

## ASIAN LEGAL BUSINESS

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2016

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EMPLOYER  
OF CHOICE  
2016Asia's best law firms  
to work for

**In a number eerily reminiscent of the figure from last year, 97 percent of lawyers across Asia have expressed satisfaction with their jobs in this year's survey, with more than half of the respondents calling themselves extremely satisfied.**

"[This is a] superb place to work," gushes one partner with an Indian law firm. "You are treated as a professional and there is an excellent work-life balance. The work is great and the management is wonderful, and the firm has an extremely strong HR department that cares for all employees."

For all but seven percent of the respondents, remuneration appears to be at least at the market standard; and more than a fifth believe it to be "well above." And almost 90 percent rate the salary structure and overall salary transparency at the firm as either "good" or "excellent." Similarly, when it comes to opportunities for training or professional development, more than 93 percent are appreciative of what is available. And more than 45 percent of lawyers rate opportunities to receive mentoring in the firm as "very good." The path to partnership is however a bit of a sticking point – almost 40 percent of those surveyed feel that the path is "somewhat transparent" or not transparent at all. That said, a whopping 81 percent rate their firm as "very collaborative." And almost 90 percent like the knowledge management and IT support available at their firms.

For work-life balance, meanwhile, fewer than 40 percent think it's worth writing home about. "The firm pays well, and it expects nothing less than 200 percent commitment to work," says an associate in Malaysia. "Based on my understanding, if you want to be at the top in the firm, there seems to be no other way but to sacrifice every other parts of 'your life.'" And around 40 percent feel only "somewhat valued" at the firm, or not valued at all. But job security is high at 75 percent.

When asked if they saw themselves in the same firm in five years' time, almost 45 percent answered "definitely." And almost three-quarters said that they would recommend the firm to a friend "wholeheartedly." ALB

## METHODOLOGY

The ALB Employer of Choice Rankings were compiled taking into account responses from more than 3,500 private practice lawyers across Asia, ranging from managing partners to paralegals, as well as our own market knowledge. The survey was open in the months of February and March, and law firms have been ranked on the basis of job satisfaction, remuneration, work-life balance, career prospects, mentorship, job security and other aspects, with respondents being asked to submit their inputs anonymously. Law firms in each jurisdiction have been listed in alphabetical order.



GUANGDONG GRAND & HOLDERS LAW FIRM

**CHINA DOMESTIC**

AllBright Law Offices

AnJie Law Firm

DaHui Lawyers

Guangdong Grand & Holders Law Firm

Han Kun Law Offices

Jilin Gongcheng Law Firm

JunHe

Solton & Partners

Yingke Law Firm

Zhong Lun Law Firm

**CHINA INTERNATIONAL**

Clyde & Co

CMS, China

Greenberg Traurig

Linklaters

Paul Hastings

## CHINA

Job satisfaction runs high among Chinese law firms, with almost 57 percent calling themselves “extremely satisfied.” For more than 60 percent of the respondents, remuneration is deemed to be above the market standard at the least, and more than 92 percent appreciate the salary structure and overall transparency when it comes to compensation. Similarly, less than 4 percent feel dissatisfied by the opportunities for training and professional development. Almost 91 percent think of their firm as “very collaborative” and more than 93 percent are generally satisfied with the work-life balance on offer. An impressive 68 percent feel “extremely valued” at the firm and job security stands at more than 83 percent. This means that almost 95 percent see at least a chance of sticking

with the same firm for the next five year, and 82 percent would wholeheartedly recommend it to a friend.

At **AllBright Law Offices**, a senior associate lauds the “excellent leader, strong team spirit and attractive remuneration.” An associate at **AnJie Law Firm** praises the “great team atmosphere and caring partners.” Meanwhile at **DaHui Lawyers**, a partner says: “I love the people I work with and the work I am doing. The atmosphere is very collegial. Partners and associates are young, passionate and energetic about work and life.” “Employees are given strong support, while the firm combines stability and flexibility, and provides great incentives,” says a senior associate at **Guangdong Grand & Holders Law Firm**. And an associate at **Han Kun Law Offices** praises the “high-profile transactions, good workflow and solid mentorship from knowledgeable partners.”

