owe it to yourself to explore all the solutions first, before you pull the plug.

## **Bonus Tip #5: Everyone who came before you will not know exactly what you are going through - cut them some slack but appreciate the sharing and goodwill**

Private practice is a "club" like no other. Being (perhaps) the largest segment of practising lawyers there is shared experience (joy or suffering) which naturally lends itself to providing a community. Being part of that community is valuable.

In my 10+ years of practice, I have developed remarkable relationships with colleagues and "adversaries" which have seen me through the most challenging circumstances and with whom I have shared successes and failures in equal measure. I have yet to come across a senior who is unwilling to share a war story or two, or who would deny a listening ear when needed. Though their advice may be perhaps more pertinent to its time, it is always offered. I think this is a hard thing to otherwise come by in adult life.

I wish you the best of luck in navigating your career path ahead in law. Wherever that path may lead, we are already colleagues at the Bar, and you should never hold back from asking a brother or sister from pointing you in a good direction.

**Raeza Ibrahim**  
Director  
Salem Ibrahim LLC



## RETHINKING MENTORING – Some Hard Truths

### Introduction

There are certain preconceived notions about mentoring and hence this article aims to unpack what mentoring is and is not. It also seeks to debunk the myth that having a mentor is instrumental to career success. Certainly, there have been some famous success stories of how Steve Jobs mentored Mark Zuckerberg and how Warren Buffet did the same for Bill Gates. Not all of us will be as fortunate to have a mentor offering us insightful work-related guidance. It may be better to do without one than have a mismatched mentoring relationship.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, there have been well-known examples of mentors who subsequently turned on their mentees. At best, it is simply better to avoid putting all our eggs into one basket.

I have never been a firm believer in the need for mentorship and my views may be somewhat contrarian. Speaking from my own personal experience, I believe that there are viable alternatives that we can embrace with open-mindedness and whole-heartedness. In fact, it could be said that I *thrived* without having a mentor and *not* despite not having a mentor. Having relied on my own “rugged individualism”, there is something very satisfying about being self-made.

### Sponsorship vs Mentorship<sup>2</sup>

The primary misconception about mentorship is that mentees expect mentors to bestow them with career opportunities. This appears to conflate the role of a mentor and that of a sponsor. Mentorship is a relationship between the mentor sharing knowledge and providing guidance and the mentee learning from the mentor’s experience and example. As they say, a mentor talks with you, whereas a sponsor talks about you.

Rather than merely offering you advice and guidance, the best sponsors can advocate for you, connecting protégés to key people within the organisation, jobs, and assignments. For me, my sponsors have helped to enhance my visibility both within and outside the firm, such as by introducing me to key clients or even by giving me opportunities to speak on a panel.

To my mind, sponsorship is far important than mentorship. While mentorship can take people far, sponsorship propels them even further in their career. How then does one attract a sponsor?<sup>3</sup> This takes work on the part of the protégé because the sponsor is putting their reputation and professional branding on the line for the protégé.

You need to do the (hard) work first so you have the proven track record and contributions that will pique the interest of a prospective sponsor who will then be willing to invest in your potential. Because a sponsor is investing time and effort into helping you develop your career, you should demonstrate that you equally have skin in the game by following through on any actionable advice or steps that they provide.

## **Building a network of resources**

I call this the council of advisors who can even comprise of peers or even younger people. It is difficult to expect a singular person to be a myriad of things to us. Instead of looking to just one person for advice, seek out several. This means create your own personal (sounding) board of directors, an informal group of 6 to 8 people who can provide diversified expertise and perspectives and to take on different roles.

Some of the members of my “board of directors” are my former colleagues and members of my school alumni. Having some commonality of a shared work history or school heritage is usually a good starting point. Be prepared for the dissonance of dissenting views, which is anytime better than the echo chamber of just one person telling us what to do.

## **Ending a mentoring relationship**

Goodbyes can be difficult. However, it is important to be aware when a mentoring relationship is no longer serving your goals. Or it could be the case that a formal mentoring relationship just runs its course, and it is time to exit the relationship. After all, the human body replaces itself every 7 years through the regeneration cells. If biology dictates that we have changed somewhat, it is perfectly okay to accept that a mentoring relationship may not be permanent.

A simple expression of gratitude is a meaningful and respectful way to let someone know that you appreciate them for their time. This should be the baseline, regardless of the length and depth of the mentoring relationship. It is always good to end the relationship on a positive note as we never know whether our paths may cross in the future.



*Flower bouquet from Debby's practice trainees upon completion of their training period*

## Alternatives to having a mentor

Instead of looking for guidance, seek out inspiration. There are influential voices on LinkedIn that I follow which have been very useful. One of my favourite voices, Jay Harrington, was previously a restructuring and bankruptcy lawyer. He is now a leading consultant and strategist in the areas of legal marketing, PR, and business development. He posts thought provoking ideas about how to succeed in the practice of law including how to gain expertise and then position yourself as an expert that clients want to work with.

I also found Instagram to be a surprising repository of thought leadership. On Instagram, I follow the musings of Yung Pueblo, Vex King, Lewis Howes and Adam Grant to name a few.

There are also good podcasts to listen to such as the “How I Lawyer” podcast with Jonah Perlin and “Personal Jurisdiction,” a podcast series hosted by Allison Freedman and Hallie Ritzu.

There is also picking a book in the good old library. In particular, autobiographies are an excellent way to learn from the experiences of figures such as the Obamas and Supreme Court justices like Ruth Bader Ginsburg.



## Conclusion

At the end of the day, honing your own craft or finding a way to stand out from the crowd will actually draw help to you and give you more leverage to ask for it.<sup>4</sup> The irony is that people may be more willing to help those who help themselves. Mentorship cannot be a shortcut or a substitute for working hard to build our own expertise.



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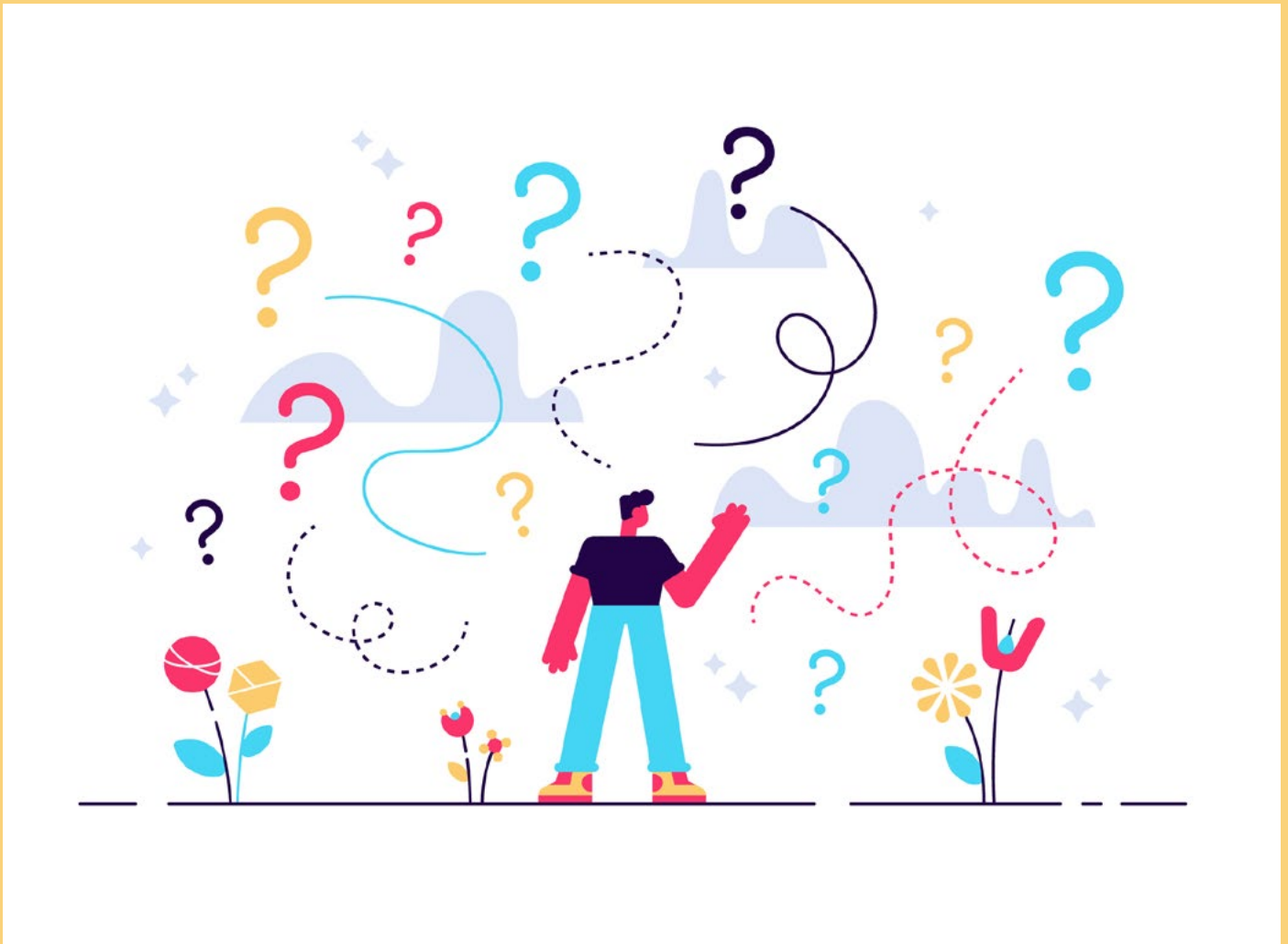
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jmaureenhenderson/2014/11/21/mentoring-isnt-the-key-to-career-success/?sh=c3c53f4692e1>

