

## ALB INNOVATION LIST 2017

BY RAJ GUNASHEKAR

Today, law firms are increasingly finding that their clients' expectations change often. It's no secret that Asia is a tight market filled with an ever-expanding cast of both direct and indirect competitors. The role of technology is expanding, and new approaches to pricing are driving the need for efficiencies and newer solutions. To achieve this and ensure that they remain a leader in a rapidly developing business world, firms are recognising the necessity of building and sustaining an innovative culture. To do so requires a big psychological leap, and law firms are learning how to cultivate a safe environment that allows staff to put forward new ideas and gives them room to flourish – or even fail.

Several law firms are using technology to standardise processes as well as offer data centres, flexible resourcing or technology products. This is expected to keep rising in 2017. In Asia Pacific, more online products being delivered to clients and more flexible working options launched to attract and keep the best talent.

"Innovation starts with a cultural change," says Stephanie Keen, Singapore managing partner at Hogan Lovells.

"Innovation for law firms means looking at how we can put our client's need at the heart of our service. It means embracing flexibility, diversity, technology and adaptation – not only to change the way we conduct our service, but also how we think."

The legal industry is also facing more and more disrupters, such as accountancy firms trying to get into the legal market, smaller firms that are pursuing more commoditised work (at least initially) as well as local firms expanding their horizons. As Keen explains, "We are also seeing more and more clients demand

diversity in our teams, with some clients placing diversity as a key decision-making criteria in panel reviews."

Law firms that take their commitment to innovation seriously should focus on using their resources to generate and nurture novel ideas.

"We have to learn to put our desire for perfection aside to create a high-performance culture and launch products and ideas that may not be as complete as planned in order to keep moving forward and stay ahead of the market. And if a new project doesn't go as well as we hoped, we learn from it and try again," says Keen. 

## INTERNATIONAL FIRMS

### AWA Asia

Asia locations: Hong Kong and Beijing

Awa Asia has implemented specific software tools to assist its billing, time entry, matter management diary and docketing systems. This enables the firm to see how many oppositions a client has filed, how many marks pop up which it can prompt its clients to oppose, and how many oppositions it has won or lost. It also allows the firm to determine successes and assess whether it is surpassing or stacking up against the competition.

The firm is now able to measure its growth areas and highest profit centres as well as identify trouble spots, wastage of resources and weakest links. Through specific software tools, AWA Asia can structure billing arrangements to meet clients' needs.

### Berwin Leighton Paisner

Asia locations: Multiple

Berwin Leighton Paisner's (BLP) culture of collaboration and cross-border work is a common thread running through most of its practice areas. The firm has implemented a new case management and workflow platform equipped with enhanced artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytic capabilities.

Its arbitration team is one practice area that offers 24-hour assistance to its clients, with group members located in Asia, the Middle East and London.

Another innovative way BLP serves its asset finance clients is by using a remotely-based legal services delivery team. Stationed in Manchester, UK, this group supports BLP fee earners in delivering aspects of client work that can be process-engineered and follow a structured "checklist" approach.

The firm uses a document management system and e-discovery software called Ringtail to carry out document reviews. It has implemented the One Asia approach, which sees partners jointly planning, managing and adjusting budgets throughout the year. This strategy has been instrumental in allowing it to be more considerate and organised in its spending.

### Hogan Lovells

Asia locations: Multiple

Hogan Lovells sees enormous activity in Greater China and beyond in the delivery of goods and services through new and disruptive online and mobile technologies. This includes payment services and broader developments in the financial technology or "fintech" space, which covers innovations such as stored value/e-money, peer-to-peer lending and data analytics.

Globally, the firm strives to be at the forefront of privacy and cybersecurity regulation as it continues to evolve. Accordingly, Hogan Lovells has established a cybersecurity solutions team primarily focused on risk management, incident preparedness, regulatory enforcement, litigation, crisis management assistance, and breach response and investigations counsel.

Hogan Lovells has also launched Business and Social Enterprise, a programme that teaches young lawyers about the foundations of business, financial modelling, client management and social impact within a commercial environment.

### Kobre & Kim

Asia locations: Hong Kong and Seoul

Kobre & Kim has invested in building infrastructure around matter management, budgets, knowledge sharing and training for its teams. For example, it has implemented an "aggressive, trial-ready approach" where it attacks each engagement using a vigorous, trial-focused strategy designed to get to the heart of the matter as quickly as possible. After each case is concluded, the firm's case and knowledge management team meet for a post-mortem discussion for a follow-up.