GUANGDONG  
GRAND & HOLDERS  
LAW FIRM



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ASIAN LEGAL BUSINESS

CHINA

EMPLOYER  
OF CHOICE

— 2016 —

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GUANGDONG GRAND & HOLDERS LAW FIRM



**Deacons** praises the “challenging work and top-notch client base.” **Oldham Li & Nie** is lauded by an associate for its “good working environment, good team, and the opportunities to get involved in different matters.” And **Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom** has “good benefits and generous paid leave. Strong teams in the U.S. and Europe support the Asia team.”

## INDIA

Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas  
Khaitan & Co.  
Trilegal

**Jilin Gongcheng Law Firm** is praised for its “flexible working environment, easygoing partners and ample opportunities for promotion,” according to a partner. An associate at **JunHe** lauds “the people, the environment, the compensation... Everything is perfect.” At **Solton & Partners**, a partner notes the “solid bond” that the team shares. And at **Yingke Law Firm**, an associate declares their appreciation for “nice colleagues and boss.” Rounding out the domestic firms is **Zhong Lun Law Firm**, where a senior associate picks three factors: “One, it is full of challenges. Two, everyone is always professional. And three, we all share a nice relationship.”

The five international outfits that make the list are **Clyde & Co.**, **CMS, China**, **Greenberg Taurig**, **Linklaters** and **Paul Hastings**.

## HONG KONG

Clyde & Co.  
Deacons  
Oldham Li & Nie  
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom

Job satisfaction is at 89 percent in Hong Kong, but remuneration could be better, with the majority (57 percent) believing it to be at market standard. Job security is fairly high, and 51 percent would wholeheartedly recommend the firm to a friend.

At **Clyde & Co.**, “there is good support from the firm, and a good career development plan. People are nice and work is coming in regularly.” A partner at

India notches up a job satisfaction rate of 98 percent this year, a percentage point higher than last year. Salaries broadly trend towards the higher end of the scale among those surveyed, while more than 90 percent appreciate the opportunities for training and professional development, and 88 percent like the mentoring they receive at their firm. The path to partnership could be more transparent (it is “somewhat transparent” for 42 percent) but 79 percent find their team “very collaborative.” Almost 60 percent feel “extremely valued, and job security is at a healthy level (71 percent say they feel “very secure”).

At **Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas**, “the work environment is challenging, the qual-

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ity of people is great and the work itself is very rewarding," says a partner. A lawyer at **Khaitan & Co.** notes the "healthy camaraderie between partners, motivated employees and the stress on achieving a work-life balance for all." And an associate with **Trilegal** highlights the "quality of work, the direct client interaction, and comfort in reaching out to partners and seniors overall."

## INDONESIA

Assegaf Hamzah & Partners  
Hadiputranto, Hadinoto & Partners  
Hanafiah Ponggawa & Partners  
Soewito Suhardiman Eddymurthy Kardono

Job satisfaction is upwards of 98 percent in Indonesia, and salary levels are also generally high, with 94 percent praising

opportunities for guidance and mentorship. Work-life balance is passable for about 62 percent, and a majority (53 percent) feels extremely valued; with almost two-thirds feeling secure in their jobs. Some 46 percent definitely see themselves in the same firm in five years' time, while 63 percent would wholeheartedly recommend the firm to a friend.

At **Assegaf Hamzah & Partners**, an associate highlights the "supportive bosses, friendly but competitive working environment, excellent colleagues and very fair remuneration." An associate at **Hadiputranto, Hadinoto & Partners** says their job allows them to "gain extensive knowledge and provides me with the opportunity to engage with many clients from different backgrounds." "I have the best job in the world according to my view," gushes an associate at **Hanafiah Ponggawa & Partners**, "the work environment is very comfortable yet challenging." And a lawyer at **Soewito Suhardiman Eddymurthy Kardono** praises the "good working environment and high pay. I can have a balanced life."