<sup>2</sup> <https://hbr.org/2021/10/whats-the-difference-between-a-mentor-and-a-sponsor>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.themuse.com/advice/sponsor-vs-mentor>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jmaureenhenderson/2014/11/21/mentoring-isnt-the-key-to-career-success/?sh=c3c53f4692e1>

# REFLECTING ON WHAT IT MEANS *to be an* ETHICAL LAWYER



As you begin your journey as a young lawyer, do take some time to reflect on what you understand being an ethical lawyer entails. To help you in your self-reflection, you can refer to the snippets below taken from articles written for past issues of our Mass Call magazines. We hope that they will invigorate and inspire you for the journey ahead.

## **Ethical precepts and principles**

*Chan Leng Sun SC, "The Calling of an Advocate", 2011 Mass Call Magazine*

On the "weighty role" of practising as a member of a noble profession:

To fulfill that weighty role, you ought to constantly live by two precepts: Integrity and Industry. Ethics is the manifestation of integrity but integrity transcends ethics. It is the covert quality that determines your overt action. No other profession requires a fine balancing such as that required of you. You are duty-bound to honour the system as an officer of the Court, and to do right by your clients as their trusted counsel. A litigator gets into the trenches of humanity the way a transactional lawyer will not, when the measure of a person is laid bare in the rigours of battle. The recent Singapore Academy of Law publication, *A Civil Practice*, teaches you how to maintain good form while plotting the demise of your opponents' case. Nobody likes a rude assassin. By all means pay your respects to grace and virtue, but do not send condolences to good. In the course of your work, you will come across darkness and light. As a hobbit almost said, there's some good in this world and it is worth legal representation.



*Christine Liu Yiwen, "Tips for Rookie Lawyers", 2019 Mass Call Magazine*

Many situations will arise in which difficult choices have to be made between adherence to principles and potentially offending a client or even bosses. Identify your core principles, and assess whether they are aligned to those of your practice. The line between doing one's all to achieve the best outcome for clients, versus actions that in effect "bend backwards" can be a fine one. Unlike the civil service, there are no instruction manuals and the ultimate guidelines on how to interpret legal professional rules and ethics are your own principles.

## **Ethical dilemmas**

*KC Lye, "Ethical Dilemmas and Where to Find Them", 2022 Mass Call Magazine*

In the course of a career, you are almost certainly going to meet a few ethical conundrums. If you are one of those who do not, you are either singularly fortunate, or so dense you won't recognise an obvious ethical problem when it is staring you in the face.

The bad news is, in this job, encountering an ethical conundrum is more a question of when, rather than whether.

There is some good news.

First, serious ethical conundrums do not happen every day. You will be quite unlucky to encounter more than half a dozen in the course of your career.

Second, serious ethical conundrums almost never come in disguise. You can usually tell right off the bat when something might be ethically problematic. A good clue is when you realise you are really hoping that this is something the authorities don't find out about. If it is something you are keen to hide, there is a good chance there is an ethical issue.

In practical terms, the problem is not how to recognise when there might be an ethical issue. The problem is what to do once you have realised there is this issue.

There are two steps once you have realised there is an ethical issue.

*First – figure out what the applicable ethical rule is.*

*Second – decide how you are going to proceed.*

## **Etiquette**

*Joseph Grimberg SC, "One Man's Experience", 2013 Mass Call Magazine*

You do nothing for yourself or for your client by being acrimonious, and this applies in correspondence as well as in court. Letters written in anger often look silly when read in cold print months or even years later in court. Let your opponent be unpleasant if he wishes, but do avoid being dragged down to his level. You will score off him that way far more effectively than if you employ his tactics. Be courteous to your opponent in court, no matter how unpleasant he may become. By all means be in control, and remember that you are both doing a job and that the judge will try to do his or hers. Neither you nor your opponent will assist the Bench by being grumpy, or rude to each other.

*John Lim, "Surviving Your First Year in Practice", 2013 Mass Call Magazine*

Always remain unfailingly courteous to your fellow advocate and solicitor. When communicating, the advocate and solicitor should not write offensive or threatening letters, which may amount to unprofessional conduct. Similarly, you should not in the heat of an argument hang up the phone abruptly on a fellow advocate and solicitor, which is contrary to simple courtesy.

*Thio Shen Yi SC, "Surviving the Associate Years", 2014 Mass Call Magazine*

Be ethical. For obvious reasons. Getting into trouble is not fun. But there's a bigger picture. Earl Warren, the Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court said that "in civilised life, law floats on a sea of ethics". As lawyers, as professionals, as good human beings, ethics must become hardwired in us, a part of our DNA. Closer to home, our Court of Appeal in *Lim Mey Lee Susan v Singapore Medical Council* was emphatic: "To be a member of a profession is to declare oneself to be someone of whom more than ordinary good conduct may properly be expected". Take pride in your professionalism. Just as importantly, be courteous and collegiate. This makes sense. Today's opponent is tomorrow's ally. If you never give your learned friend a break, you are never going to get one yourself. Ok, so you feel that you are tough, you don't need a break, you don't need that extension of time as requesting one will be seen as weakness. Suit yourself, you'll get old and grumpy quickly. You need friends in the profession. It reduces friction in transactions and in the Courtroom. It allows you to treat your opponents as friendly competitors, exhibit magnanimity when things go your way, and grace when things work against you. Your professional life doesn't become a series of unremitting conflicts. Some thrive in that environment, but not many. It doesn't have to get personal. It doesn't have to get ugly. While competitive, it remains collegiate. As a litigator, my acid test is this. After a trial, despite fighting hard, can I still meet my learned friend for a coffee or beer?

*Siraj Omar SC, "Letter from a Litigation Lawyer", 2019 Mass Call Magazine*

Always treat your fellow lawyers with courtesy. You are not a hired gun, but an officer of the Court. Advance your case firmly and robustly, but understand and expect that your opponent will do the same. This may be personal between the clients, but it should always remain courteous and professional between lawyers. Keep that in mind whenever you speak or write to your opponent, and resist the temptation to be rude, condescending or sarcastic. Even if your opponent crosses the line, you should not do the same.