The firm supports its lawyers' career goals. Lawyers are ensured the option to discuss their professional ambitions with partners through a mentor programme and directly with firm's management. Its training programmes are focused on providing lawyers with the tools needed to develop specific legal skills as well as how to advance at the firm, including career progression.

### Mayer Brown JSM

Asia locations: Multiple

Mayer Brown JSM bucked the industry trend towards outsourcing back office support by merging its regional IT service desks to create a single global solution, achieving substantial gains in efficiency, client satisfaction and cost reduction. Prior to this ambitious remake, Mayer Brown's three service desks in the Americas, Asia and Europe served more than 3,500 people across 22 offices globally.

Amid growing client pressure for lower costs, there is a significant interest from law firms in outsourcing across all areas of back office support. A common misbelief about IT outsourcing is that it delivers efficiencies and improvements that cannot be achieved internally.

When the firm's global IT service manager and director weighed the options, they discovered that diverse challenges around language and culture were very difficult to achieve with outsourcing. They built the business case for an internal global service, which was fully supported by the firm's leadership.

### Pinsent Masons

Asia locations: Multiple

In Asia, the firm's focus is sharper, building its business around the energy and infrastructure sectors. A compelling example of that strategy in action has been the development of the Pinsent Masons' "Infrastructure Academy", in partnership with a major infrastructure client in South Korea.

The firm has developed TermFrame, an in-house matter management system that incorporates machine learning into the legal process. TermFrame offers a straightforward way to model legal scenarios and automatically pulls in discrete parts of the firm's legal knowledge, thus providing relevant information and prompts to lawyers.

To date, this technology has been deployed in over 7,000 matters, including property acquisitions, leases, licences and disposals, dispute resolution processes, contract risk review frameworks, complex due diligence and contract review.

## COVER STORY

## DOMESTIC BOUTIQUES AND ALSPs

### Collyer Law

Location: Singapore

Collyer Law has incubated a legal-tech platform called FirstCOUNSEL, designed to provide on-demand tailored legal support to entrepreneurs, startups and SMEs. From online support on incorporation to access to a curated library of commonly used contracts as well as an in-house lawyers on-demand, the platform provides early-stage businesses with a one-stop solution for all their legal support needs.

The firm seeks to make the quality of its work environment better for talented candidates who may not have such flexibility in Big Law. For example, one third of its lawyers can work virtually anytime – they can use a "hot desk" when they're in office for meetings and so on, but they can also work from home whenever that is the more productive option. "We were inspired by consulting firms where the client-facing consultants often spend much time outside the office and at client locations, and have only hot desks for when they return to the office," it says.

Collyer Law also actively hires and engages with candidates who wish to work on a part-time basis, especially working moms and millennials seeking work-life balance while remaining in legal practice.

### Lawyers On Demand

Asia locations: Multiple

From helping a law firm to develop its own flexible legal service to helping a lawyer work remotely with a top fashion brand based in Los Angeles, LOD is focused on providing each client a tailored solution.

A major practice of LOD is the personalised career development process. The outcome of this dispels the myth that being a flexible lawyer or consultant stops career growth. LOD believes career development is individual. A business plan process is in place

for new lawyers and consultants, providing them with an individual and targeted approach to facilitate their professional development. The firm is constantly assessing the Asian markets and remain innovative and responsive to them.

For example, LOD launched its In-House Legal Women of Influence Program in Asia last year. This is a forum for women in senior in-house legal roles to share ideas, issues and solutions to the challenges they face in their line of work.

The firm uses social media and forums to recruit and connect with lawyers before the candidates decide to apply for a post. LOD has built relationships with the HR teams of various law firms, and they refer talented lawyers who may be looking for an alternative way to practice law to LOD.

### MG/Chambers

Location: Singapore

In March 2016, MG/Chambers launched a document assembly system called VanillaLaw and deployed it to clients. Unlike a template/form filling system, VanillaLaw has guide notes to allow users, even those who have no legal training, to select the clauses they want. While there are other non-template systems in the market, these systems are used in the back end by lawyers and are not suitable for use by non-lawyers.

By deploying VanillaLaw directly to clients, MG/Chambers has made itself available virtually, and is no longer just a brick-and-mortar law firm. This gives its clients to have access to a virtual in-house legal department and external lawyers combined.

To support VanillaLaw, the firm had to digitise all its work flows and processes. Its lawyers now work in a strictly digital environment, which corresponds to increased cyber security issues. Therefore, the firm has changed some of the hardware and work flows to deal with these issues.