## KOREA

Bae Kim & Lee  
Kim & Chang  
Yulchon

After China, South Korea had the largest number of responses to the survey this year, with hundreds of lawyers submitting enthusiastically. And the enthusiasm was not unfounded: almost 55 percent declared themselves "extremely satisfied" with their jobs. Remuneration is "well above" the market standard for almost 40 percent, and more than 58 percent said opportunities for training and professional development was of the highest quality. The path to partnership is "very transparent," according to 53 percent, and nearly 80 percent praise their team for being highly collaborative. Work-life balance is excellent for 46 percent, and a whopping 61 percent feel "extremely valued." No wonder job security



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Employer of Choice - Korea  
- Asian Legal Business (2016)



KIM &amp; CHANG

is at 70 percent, and almost 75 percent would “wholeheartedly” recommend it to a friend. Management at **Yulchon**, says a counsel, “is very considerate to employees, and pays attention to small things like sending birthday gifts to spouses, providing free lunches, and so on.”

According to Sky Yang, a partner of **Bae, Kim & Lee** (BKL), over the past decade or so, the firm has created a number of special events designed especially for its associates. “For example, new members typically attend a weekend hiking retreat as well as a welcoming dinner party for them and their families,” he says. “In addition, BKL holds an annual ‘Only One Party’ exclusively for our second-year associates

who have spent a year with us to encourage them and to hear their feedback. For all associate professionals, BKL hosts an overseas workshop for two or three days. Furthermore, we have recently adopted a pool system for all first-year associates to provide them with opportunities to build experience in a variety of practice fields.”

He adds that as the foundation of the firm’s philosophy regarding employee engagement and retention, BKL does its best to recruit talented lawyers who are also “good people.” “We see this as essential not only to fostering a collegial atmosphere and strong bonds of mutual respect and trust among our professionals, but also to delivering top-quality legal services to

our clients,” says Yang. “We then place a very high priority on providing diverse career development opportunities to our people. Such opportunities can include overseas study as well as secondments to long-standing clients. And we strive to maintain strong connections with our people even when they leave the firm, such as by inviting them to attend conferences and other social events.”

Bumkyu Sung, senior attorney at **Kim & Chang**, says that his firm is always looking to provide attorneys with opportunities for professional development that would enhance the engagement of its professionals. “For example, the firm has put more emphasis on its well-established mentor programme and increasing the interaction between the senior and junior attorneys to provide young lawyers with guidance in their professional development and also adjustment to firm life,” he says. “We also hold regularly scheduled off-site seminar programmes with the goal of enhancing teamwork and engagement. The overarching approach to increasing employee engagement, however, is continued focus on providing the top notch service that our clients have come to expect of us, as we know that client satisfaction is the starting point of a healthy cycle of quality clients and work, and we know this is the best way to enhance the engagement level of our professionals.”

Professionals have always been its strongest asset, he adds. “The firm will continue to provide development and training opportunities to increase this commitment and dedication,” says Sung. “We understand the importance of having attorneys that are content with the work environment and the work they are engaged in and we do everything to provide this to our attorneys. Again, the key to strengthening



BAE KIM &amp; LEE



engagement at a law firm is providing its professionals with the best opportunities, in terms of both clients and the actual work “The satisfaction derived from working for the best clients in their most sophisticated matters is what all law firm professionals strive for. And we believe that these opportunities, which only Kim & Chang can provide, are what lead to greater commitment and engagement from professionals.”

## MALAYSIA

Azmi & Associates  
Tay & Partners  
Wong & Partners  
Zul Rafique & Partners

Satisfaction rates are somewhat lower in Malaysia, with less than a quarter calling themselves “extremely satisfied.” Remuneration is at the market standard for 63