*Alvin Chen, "Why Etiquette Matters – Inspirations from C C Tan Award Recipients", 2020 Mass Call Magazine*

As a newly called lawyer, the furthest question from your mind now is probably: "How do I want to be remembered within the legal profession?" But beginning your legal career with the end in mind is important, as there is no better time than now to set your ethical compass in the correct direction. As Stephen Covey observes, "start with a clear understanding of your destination ... so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction".

As you begin your legal career, there is no better reference point than the exemplars set by the recipients of the CC Tan Award. Since 2003, the Law Society has presented an annual award to a member of the Bar who exemplifies the highest ideals of the legal profession – honesty, fair play, gentlemanliness and personal integrity. The award is named after the first President of the Law Society, Mr Tan Chye Cheng, or CC Tan as he was widely known, who embodied these ideals. Etiquette is reflected in many of these qualities.

Why does etiquette matter? Practically speaking, many rules of etiquette have been codified as ethical rules in the Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules 2015 (PCR 2015), which carry not only disciplinary consequences, but also legal ramifications in some cases where, for example, one's legal and ethical duties to the client overlap.

More importantly, etiquette underlies the core of lawyering – it is not merely a list of do's and don'ts to observe. Etiquette is an integral component of a lawyer's DNA, without which professional victories are merely empty or even Pyrrhic ones. Stephen Covey's principles-based framework illustrates that private victories are as important as public ones.

## Dealing with difficult clients

*Eugene Thuraisingam, "Ethics and Professional Practice", 2016 Mass Call Magazine*

Clients. You cannot live with them. You cannot live without them.

Clients can sometimes be very difficult to manage. Very often, if you are assisting a more senior lawyer, clients tend to think that you are not senior enough to handle their cases and they do not want to communicate with you. It is therefore not unusual to receive unjustified and/or rude e-mails from clients that can be demoralizing. In such a case, you have to put forward your position firmly and forthrightly without descending into a bitter spat. Personally, when I receive an unwarranted and rude message from a client, I find that it helps to take a deep breath, distract yourself by doing another piece of work before returning to the table to craft your response to the client. Do not fight with your clients.

## Resilience

*Alvin Chen, "Why a Resilient Professional Identity Matters", 2014 Mass Call Magazine*

Your legal training to date would have helped you develop a sound professional identity to tackle what lies ahead. But inevitably, your professional identity will be forged and crystallised in the crucible of legal practice. You will meet difficult clients, handle hard cases, work under immense time pressure and address all kinds of unexpected events arising from your clients' matters. Legal practice will test the breadth and depth of your professional identity.

Therefore, it is crucial that your professional identity develops a certain resilience to withstand the real-life pressures of legal practice. Resilience, in its ordinary meaning, refers to a capability to "[withstand] shock without permanent deformation or rupture". However, resilience does not mean that you should stubbornly pursue a certain course of action, convinced that only your viewpoint (moral or otherwise) is the correct one. The experience and practical wisdom of senior lawyers may frequently offer better choices.

Instead, to be resilient in legal practice means that you should critically evaluate situations which challenge your existing professional identity.

*Rachel Eng, "Letter from a Corporate Lawyer", 2019 Mass Call Magazine*

Second, Resilience. What we learn in law school provides us with foundational knowledge. In practice, there are many dimensions that you have not been taught and are learnt whilst on-the-job from partners and seniors. With so much to do and so little time, you may find yourself overwhelmed, you might lose confidence in yourself and you might make mistakes. When a mistake is made, it may be rectified with a simple apology. But, it could also be a serious error, for example, one which causes clients to miss a statutory timeline. The awful feeling of having made a grave mistake is hard to stomach and the reproach by the partner simply aggravates it. In my years of practice, I too have made some mistakes along the way. I will never forget those mistakes and I make sure that I do not make them again. The important thing to do after you have made a mistake is to acknowledge it and to learn from it. Take ownership and apologise to the partner in charge instead of trying to come up with excuses or half-truths to cover up the mistake. By confronting it directly, you and your partner will be able to take immediate remedial action to rectify the mistake and seek the client's understanding. After the matter has been resolved, it is important to be resilient and to bounce back from the low point. Then, work harder than before and ensure that you do not make the same mistake ever again.

# 6 ETHICS RESOURCES *from the* LAW SOCIETY



As a young lawyer, you will likely come across ethical issues from time to time in the course of your practice. Do not fear. Help is at hand as the Law Society offers a suite of professional ethics resources for members. Some of these resources are available at the click of a mouse, so do make full use of them to resolve your ethical issue quickly and efficiently.

## **1. Law Society's Practice Directions and Guidance Notes**

You can find all the Practice Directions and Guidance Notes issued by the Law Society to date on the Ethics & Professional Responsibility webpage of the Law Society's website (<https://www.lawsociety.org.sg/for-lawyers/ethics-and-professional-responsibility/>).

They are conveniently categorised under 10 broad headings:

- Conduct of Proceedings
- Law Society
- Legal Practitioner's Practice: Operational Matters
- Legal Practitioner's Practice Areas

- Legal Practitioner’s Remuneration
- Publicity and Media Related Matters
- Relationship and Dealings with Clients
- Relationship between Legal Practitioners
- Relationship with Third Parties
- Third-Party Funding

A consolidated PDF version of all the Law Society’s Practice Directions and Guidance Notes (as at 9 June 2023) is also available for download.

## **2. Ethics Resources webpage**

Our Ethics Resources webpage (<https://www.lawsociety.org.sg/for-lawyers/ethics-resources/>) contains a wide range of professional ethics resources that the Law Society has published over the years. They include the Conflicts of Interest Toolkit, Professional Ethics Digests and Singapore Law Gazette articles on professional ethics (including conflicts of interest, court etiquette and professional courtesies). Please note that access to some resources requires a Members’ Library login.

## **3. The Art of Family Lawyering (2019 Special Edition)**

Are you intending to be a family law practitioner? Start off on the right foot with the Law Society’s *The Art of Family Lawyering (2019 Special Edition)* (AOFL). The AOFL contains 52 best practice tips and numerous practical pointers on how to buttress constructive problem solving, conciliation and the prevention of conflict of interest.

Spanning around 100 pages, the AOFL aims to help family law practitioners adopt a constructive and conciliatory approach to the resolution of family proceedings while having regard to the need to take a child-centric approach towards resolving issues that involve or relate to children.

The AOFL is available for purchase at the Law Society (28 Maxwell Road, #01-03 Maxwell Chambers Suites) at \$5.40 (inclusive of 8% GST).

## **4. Disciplinary Tribunal Reports**

Keep up to date with Disciplinary Tribunal (DT) decisions by reviewing summaries of the DT’s findings and determination at <https://lawgazette.com.sg/category/notices/disciplinary-tribunal-reports/>.

## **5. Member Assistance and Care Helpline (MACH)**

Need a listening ear on your ethical problem? The Law Society’s confidential and one-stop referral service hotline provides members with a forum to turn to for help or assistance when faced with issues at work or problems which may affect work. Members may call to speak confidentially to the Law Society at 6530 0213. Calls are generally accepted from 9am to 5pm, Monday through Friday.

## **6. Ethical guidance from the Advisory Committee**

You can also seek written guidance on a professional ethics issue from the Advisory Committee of the Professional Conduct Council. The guidelines for submitting a request to the Advisory Committee for ethical guidance are set out in Part C of Practice Direction 2.1.3 (Enquiries to Relevant Committee). Do ensure that you comply with these guidelines before you write in to the Advisory Committee Secretariat at [ethics\\_enquiry@lawsoc.org.sg](mailto:ethics_enquiry@lawsoc.org.sg).



## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: Learned Friend or Foe?