Founded by Mark Goh, MG/Chambers aims to “clear the fog of law”.

## DOMESTIC FIRMS

### Atsumi & Sakai

Location: Tokyo

With the rapid advance and development of technologies such as AI internet of things (IoT), big data, analytics and communications, and the expansion of their application across all business fields, legislators frequently have trouble keeping up with the pace of change.

Atsumi & Sakai says it keep itself abreast of these changes and assists clients with the novel legal issues arising from them through its Innovation Business Support (IBS) team. Recently, the IBS team has been transformed into a new Innovation Practice Group, which combines lawyers experienced in the fields of law relevant to this swiftly changing world.

The firm also provides matching services, assisting a leading company or a venture capital firm to find startups, and supports industry-government-academia partnerships.

### Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas

Locations: Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad in India

Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas (CAM), India’s largest law firm by headcount, wants to be at the forefront of the technological revolution in the fast-growing Indian legal market by being the first user of machine learning software Kira Systems as well as by bringing more change through innovation.

It recently signed an agreement with Canada-based provider Kira Systems to enhance its delivery model and boost the efficiency, accuracy and pace of certain legal services.

Kira is software that AI to identify, analyse and extract clauses and other information from contracts and other types of legal documents. CAM the first law firm in the country to deploy such a technology.

As a full-service law firm, CAM does numerous deals and has previously innovated in the area of M&A diligence by establishing of its Transaction Support Group.

As an early user of artificial intelligence, the firm aims to move up the learning curve and be ready for further technological changes.

### Drew & Napier

Location: Singapore

Drew & Napier’s organisation structure is unique in that it is organised in teams comprising junior directors, associates, and secretaries. All the teams are led by senior directors who are recognised leaders in their area of practice. Junior lawyers are expected to rise to the challenges of a top-tier legal practice, but they aren’t expected to do this alone. Within the teams, senior lawyers give consistent personal attention and hands-on training to junior attorneys. Instead of hiring laterally, the firm has a tradition of developing and promoting talent from within. Drew & Napier’s five senior counsels are homegrown talents.

The firm has a “ministry of fun” committee organises enjoyable events, allowing staff to take a break, let their hair down and get to know one another better. The group puts together cocktail events throughout the year, a trivia night for the charities that Drew & Napier supports, and a crazy call party to celebrate trainees.

### Hammurabi & Solomon

Locations: New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Patna and Ranchi in India

When it comes to incorporating innovative approaches in running a law firm, Hammurabi & Solomon ensures that its services offer value for money. The firm discusses its approach and budget for the transaction prior to commencing work. This encourages absolute transparency, as the client is made aware of the strategy and costing beforehand. It also provides detailed bills to clients, reflecting the hours and work done by lawyers on the matter or transaction.

Hammurabi & Solomon maintains an intranet system to facilitate knowledge sharing at the firm. It also recently introduced an IT-driven system to manage its client relationships and matter mapping.

### King & Wood Mallesons

Locations: Multiple

Since its restructuring, King & Wood Mallesons (KWM) has discovered more opportunities for larger transactions that require cross-practice legal services within one

firm. The sector-oriented structure placed the firm in a better position to advise on the most important legal affairs and business opportunities of clients in the areas of internet, healthcare and compliance practice.

Coinciding with the launch of the practice areas restructure, KWM also rolled out a plan for improving legal service quality as well as boosting its client relationship management programme and cross-selling. This served to reinforce the change from a project-based to a client-centric mindset and work approach.

The restructure also brought on a massive reshuffling of its operational systems including IT, HR, marketing, digital solution and ERP. Under the same principle, KWM also successfully restructured its business support system to be client-focused as it was designed around the practice groups’ needs, while the client management programmes have become sector-oriented.

### Rajah & Tann

Locations: Multiple

Rajah & Tann is the first of the Singapore mega-firms to set up a dedicated practice group (business fundamentals) for startups and SMEs. Most SMEs lack specialised skills and knowledge to negotiate issues involving compliance, regulations and corporate documentation, while they face competing demands in managing, marketing and growing their businesses at the same time. The business fundamentals group is aimed at countering these pain points by offering SMEs a spectrum of growth-stage appropriate affordable solutions.

The firm has also established R&T Asia Resources, a flexible insourcing service designed to meet clients’ increasing need for experienced contract lawyers to support in-house counsel on short-term contracts and project-specific work.

As work from clients grows in complexity and spans multiple jurisdictions, R&T has implemented group-blended rates with established working protocols, ensuring clients have a unified, simplified and more enriching experience through a one-stop shop service.