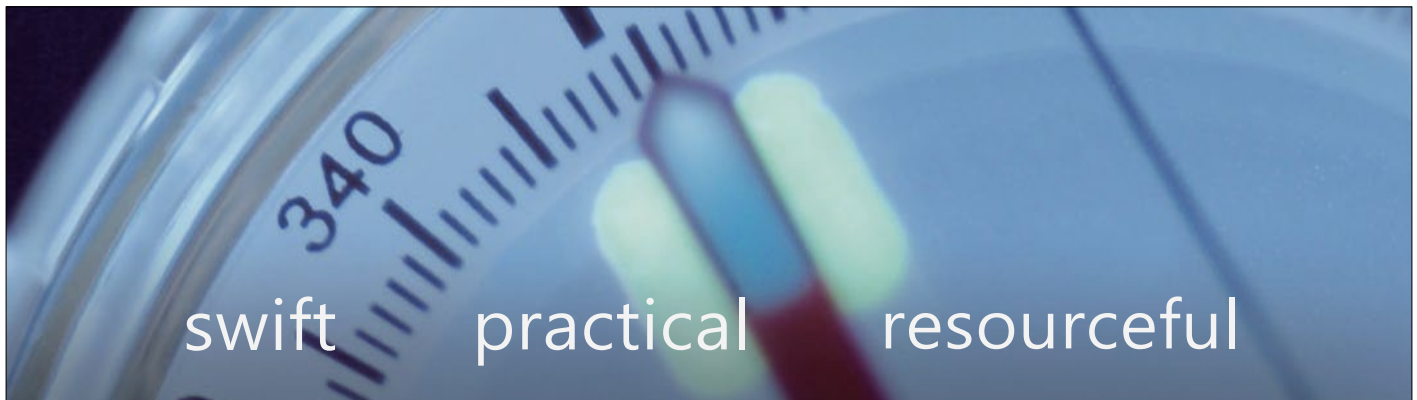
percent, and opportunities for training and professional development are good, according to 57 percent of respondents. The path to partnership is however something firms can work on: More than 67 percent, or exactly two-thirds, feel the path is only “somewhat transparent.” Work-life balance is also decent for almost 80 percent, but only about 28 percent feel “extremely valued” by their employers. A third of the respondents say they will “probably” be in the same firm in five years time, and about half would recommend it to a friend, but with qualifications.

**Azmi & Associates** provides “challenging tasks and endless opportunity, as long as I’m willing to learn,” says an associate. “I am exposed to a variety of clients and interesting legal work,” says a lawyer at **Tay & Partners**. At **Wong & Partners**, a partner notes the “challenging and intellectual client work” and dynamic fast-paced work environment.” And a lawyer at **Zul Rafique & Partners** praises its “ideal balance of work and personal life, and minimal office politics.”

## PHILIPPINES

Quisumbing Torres  
Romulo Mabanta Buenaventura Sayoc & de los Angeles  
SyCip Salazar Hernandez & Gatmaitan

The Philippines has a job satisfaction rate of 96 percent, and salaries are above the market standard for more than two-thirds of the respondents. More than 92 percent appreciate the opportunities for training and professional development that their firm provides, while 86 percent like the opportunities to receive mentorship. The path to partnership is very transparent for just under a quarter of respondents, while two-thirds think their firm is “very collaborative.” Knowledge management and IT support is also something that the Philippines scores well in. With work-life balance acceptable at the least for 87 percent, and job security for nearly three-quarters, 74



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ROMULO MABANTA BUENAVENTURA SAYOC &amp; DE LOS ANGELES

percent would “wholeheartedly” recommend the firm to a friend.

“The work environment is very conducive to professional development. Our firm is also the highest-paying firm in the legal market,” says an associate at [Quisumbing Torres](#). And a respondent from [SyCip Salazar Hernandez & Gatmaitan](#) praises the “challenging and rewarding work.”

Perry Pe, a partner at [Romulo](#) says the firm leads by example and has a caring attitude: “Our firm’s most senior partner, Ricardo J. Romulo, goes for lunch with associates every Friday in a very informal and convivial setting, to share stories.”

## SINGAPORE

Baker & McKenzie.Wong & Leow  
Bird & Bird ATMD  
Drew & Napier  
Harry Elias Partnership  
RHTLaw Taylor Wessing

Singapore’s job satisfaction comes in at just under 90 percent, still a fair achievement for a market that has seen work being sluggish of late. Remuneration remains

stable, and the path to partnership is at least somewhat transparent for 90 percent. Teams are generally collaborative (some 63 percent call their firms “extremely collaborative”), and lawyers also feel that their work-life balance is decent (82 percent). With nearly half the respondents feeling “extremely valued” and 64 percent feeling secure about their jobs, more than a quarter “definitely” expect to see themselves in the same firm in five years’ time, while 54 percent would “wholeheartedly” refer it to a friend

At [Baker & McKenzie.Wong & Leow](#), an associate says “the people are generally really friendly, there is a good atmosphere around the office, and the work is interesting.” An associate at [Bird & Bird ATMD](#) praises the “opportunities to do business development, friendly and approachable partners, and interesting work from good clients.” At [Harry Elias Partnership](#) the “partners are sound and understanding,” while a partner at [RHTLaw Taylor Wessing](#), a partner lauds the opportunities for growth and understanding management.”