Filing a brief in court referencing case authorities, finding out that the cases were actually made up (because no one – not opposing counsel, nor even the judge – could find them), and then blaming ChatGPT for it – that sums up the predicament that a lawyer in the United States faced when he used ChatGPT “unaware of the possibility that its content could be false”.<sup>1</sup> If the lawyer had taken the time to verify the case references before submitting them, he would neither have made international news, nor be fined USD\$5,000 for his actions.<sup>2</sup>

Closer to home, in Singapore, a self-represented person had also consulted ChatGPT on a list of cases and their summaries for a particular legal proposition, and ChatGPT gave 5 fictitious cases which came to light when opposing counsel looked them up and found they did not exist.<sup>3</sup>

These 2 cases perfectly illustrate the key issues arising from the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the practice of law:

(a) In the first case – the lawyer should have known better and verified the case references himself (or had an associate verify them). This leads to the broader question of how should lawyers be using AI in the course of their work? Will using AI be an acceptable delegation of duty (if its use is properly supervised) or a dereliction of duty?

(b) In the second case – the self-represented person’s use of ChatGPT highlights that there is a growing demand from the public for legal AI tools intended for laypersons so they can access the law and “self-help”, and the legal profession must adapt to it.<sup>4</sup> This leads us to examine what is the role of a lawyer in society, what aspects of a lawyer’s work can AI replace, and can AI facilitate greater access to (do-it-yourself) justice?<sup>5</sup>

To address the issue of the impact of AI on lawyers,<sup>6</sup> we must understand what is AI and how it works. Artificial intelligence<sup>7</sup> is achieved primarily through machine learning, where a machine automatically learns and improves from experience instead of requiring explicit programming to reach an outcome.<sup>8</sup> There are many applications of AI, from using it to aid in decision-making, to generating images or text based on prompts entered. In all cases, AI is trained on copious amounts of (past) data, so that it recognises patterns or attributes in the data to make predictions and find connections.<sup>9</sup>

Knowing this will help you put things in perspective: AI actually runs on a lot of humans behind the scenes, gathering and deciding what data to train it on, managing its training process, giving feedback on the responses it produces, and also updating it with information about the latest legal developments to stay relevant. Humans can never be removed from the equation.

## Co-existing with the machines ... or are they coming for your job?

Law firms are already using AI in a variety of ways, from discovery and document review, to legal research, predicting the outcomes of court cases and reviewing contracts. With the advent of generative AI like ChatGPT, law firms are also looking into how they can harness this technology to aid with legal research and drafting.<sup>10</sup> Right now, ChatGPT is known to “hallucinate” (i.e. give made up information), but developers are intensively looking at ways to fix this so that the results are more reliable.

The use of AI in the workplace is not something that can be stopped, but is in fact gaining momentum - the Singapore civil service has incorporated ChatGPT into its work processes this year, with guidelines on AI usage.<sup>11</sup> Reading the news and opinion pieces on how the legal profession will fare, there is cause for optimism as well as caution.<sup>12</sup> For example, a March 2023 report from Goldman Sachs estimates that about 44% of legal positions could be automated.<sup>13</sup>

Singapore has also grappled with this balance, where our Second Minister for Law remarked that AI “can help you with the base material, but it cannot replace the creativity that the lawyer can bring to the team”.<sup>14</sup> The prevailing sentiment is that AI will take away the parts like research and sifting through large volumes of documents, and leave lawyers more time to do analysis and strategy,<sup>15</sup> such that “the value proposition of lawyers will lie in the complex legal work that cannot be effectively provided by technology”.<sup>16</sup>

The nature of legal work will definitely change, with different tasks and different jobs created (although it is difficult to predict exactly how at this point in time). Some lawyers could be training chatbots, and reviewing their output for accuracy so that it may be fine-tuned. A prominent UK firm had put out a notice for a “GPT legal prompt engineer” earlier this year to help it apply ChatGPT to its work.<sup>17</sup>

## What remains for the lawyers?

So what is the essence of being a lawyer, if a machine can be programmed to do some of the work that we do? A very clinical answer would be what’s in section 33 of the Legal Profession Act 1966 (which sets out the circumstances under which an “unauthorised person” acts as an advocate or solicitor), but being a lawyer is so much more than that!

### 1. Judgment, empathy and the ability to read a room

One of the first things we should understand is that clients don’t have a “legal problem” – they just have a problem, and law is one of the tools that can be used to solve it. Clients also don’t give you the facts of their case neatly laid out like a law school hypothetical. You have to find out what they need, and think about the gaps in the information you have (and weigh up the pros and cons of asking something (that may turn out to be irrelevant and frustrate the client)). This requires judgment, empathy, and the ability to read a room, on the part of the lawyer, to understand what is the client telling you, not telling you, or doesn’t know how to tell you – that really cannot be outsourced to a machine!

### 2. Customising the solution to the client

Second, even if an AI system were to say that the likelihood of a positive outcome in court is “70%”, or “high”, that number or estimate alone is not helpful to the client or the lawyer in deciding whether the client should proceed with the case, and what strategy to adopt. Lawyers are still needed to uncover what the client’s interests are (and the client’s risk appetite<sup>18</sup>), explain the strengths and weaknesses of the case, and provide a legal strategy.

Lawyers also need to assess whether a solution on paper (regardless of whether it is generated by AI) would work in reality, requiring a nuanced understanding of the client’s business.<sup>19</sup> And where another party is involved, to be able to get into the shoes of that other party to assess if the solution is also palatable to them, so that they are more likely to accept it.

### 3. Adaptability; thinking on one’s feet

At present, generative AI can give a good first draft, but you still have to check it and refine it. For example, you could ask it to come up with cross-examination questions after feeding it parties’ statements – or you could prepare a list of such questions yourself. However, if at trial the answer from a witness is not as expected, the lawyer must be able to deviate from “script” within seconds to get the answers needed to prove the case, and have the flexibility to try various approaches based on the witness’ reaction.

## New rules for the legal profession with the use of AI?

There will be a host of interesting questions for the legal profession to address as AI-adoption becomes more commonplace, such as:

(a) If you rely on AI, must you disclose that you use AI to the client or to the Court, or both? If lawyers must disclose the use of AI, what uses will this apply to? After all, we all use technology to make our lives easier – would it be overkill to disclose every single use?

(b) Will there be a requirement to certify that if generative AI was used, that the content generated was subject to a lawyer's review? Recently (in May 2023), a Texas judge was the first to direct lawyers appearing before him to file a certificate that "no portion of any filing will be drafted by generative artificial intelligence (or that any language drafted by generative artificial intelligence [...] will be checked for accuracy, using print reporters or traditional legal bases, by a human being before it is submitted to the Court."<sup>20</sup>

(c) Will there be a requirement or expectation for lawyers to use AI tools – a duty to keep up to date on technological developments?<sup>21</sup> Will it be seen as professionally negligent not to use such tools if they have a higher rate of accuracy than a human?

The answer may in part depend on how comfortable clients are with the technology (which determines whether they want their lawyers to use it), and whether lawyers can justify that the use of such technology is in the best interests of their clients (as clients would rely also on their lawyer's judgment). Will firms that do not use AI be viewed as "out-dated" and "out-of-touch" when AI is the "new normal" in the legal sector?<sup>22</sup>

## When technology crosses the legal line

AI tools also raise the question of whether they are providing unauthorised legal services, especially where they are designed for use by members of the public directly (as opposed for internal use within a law firm). There is a very fine line between legal advice (which only lawyers may provide), and legal information. It also raises the question of who will assume liability if the advice is incorrect.

An interesting case is that of DoNotPay, a New York-based startup which had described itself as a "robot lawyer".<sup>23</sup> DoNotPay's plan was to assist persons challenging speeding tickets in court, where the litigant would wear smart glasses to record court proceedings, have responses generated by AI text

generators including ChatGPT, and the responses fed into the defendant's ear from a speaker. The first of such AI-assisted defence was scheduled to take place in California in February 2023, but it was cancelled when DoNotPay received notices from multiple state bars about the unauthorised practice of law, and is now under investigation by the state bars.

Nevertheless, since there is no lawyer on record, can we say that the litigant is still in effect representing himself, and he can decide for himself each time whether to follow what the AI text generator recommends? This is especially if the litigant is aware of the risk of "mistakes" (hallucinations) in the advice from such tools – should a person be allowed to rely on them, if done so voluntarily and fully informed? These will be issues we have to grapple with as the use of AI becomes more prevalent.

## What can you do to stay ahead in this age of AI?

1. *You still need to put in the effort to know the law – there are no shortcuts*

Even with the use of AI tools, lawyers must still put in the hard work to familiarise themselves with the law in the areas they practise in. This is in order to —

(a) know what questions to ask the client so you have a complete set of facts to advise on, and what assumptions to make;

(b) identify the legal issues, which can only stem from understanding the subject matter, in order to engineer effective<sup>24</sup> prompts for the generative AI system;

(c) review the output from the generative AI system to see if it is correct, and make the appropriate edits and additions to it – otherwise you are just correcting English, and not applying a legal mind;

(d) explain the reasoning behind your conclusion, or why you recommend one option over another.

2. *Take time to understand the technology and experiment with it*

Instead of just reading about the latest AI tool on the market, take some time to try it out and see for yourself how it enhances your work, as well as its limitations. There are many free articles on the web about AI, as well as books and videos – follow up with those that speak in a way you understand, and then pursue a few more to ensure you have both the correct information and a balanced perspective.



It is important to understand the technology and its developments to distinguish fact from hype. This also helps you in asking the right questions of your clients if they approach you about AI.

### 3. Keep updated on the legal developments surrounding the use of AI

Lawyers aren't the only persons navigating this new field – everyone is! Organisations will have questions about their employees' use of generative AI like ChatGPT while on the job, or about the AI system that the organisation is developing, or planning to purchase from a developer.

At present, Singapore has not implemented general AI regulations (unlike the EU's draft Artificial Intelligence Act), but there are guidelines issued by regulators, such as the Model Artificial Intelligence Governance Framework, to aid organisations deploying AI. It is important to think about whether this new technology has features that affect the application of our existing laws. Keeping updated on legislative developments and regulatory action/judicial decisions around the world will help you get perspective on what are the risks and methods of mitigating those risks when using AI, and what are the grey areas (e.g. IP issues relating to generative AI), enabling you to effectively advise your clients (or your own organisation) on their use of AI.

At the end of the day, it is about perspective – how do you see your role as a lawyer? If it is to solve people's problems and ensure access to justice, AI can be harnessed as one more tool to help with achieving it.

Congratulations on being called to the Bar! My wish for each of you is that you will find a career that continues to excite and challenge you daily.



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*The views expressed in this article are the personal views of the author and do not represent the views of Drew & Napier LLC.*

<sup>1</sup> In the lawyer's own words; see a report of the case at <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/27/nyregion/avianca-airline-lawsuit-chatgpt.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jun/23/two-us-lawyers-fined-submitting-fake-court-citations-chatgpt>

<sup>3</sup> This example was brought up in Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon's Speech delivered at the 3rd Annual France-Singapore Symposium on Law and Business in Paris, France on 11 May 2023, accessible at: <https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/news-and-resources/news/news-details/chief-justice-sundaresh-menon-speech-delivered-at-3rd-annual-france-singapore-symposium-on-law-and-business-in-paris-france> at para 26.

<sup>4</sup> See paras 16, 24 and 26 of CJ Menon's 11 May 2023 speech above.

<sup>5</sup> OCBC Bank rolled out a free online service for Singaporeans to prepare a will in less than 10 minutes, compared to hiring a lawyer for this purpose which would cost anywhere upwards of \$100. This online will generator was referenced in CJ Menon's speech at the 29th Inter-Pacific Bar Association Annual Meeting and Conference, available at <https://medium.com/@singaporeacademyoflaw/deep-thinking-the-future-of-the-legal-profession-in-an-age-of-technology-6b77e9ddb1e9>. The will generator also comes with appropriate caveats, informing the user to "seek legal advice from appropriately qualified lawyers for more specific Will requirements (e.g. Islamic law, persons under 21, not residing in Singapore etc)."

<sup>6</sup> This article will focus on how AI affects the performance of legal work, and not with other administrative tasks such as logging your time.

<sup>7</sup> Artificial intelligence "refers to set of technologies that seek to simulate human traits such as knowledge, reasoning, problem solving, perception, learning and planning, and, depending on the AI model, produce an output or decision (such as a prediction, recommendation, and/or classification)" – per the IMDA/PDCP's Model Artificial Intelligence Governance Framework, available at: <https://www.pdpc.gov.sg/-/media/files/pdpc/pdf-files/resource-for-organisation/ai/smodelaigovframework2.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://cloud.google.com/learn/artificial-intelligence-vs-machine-learning>

<sup>9</sup> This makes it ideal for deployment in the legal field since law is all about precedent (e.g. how were past cases decided; what contractual document was used in the past for a similar matter).

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/generative-ai-is-coming-for-the-lawyers>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.straitstimes.com/tech/public-officers-allowed-to-use-chatgpt-and-other-ai-but-must-take-responsibility-for-work-mci>

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the opinions expressed in the Australian Law Society Journal at <https://lsj.com.au/articles/chat-gpt-is-putting-the-future-of-grad-lawyers-under-the-microscope/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://observer.com/2023/03/generative-ai-may-replace-300-million-jobs-goldman-sachs-study/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/lawyers-more-efficient-with-technology-but-cannot-be-replaced-by-ai-edwin-tong>

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, the opinions expressed by the developers of ROSS, marketed as "the world's first artificially intelligent attorney", at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/innovations/wp/2016/05/16/meet-ross-the-newly-hired-legal-robot/>

<sup>16</sup> See para 29(b) of CJ Menon's 11 May 2023 speech above.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.lawcareers.net/Explore/News/Law-firm-to-hire-AI-engineer-to-identify-how-its-lawyers-can-use-ChatGPT-060320>

<sup>18</sup> Clients may still wish to pursue a case even if the likelihood of success is low, for reasons such as principle or reputation.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/generative-ai-is-coming-for-the-lawyers>

<sup>20</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20230531100341/https://www.txnd.uscourts.gov/judge/judge-brantley-starr>

<sup>21</sup> The Law Society hosted an online Colloquium on 19 May 2020, and in one of the panel sessions on Legal Ethics and Technology, views were sought as to whether lawyers should have an additional ethical duty to be "technologically competent" – see <https://lawgazette.com.sg/news/events/the-future-of-lawyers-colloquium/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.lexisnexis.co.uk/blog/future-of-law/artificial-intelligence-trends-their-impact-on-the-legal-sector>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2023/01/25/1151435033/a-robot-was-scheduled-to-argue-in-court-then-came-the-jail-threats>

<sup>24</sup> See the UK Department of Education's statement on Generative artificial intelligence in education, issued in March 2023, available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1146540/Generative\\_artificial\\_intelligence\\_in\\_education\\_pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1146540/Generative_artificial_intelligence_in_education_pdf) - "We can only learn how to write good prompts if we can write clearly and understand the domain we are asking about. We can only sense check the results if we have a scheme against which to compare them. Therefore, generative AI tools can make certain written tasks quicker and easier but cannot replace the judgment and deep subject knowledge of a human expert."



# EIGHT SECRETS OF NETWORKING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS

Congratulations on your recent call to the Bar! You are no doubt excited about what lies ahead. It can be daunting and overwhelming as there is so much to learn and so much to do. But where do you start? To succeed as a lawyer, it is crucial to excel in your field and establish a solid reputation, but in addition to that, the Law Society of Singapore has asked me to share some tips on networking and business development that will help you over the coming years. Although you may think it is too early to focus on these things now, these 8 secrets of networking and business development success will help you to become a future rainmaker.