“We value the many talented young lawyers who join us and invest a substantial amount of time and resources into training and mentoring them,” says Blossom Hing, a director at [Drew & Napier](#). “Our senior lawyers, most of whom started their careers here, are committed to help the young ones realise their potential and become successful lawyers. As one of the largest firms in Singapore, we attract interesting, high profile and complex work. Our lawyers and

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## TAIWAN

Baker & McKenzie  
Eiger Law  
Winkler Partners

Job satisfaction is at 88 percent in Taiwan, although salaries could be higher, with only about 36 percent saying they are paid above the market rate. Almost three-quarters appreciate the opportunities for training or professional development provided by their firms, and almost 84 percent feel that the work-life balance is acceptable at the very least, although a shade above 31 percent feel they are “extremely valued.” Job security is at 59 percent, and just above 53 percent would wholeheartedly recommend the firm to a friend.

An associate at Baker & McKenzie’s Taipei office notes the “stable and friendly environment.” “We have a great and very diverse team that works very well together,”

trainees benefit by having the opportunity to get involved in challenging cases and ground-breaking deals that allow them to constantly hone their skills and keep them engaged.”

A bonus is the open atmosphere. “Drew has a unique family culture with an ‘open door’ policy. We encourage open communication so that everyone feels he or she is part of a team,” adds Hing.

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WEERAWONG, CHINNAVAT &amp; PEANGPANOR

says a partner at **Eiger Law**. And a counsel at **Winkler Partners** sums it up this way: "I enjoy coming to work. My colleagues care about each other and our clients. Bottom line: I can have it all: high-quality clients and colleagues, and quality of life."

## THAILAND

Baker & McKenzie  
Tilleke & Gibbins  
Weerawong, Chinnavat & Peangpanor

While job satisfaction is at just under 84 percent in the Land of Smiles, the proportion of lawyers who are "extremely satisfied" is relatively high, coming in at 50 percent. About 51 percent also feel that they are paid above the market standard, and Thai firms also rate highly when it comes to opportunities for training and professional development. For 81 percent, work-life balance is at the least acceptable, and more than 58 percent feel "extremely valued" in the firm. With job security at a round 75 percent an impressive 60 percent definitely see themselves in the same firm in five years' time. At **Baker & McKenzie**, an associate feels the "job is challenging and I have the opportunity to be surrounded by and working with very well-qualified partners and colleagues." Meanwhile **Tilleke & Gibbins** is praised as "a great place to work, with incredibly talented colleagues

and a chance to represent some of the best clients in the world," according to a respondent.

Veeranuch Thammavaranucupt, senior partner at **Weerawong, Chinnavat & Peangpanor**, says that employee engagement is one of the keys to the firm's success. "This year, we have introduced several new professional development programmes," he says. "We provide challenging on-the-job and seminar-based training for all WCP staff, from legal assistants to senior associates. Secondments to international firms are arranged each year. In order to provide a degree of flexibility to our working environment, we have introduced our contract lawyer program. Lawyers are recognised and rewarded fairly for their contributions to the firm. The firm also provides regular opportunities for all staff to get to know each other using team building and other activities. We are building an on-site gym as we believe that good health is important."

Adds executive partner Chinnavat Chinsangaram: "We care about our people and the overall philosophy is that the firm is a platform to support all lawyers and staff to grow and advance in their professions to achieve their respective potential. We continue to reinforce a clear set of cultural values, which differentiates us from other firms in the market. We emphasise, among other factors, a politic free, transparent work environment without power play, which motivates lawyers in terms of assignments, rewards and career path. We encourage team work and dialogue among all practice groups. Often, lawyers from

different practice groups work as a team to advise and provide solutions for clients' multi-faceted transactions. The firm also welcomes diversity."