## 1. Cultivate your affability

Being friendly, helpful, and approachable goes a long way in attracting work from senior lawyers, collaborating with peers, and winning over clients. Your attitude plays a significant role in your success by delivering exceptional work and fostering positive relationships. Aim to impress the partners who assign you tasks and leave clients wanting to work with you again. Having a positive and cheerful disposition will mean that others are more likely to want to spend time with you.

## 2. Become a doer

Make sure that when you say you will do something, you are true to your word. Become known as a person who gets things done. Work hard to become the "go-to" associate that every partner wants to work with. You can do this by cultivating a "can-do" positive attitude. This helps you attract the best work and builds your reputation in your firm.

## 3. Start building your network

It takes time to curate a valuable professional network that can provide work opportunities. You have to play the long game, so why not start now? Begin with keeping in touch with your batch mates, law school, university and high school friends. These individuals will become General Counsels and industry leaders of the future. Stay in touch and nurture those relationships over the years to come. Socialise with them and show interest in their work.

Don't forget the importance of family and family friends. Perhaps Aunty Mae needs help with a will or Uncle Harry is selling a property? Make sure that they all know you have qualified as a lawyer and that they can reach out to you if they need legal help. You probably won't be able to do the work yourself at this stage, but being able to bring work to your firm will be a good thing.

There is a saying that "your network is your net worth." Remember that it is never too early to start building relationships that will support your career growth. Building relationships internally with your colleagues is also networking. Build trust with your peers and learn from each other as you progress. Staying in touch consistently is the best way to develop solid mutually beneficial relationships and stay top of mind.

## 4. Become a curious listener

Good listening skills are often overlooked by lawyers who tend to dominate conversations. Differentiate yourself by becoming an active listener who asks the

right questions, shows empathy, and gets to the heart of the issue. By being genuinely interested in the people you meet, you can build rapport, establish trust, and become a trusted advisor.

## 5. Maintain hobbies and interests

Many lawyers make the mistake of giving up all their hobbies and interests outside work because they get busy. They then become boring because all they have in their life is work. You want to be interesting. You want to be someone who has plenty of conversation about current affairs, books you have read, movies you have seen, places you have visited.

When you meet new people, you want to find out the things you have in common. This is what builds rapport and trust and can lead to a relationship. Let's say you attend a networking event and meet someone who tells you their favourite sport is tennis. If you can tell them that you love tennis too and would love to invite them for a game of doubles, that could be the start of a beautiful relationship.

## 6. Attend events and join committees

Identify professional organisations relevant to your area of practice or industry focus and attend their events. These gatherings offer opportunities to network, learn and deepen your involvement by joining committees. There are lots of young lawyer committees and volunteering opportunities where you can foster trust and nurture relationships, for example, the Law Society's Young Lawyers Committee (YLC) and Young SIAC (YSIAC).

## 7. Seek out mentors

Mentors can help accelerate your career by sharing insights that they have acquired over the years. Observe successful lawyers at your firm. Who seems to be happy and have lots of happy clients who instruct them repeatedly? What is that lawyer doing? What do they say to their clients? What do they write to their clients? How do they spend time with their clients? Ask them if you can go for coffee with them and ask them what advice they could share with you. Meet up with them regularly to gain valuable insights. But don't forget that mentoring should be a two-way street. Ask them what value you could give back. Could you do reverse mentoring by offering them insights into the latest trends in technology and show them how to use tools that can help them with their practice? Make them want to invest in you. Develop relationships with multiple mentors who have different strengths, as everyone has something to teach.

## 8. Build your personal brand

Use social media to build your personal brand and expand your network. Learn how to use platforms like LinkedIn well. Complete your LinkedIn profile and engage by commenting and posting relevant content. People do business with people they know, like and trust. Let them get to know you. Who are you? What do you do? Who do you do it for? Why do you do it?

Be authentic by sharing your opinions and insights into your personality. What have you observed in the world around you? What makes you laugh? What is it like to be a junior lawyer? What could you share that would help law students? Grow your tribe. Connect with like-minded people and thought leaders in your field. Follow inspiring people. Always be helpful and add value. Be generous with the content you deliver. Be supportive of others, grow relationships and explore win-win collaborations. Move from messages into virtual or in person meetings where you can deepen human connection.

## Conclusion

As a junior lawyer, investing time and effort in networking and business development is essential for positioning yourself as a future rainmaker. At this stage, business development means generating new work for yourself though mastering your craft, cultivating an affable and "can-do" attitude and building a strong professional network. Remember the importance of active listening and maintaining diverse hobbies and interests so that people want to engage with you. Participate in relevant events and committees where you can collaborate with others and build relationships. Seek out mentors who can guide you and teach you. Leverage technology, particularly platforms like LinkedIn which provide a personal relationship database and opportunity to build a personal brand. Your career as a lawyer is what you make it, so embrace these 8 secrets and start dancing in the rain. Good luck!



**Lara Quic**  
Head of Business Development, Asia Pacific  
Twenty Essex

# GOING IN-HOUSE: A VIEW FROM THE BOTTOM



*There seems to be a trend of lawyers going in-house at a younger age, and nowadays some companies may not even require their new in-house counsels to have experience in private practice. The internet is full of articles listing the pros and cons of an in-house career, but how much of it is actually true?*

## **A bit of background about myself, and getting a foot in the door**

I graduated from the University of Tasmania with a combined Arts (majoring in Japanese language) and Law degree after 5 long years of study (for the uninitiated, Tasmania is the apple-shaped island off the southern coast of Australia). After completing my legal practice course, I made my way back to Singapore to complete the Part A exams. Four years flew by while completing my relevant legal training and practice training period, as well as the Part B exams, at the Land Titles Registry in the Singapore Land Authority. While occasionally looking out for jobs that would allow me to use Japanese at work, 3 years as a conveyancing lawyer followed, then I sort of just fell into this role when a recruiter contacted me about the opening after I had applied for another opportunity. After a whirlwind recruitment process (which is a whole story in itself), I was in!

## **So, are the generalisations that people make about an in-house career true e.g. better work/life balance at the expense of being viewed almost like a second-class lawyer, for example?**

Recently I had to work with a firm to reply to a Letter of Demand (for which I had already drafted the reply but my bosses wanted it to be issued through a firm) and the partner made an off the cuff comment about “non-legally trained persons like yourselves”. I took only a tiny bit of offence at that, so we probably will never work with them again while I’m around.





#### 4. *Balancing between colleagues and the company*

The final “hard” part of the job is when I have to advise colleagues on certain actions that the company has taken that is perceived to be not entirely to their benefit but is within the confines of the law. Since I’m part of the minions, it can be a little hard to stay neutral and impartial when the company makes certain decisions and I have to get it across to everyone else in a nice way. Also, although I’m generally not involved in the decision-making process, I feel that being that bridge of communication has given me some insight into what management has to consider when making such decisions.

#### **Any parting comments?**

I’m glad to be able to say that I’ve been enjoying my time here. It’s especially nice to be able to see how my humble work has been able to influence or change things, from implementation of suggestions to seeing the slow, steady growth of the ASEAN legal team. So why not seriously consider it if an opportunity comes around? Maybe you’ll be pleasantly surprised!

\* Individual experiences may vary.



**Tee Liang Shi**  
Hanwa Singapore Private Limited



## THINKING ABOUT GROWTH

Congratulations on being called to the Bar! Being conferred the status of advocate and solicitor (and hopefully, a practising certificate!) gives you the opportunity to take on more challenging work, which I hope you will welcome and not shy away from.

I wish to share with you the importance of practising a growth mindset (as opposed to a fixed mindset) along with some pointers which I hope will be helpful in your legal career and aid your growth.

A growth mindset sees failure as a springboard for growth and for stretching our existing abilities. A growth mindset sees success as a recognition of the effort and improvement we've made. On the contrary a fixed mindset sees failure (and success) as a confirmation of our abilities. But our abilities are not – and should not be – the same across time. The book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck explores these 2 mindsets in depth.

Often, we are beset with negative thoughts about our abilities. This is especially so for junior lawyers who have yet to develop their skills and knowledge in the law. We may wonder if we are truly suited to be a lawyer, whether we will fail, and whether we will look stupid and be exposed for our lack of ability.

You may also have heard of impostor syndrome where people doubt their skills, talents or accomplishment and fear being exposed as frauds. You may also have heard of affirmation-seeking behaviour where there is a tendency to please others and to seek compliments or positive feedback. I've seen people struggle with thinking that they are not good enough and that they are not suited for the law, exacerbated by labels from their superiors that they are incapable and not predisposed to law.

These thoughts hinder us because they cause us to be less self-confident, more anxious and frustrated at being unable to meet standards. We may become fixated on how our work will reflect our abilities and be worried that others don't think well of us.

Conversely, thinking that we are good enough also falls into the fixed mindset trap. We may deny ourselves crucial opportunities for growth if we don't take up challenges and don't consider feedback seriously.

With a fixed mindset there is a tendency to think that we are either "smart" or "stupid" or "good" or "bad" at something and to prove ourselves repeatedly. A related observation appears in the well-known *Atomic Habits* book by James Clear, where he points out that people repeatedly make statements downplaying themselves, which causes them to disengage from activities that they think they are not good at. Ultimately,



their statements become self-fulfilling because they don't give themselves a chance to become better. For instance, someone may say, "I am bad at math" or "I am bad at directions" and will avoid solving math problems or navigating by having others do it instead, which means they will lack practice and end up not improving at math or navigating.

With a growth mindset, we are cognisant about our capacity for growth, and the improvement that we've made. We tend to think "I've done well but I can do better". We become more inclined to take on challenging work, recognising that putting in the effort will make us better. Even if we are exposed along the way for not being good enough, we take any realisation or criticism as a way to learn. We may not have been the best students with top grades but that doesn't mean we cannot become good lawyers.

We can manifest a growth mindset by avoiding thoughts associated with a fixed mindset, and replacing those thoughts with a growth mindset. Here are some examples:

Fixed mindset	Growth mindset
Intelligence is status	Intelligence can be developed
Avoids challenges	Embraces challenges
Gives up easily	Persists in the face of setbacks
Sees effort as fruitless	Sees effort as the pathway to mastery
Ignores useful negative feedback	Learns from criticism
Feels threatened by the success of others	Finds lessons and inspiration in the success of others
Outcome: A deterministic view of the world. May plateau early and achieve less than their full potential.	Outcome: A greater sense of free will. Reach ever-higher levels of achievement.

In practical terms, how can we challenge ourselves and learn from criticism?

**1. Don't be affected by negative comments and reframe them as comments useful for your learning.** Whenever someone says that you are not good at something or did a task badly, reframe the comment to mean that you can be better, or you could do the task better in the future.

Some mentors will practise positive coaching and others will practise negative coaching. If you watch football, you will notice that José Mourinho calls out players who played badly during a football game during media interviews, but Pep Guardiola doesn't do that – instead, Pep recognises that the players have room for improvement and didn't perform to their potential. If your colleague makes a negative comment or calls you out in front of others (and possibly even the Court), recognise that the issue may lie with them and not with you.

See negative comments as an indication that you should and can improve. Remind yourself what you're doing well, and what you're not doing so well, so that you can practise self-affirmation instead of seeking or relying on affirmation from others.

**2. Don't shy away from opportunities and actively look for them.** As a junior lawyer, you may be dealing with the discovery of documents and the drafting of simple letters most of the time. When an opportunity comes along for the matters that you're working on to draft submissions or to do an interlocutory hearing, take the initiative to ask whether you can do it. You may be rejected, but there's no harm in trying – you will never know if you don't ask – and this is your chance to show your enthusiasm.

If your colleague asks whether you would like to try your hand at drafting or argue at a hearing, go for it! Don't ever think that you're too junior to do something because there's always a first time. Plus, you can always do more preparation to make up for your relative lack of experience.

I wish you a fulfilling journey of growth ahead!



**Yuen Ai Zhen Carol**  
 Remy Choo Chambers LLC  
 Member, Young Lawyers Committee 2023



## THERE AND BACK AGAIN: A LAWYER'S TALE

*Like a certain Mr Baggins who wrote about his experiences outside the Shire and his comfort zone, this article features some lawyers who have spread their wings and made that leap of faith to work overseas, either in-house or in private practice. The Law Gazette speaks to Lincoln Tan, Clarissa Lin and Marius Toime!*

### **1. Please tell us about yourself.**

LT: Hello! I am Lincoln and I am a Legal Director at Gilead Sciences, looking after the legal risks arising from the international region's key Cell Therapy launches. Prior to Gilead Sciences, I was head legal at Roche and Novartis and I was also working in a few Japanese law firms before that too. It has been 10 years since I qualified as an advocate and solicitor in Singapore and I have been blessed to have had the opportunity to work and live in countries like Japan and Vietnam.

CL: My name is Clarissa and I am currently a Regional Counsel in a FinTech company. Prior to this, I worked in a Singapore law firm with an office in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) for about 4 years. I had always known that I wanted to live and work overseas at some point in my life. As I did not study abroad or attend any exchange programmes, I knew that my dream of experiencing a life outside Singapore was going to have to be through my career.

MT: Hello, I'm Marius, a corporate and projects lawyer with around 2 decades of experience in private practice. I was admitted to the Singapore Bar in 2018. As a partner in the corporate practice group at K&L Gates Straits Law LLC, I specialise in M&A, projects and finance and have been lucky enough to have lived and worked in places such as Singapore, Indonesia and New Zealand.

### **2. How did the opportunity to venture overseas arise, and why that country?**

LT: The last city that I was working in for 1.5 years was in Ho Chi Minh City and before that I was also based in Tokyo. I speak fluent Japanese and was naturally placed in the "Tokyo team" of the law firms that I worked in, wherein I would speak and draft legal contracts in Japanese (under the supervision of a Japanese partner) and specialising in M&A also meant that I was required to work in HCMC (for inbound Japanese investors) and in Tokyo (for outbound Japanese investments). When I was not too keen to stay in Tokyo/Singapore, an opportunity came up with another Japanese law firm that brought me to HCMC to work with Japanese investors given the huge inbound investments from Japan.

CL: My friend who was at the Singapore law firm at the time reached out to me. He knew I was looking for a change in my career and he suggested I apply for the opening in their Dubai office. I knew I wanted to go overseas at some point but I never envisaged that it would be to Dubai. At the time, I had only seen Dubai's airport during transits. Nevertheless, I believe that life is about experiences and there was no harm in just trying – so I did. I got the job, and the rest is history.

MT: As a young lawyer, I had early exposure to international deals and interacting with colleagues from across the network. This fuelled my interest for cross-border work. When the chance arose in Singapore, I didn't hesitate. Lessons in Chinese and Japanese linguistics as a kid provided further motivation to go out and explore Asia.

I also moved to Jakarta for several years as a Foreign Legal Consultant on the recommendation of Peradi, the Indonesian bar association. Indonesia presented an alluring landscape for growth, and led to a strategic plan to establish a strong presence in the country. Indonesia is an incredibly dynamic market, and I was very fortunate to have had the opportunity for such an enriching experience, both on a personal and professional level.

### **3. How was your experience there?**

LT: It could be quite demanding in Tokyo as Tokyo's M&A activities are tremendous and as it is the HQ for the Japanese law firms, it also means that you get a lot of work from various Japanese partners there. However, work-life balance was slightly better in HCMC given the work culture of the Vietnamese lawyers we work with and while typically we get huge transactions with major Japanese investors, most of the time the ball is in the court of the target companies.