## VIETNAM

LNT & Partners  
Rajah & Tann LCT Lawyers  
Tilleke & Gibbins

A job satisfaction rate of upwards of 97 percent, above-market remuneration for more than 52 percent of the respondents, and adequate opportunities to receive training and professional development mean that it's not a bad time to be a corporate lawyer in Vietnam. Work-life balance is "excellent" for 37 percent and "good" for 55 percent more, and almost 62 percent feel "extremely valued." Job security is at 84 percent. It's no surprise 57 percent seem themselves in the same firm in five years' time.

At **LNT & Partners**, a senior associate praises the "good environment for career development, diversity of practice areas, innovative methods and good training system. A **Rajah & Tann LCT Lawyers** partner lauds the "great work and good treatment from the firm." "My colleagues are just like my family," says a lawyer at **Tilleke & Gibbins**. "We help each other, and my boss always inspires us."

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## RECRUITMENT TRENDS IN SINGAPORE AND HONG KONG

According to recruitment consultancy Hays, Singapore's legal recruitment market was hit hard in 2015 by volatile economic developments impacting oil & gas and shipping. "Global falls in business confidence have left several corporations conservative about increasing the headcount of in-house legal teams," it says the 2016 Hays Asia Salary Guide. "Despite this, we have seen a stable level of activity in private practice particularly in the areas of banking & finance, mergers & acquisitions, capital markets and international arbitration."

The key skills that are currently in demand for in-house positions, according to Hays are regional APAC experience, transactional and drafting skills, as well as the ability to communicate and read in Mandarin Chinese due to both inbound and outbound investments in China. "Following the implementation of the Fair Consideration Framework in 2014, continued preference has been given to Singapore citizens and permanent residents, particularly for more junior positions. We see these requirements continuing within the in-house hiring market," the guide adds. In private practice, it anticipates that the key areas of demand will be project finance, international arbitration, M&A and asset finance, and candidates with language skills in Bahasa Indonesian, Japanese and Mandarin will continue to be viewed as a valuable asset.

Meanwhile, with China determined to work through the global financial instability to continue its robust growth patterns of many years, Hong Kong's legal sector is expected to remain strong across the board, says Hays. "Traditional revenue generating areas in private practice, especially capital markets (equity and debt, international and local), general corporate, mergers & acquisitions and private equity are

**Traditional revenue generating areas in private practice, especially capital markets (equity and debt, international and local), general corporate, mergers & acquisitions and private equity are expected to continue to be strong areas of hiring in 2016.**



expected to continue to be strong areas of hiring in 2016," it notes. "Competition for candidates is fierce particularly for those with cross-border China experience as well as trilingual (English, Mandarin and Cantonese) language skills."

Additionally, there is rising demand for candidates that can apply global compliance and regulatory expertise in the local domain, both with respect to contentious and noncontentious legal work, and Hays predicts that salary levels for genuinely qualified and experienced people will grow significantly. "As a consequence of the growing importance of risk control and compliance within financial institutions, financial areas at the fringes of traditional investment banking such as private

banking, hedge funds and other investment management and insurance, will continue to grow as sectors of investment and therefore as sectors that employ legal professionals. Most areas of non-financial in-house legal recruitment are expected to remain steady in 2016 after several years of busy hiring," the guide says. **ALB**

### THE BEST OF THE WORST

Feedback from some extremely dissatisfied respondents

*"Direct bosses do not recognise the hard work put in by the associates. It seems that they do not want to promote associate lawyers. There is also no mentoring by the bosses. There is also a lot of finger-pointing by the bosses and lack of transparency in promotions. There is also manifest favouritism."*

- FROM A LAW FIRM IN THE PHILIPPINES

*"Disorganised work allocation and assignment, no promotion plan and no salary increase for two years, no recognition for those who concentrated on work but only praise on those who acted high profile."*

- FROM A LAW FIRM IN HONG KONG

*"I feel [law firm] has exceptionally high expectations from its associates. They are given far too much of a work load and it is common practice for associates to work until morning. This is why our resignation rate is very high."*

- FROM A LAW FIRM IN THAILAND

*"The partners do not even know my name, even though I've been working here for more than three years."*

- FROM A LAW FIRM IN INDONESIA

*"The bosses are terrible... fire the bosses."*

- FROM A LAW FIRM IN KOREA