CL: It was wonderful. UAE has so many public holidays!

Joking aside, my experience in UAE was eye-opening. As a lawyer, getting familiar with the UAE's civil law legal system was a necessity. I signed up for courses and was lucky enough to receive guidance and mentorship from colleagues at the local UAE law firm which the firm had an alliance with.

Of course, the most interesting thing about working in a different country is the difference in culture. In the UAE, the Islamic faith is at the forefront of everything. At the time I was there, the work week in UAE was Sunday to Thursday to cater to Friday prayers; government and official documents had to be in Arabic; and restaurants would close or put-up opaque window covers to hide diners during Ramadan. There was also the notable use of the term, "*Inshallah*" or "if Allah wills it". Ask anyone who has worked in that region, and they will be familiar with the term since it can be used in almost every context. Got a deadline to meet? *Inshallah*.

MT: Probably the biggest challenge was navigating the diverse array of street food, including food carts and local *warungs* (small restaurants) serving dishes such as *sate ayam* (chicken satay), or *gado-gado* (vegetable salad).

One of the memorable experiences was travelling to Indonesian universities as a guest lecturer in the law faculty. This offered a precious glimpse into the minds of the lawyers of the future, and provided insights into teaching methods, curriculum and approaches to legal problem solving and analysis in the Indonesian legal community. It was totally worth the challenge of spending hours commuting in chaotic traffic while juggling client calls and other time pressures arising from the nature of working as a lawyer.

### **4. Why did you come back to Singapore?**

LT: I was getting quite worn out with the work demands of being in a Japanese law firm and I had always given myself a timeline of 2-3 years before I made another move to another country or place of work for new adventures. One-and-a-half years into the role, I was approached by a large pharmaceuticals MNC and I had always toyed with the idea of going in-house with an industry that is challenging and interesting so I decided to cut my time in HCMC slightly shorter than what I had planned for.

CL: Fate! Well, actually it was Covid-19. I came back to Singapore in March 2020 to what I thought was going to be a 2-week holiday. Within my first week back, countries across the globe were going into lockdown. The UAE closed their borders and so I could not return for a good 6 months. During those 6 months, I re-evaluated and decided that I had scratched the itch of living abroad and there was still much more for me to learn and grow in Singapore. I have not ruled out the possibility of going abroad again if an opportunity arises but for now, it's good to be home.

MT: By coincidence, my family and I arrived back in Singapore for a routine medical check-up a couple of days before the circuit breaker. With work flow moving quickly to virtual format, geographical location became a secondary consideration. Returning to Singapore marked the beginning of a new chapter, and I took up the opportunity to join the highly regarded team at K&L Gates Straits Law LLC.

## 5. Any tips for aspiring newbies looking to go global?

LT: Young lawyers should always keep an eye on how they want to grow their careers but yet at the same time be flexible to opportunities. Having the chance to work overseas in a foreign law firm, Singaporean law firm or even as in-house will always set you apart from other lawyers who have not done so and that opens up more doors to various opportunities. Always try to immerse yourself in the culture of the law firm or country as that will also help you develop certain life skills as a lawyer!

CL: Be prepared to roll with the punches. Other countries will function very differently, and it is easy to get lost or confused trying to navigate their government/administrative systems and cultural norms. Just be patient and accept that things will be different and get the job done.

Put yourself out there to make friends. Everyone needs a support network. The friends I made in Dubai were my family away from home. They took care of me when I was sick, helped me out when my car broke down, found me an Arabic speaking friend when I had to talk to the police after a car accident, took care of my plants, and even helped me pack up my apartment and ship my things back when I made the decision not to return. I wouldn't have survived without my friends, and I am very grateful to have them in my life – all thanks to my impulse decision to give UAE a shot.

MT: Stay committed and be persistent in the pursuit of your long-term goals. I was excited by the prospect of tackling complex deals and exploring new markets, and being adaptable often led to new opportunities. In Jakarta, having friends you can rely on was really important; when Covid hit, a colleague helped to pack up some of our valuables until I was able to go back to collect them - things would have been so much more difficult without their support. Work wise, having a sense of determination and motivation also helped to ensure that there was enough fuel in the tank to handle periods of intense deal flow and multiple time zones.



**Tee Liang Shi**  
Hanwa Singapore Private Limited



WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH,  
THE TOUGH GET GOING ...

## With Some Help

In the course of your career you will face obstacles, dilemmas and quandaries. It can be useful to get a different perspective on a problem or a helping hand from a colleague, senior, elder or friend. Help and solutions can come in many forms, and the Law Society's Member Support Schemes could be one of them. We offer a plethora of support schemes which we welcome every member to avail themselves of. Think of our support schemes as a warm blanket – always available, unobtrusive and ready to cover you when you need us. And if you don't, that is fine too, we promise we won't take offence.

With our best wishes,  
Your friendly Law Society

### Members' Assistance and Care Helpline (MACH)

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially and need an assuring voice on the other end of the line, we are just a phone call away. Add 6530 0213 to your speed dial.

### Ethics Guidance

A dilemma may arise on the ethical front and you may need advice on what to do, what not to do or what is the right thing to do. Drop an email to our Advisory committee at [ethics\\_enquiry@lawsoc.org.sg](mailto:ethics_enquiry@lawsoc.org.sg).

## LawCare

Sometimes offloading a problem on a friend over a beer is not good enough. If your situation starts to get overwhelming and you need a professional to reframe issues and suggest answers, we offer a confidential counselling service in collaboration with Counseling Perspective Pte Ltd, on a co-payment basis for up to 3 sessions. Rest assured your identity will be kept a secret. We will co-pay the bill without asking who, what, why.

## PracMentor

School does not teach us everything we need to know. PracMentor is a scheme where young lawyers may seek guidance from a senior lawyer on practice issues. Legal problems that your clients bring you have to be considered from various angles that the textbooks have not covered – what business environment is your client operating in, are there certain unspoken factors that need to be considered when rendering a piece of advice? Tap on PracMentor to short cut your learning curve and get a front row seat in the school of life by talking to your seniors.

## Practice Consult

If you are thinking of starting your own firm (there are rules on this though, you can't start a firm right off the bat), or have been given law firm management responsibilities, know that being a lawyer and running a firm are 2 very different things. HR management, operating costs, balance sheets, office automation, rain-making and more will suddenly take on a huge significance. Arm yourself with the necessary know-how by tapping on a legal practice management consultant under this scheme.

## Relational Mentorship

We have senior practitioners to take you under their wing to help you out with an ethical conundrum, offer career guidance or simply lend a listening ear if you are buckling under the stress of practice. To get the low down on mentoring turn also to page 7 and 11.

## Young Lawyers Law Mentors Scheme

Sometimes you just want to hang out with someone who "gets" you, speaks your lingo and who is going through the same growing pains as you. This is where our peer to peer support scheme comes in.

## Career Path

Do you vacillate between hating and loving the work you do? Are you thinking of calling it quits? Do you think you would be better off selling chicken pies using grandma's recipe? If you are facing an early life crisis or are at a crossroads in your career, why not speak to our career guidance counsellor?

## Defence Assist

This one is every lawyer's nightmare – being on the receiving end of a complaint under section 75B or 85(1) Legal Profession Act. While we hope this never happens to you, on the off chance that you have to face disciplinary proceedings, you can seek legal assistance from volunteer members either on a pro bono or ad honorarium basis. However, prevention is always better than cure. Try not to be the subject of a complaint by reading our ethics articles on page 14 and 18.

There you have it – our support schemes in a nutshell. You may also refer to the full list on our website [www.lawsociety.org.sg](http://www.lawsociety.org.sg) > About Us > Support Schemes. Alternatively, drop our Membership folks an email at [membership@lawsoc.org.sg](mailto:membership@lawsoc.org.sg) or call 6538 2500.

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