

The thing about ... Jeanette Chan

Recently, Asian-mena Counsel's Patrick Dransfield photographed Jeanette Chan, managing partner of the China practice and head of the Asia head of the telecommunications, media and technology practice at Paul, Weiss, and asked her a series of questions on behalf of the In-House Community.

ASIAN-MENA COUNSEL: Jeanette, as part of your legal training, you were an associate mentored by Jerry Cohen – how have you seen the China legal market evolve over your career? How does the in-house counsel community in China during the early 90s compare to the Chinese in-house community today?

Jeanette Chan: When Paul, Weiss first opened in Asia in the 1980s, there were less than a handful of international law firms in the region, and only a couple that focused on the China market. Tribute should definitely be paid to Jerry Cohen, a senior counsel, who helped to establish the firm's China practice at that time; he had an amazing vision and saw China as a huge market with great potential for growth. The landscape of the legal market has changed considerably over the last three decades, with an influx of international law firms as well as the rapid development of local law firms. Today, Asia has the largest concentration of international law firms, many of which have China practices that focus purely on China-related work. Similarly, the in-house community in China has adapted to the changing times where many of the in-house lawyers receive their education overseas and are qualified to practice law in Hong Kong, the US and/or the UK. Their education, background, language skills and experience is highly sought after in China.

AMC: What do you wish an in-house counsel to have 'front of mind' when she thinks about Paul, Weiss? Has the firm retained a consistent strategy for Asia in general and China in particular over the time you have been with the firm?

Chan: I am confident that when in-house counsel think of Paul, Weiss, they think of quality, practicality and passion. We have consistently delivered excellent service and

practical legal solutions to our clients. Quality is paramount, and we believe that differentiates us from other firms; that commitment has also helped create business opportunities for our firm in this region for over 30 years. We remain very focused on our areas of expertise, and we also strive to further enhance our skills and our knowledge. In addition, we are passionate about our work, and we like to think this comes across in our interactions with clients and peers. Paul, Weiss's largest office is in New York, but our overseas offices extend the firm's capabilities. In China, we are strategically focused on niche practices in the areas of M&A, private equity and technology, media and telecommunications, where we have been consistently ranked in the top tier by numerous publications. Last year, we added two top-tier lateral hires in Hong Kong and China, Betty Yap and Judie Ng Shortell, who are renowned for M&A and private equity transactions, respectively. This approach aligns with our global strategy to carefully grow our corporate and M&A practice.

AMC: I note that you spent some time as In-House at Cable & Wireless: has that experience enabled you to engage with in-house clients more effectively?

Chan: It certainly was a great experience and gave me another perspective on how to work with in-house lawyers more efficiently. Having been on 'the other side' allows me to manage the expectations of in-house lawyers much more effectively, and you also learn where and how outside counsel can add the most value. There is a level of empathy involved because you learn to understand the pressures and limitations that in-house lawyers face – whether it be from their senior management or their law firms.

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AMC: Clients, and the availability of technology, are challenging leading law firms to be on top of technological advances to best provide value. How does Paul, Weiss effectively use technologically-advanced solutions in its services to clients?

Chan: Paul, Weiss is a leader when it comes to technology. We give our lawyers the option to bring their own devices and our IT department provides all technical support necessary so that our lawyers' ability to provide prompt and efficient legal support is not limited by technology. In addition to providing technologically advanced solutions, Paul, Weiss is also at the forefront of technology-related transactions. Our ability to deliver sound counsel to our clients is reflected in the range of projects we handle, from traditional regulatory and transactional work in telecommunications and media to representations involving advanced technologies, convergence and the Internet. In China, we have provided innovative solutions in the telecommunications, IT and media markets since 1994, when China first opened to foreign companies. For example, we advised Microsoft in its JV with China Electronic Technology Corporation (CETC) to license, deploy, manage and optimise Windows 10 for China's government agencies and certain SOEs in critical infrastructure sectors and to provide continuing support and services for these customers. This work was innovative, as it was tailor-made for Microsoft in China and unique to

the PRC. This joint venture, which required careful structuring of ownership of IP rights and implementation of localisation in order to address the needs of the PRC governments and SoE customers and at the same time protecting Microsoft's IP rights.

AMC: What qualities do you think make a good Paul, Weiss lawyer and how does the firm attempt to mould such a person? What do you find most refreshing and also lacking in the new generation of lawyers?

Chan: Paul, Weiss lawyers consistently provide top-quality legal advice and excellent service. The firm's solution-driven approach has really worked in our favour, as our lawyers are taught to think outside of the box and we look at matters from different angles. Quality lawyering involves more than just drafting a perfect document; it requires understanding the needs of the client, the unique considerations that relate to practicing law in this region and good judgment. Training is critical to the success of a Paul, Weiss lawyer – with training, supervision and good exposure to complex transactions, Paul, Weiss lawyers gain valuable experience. Experience is the key to be able to exercise good judgment. We regularly review performance of and give support to our lawyers wherever and whenever it is needed. I thoroughly enjoy working with associates of all levels in our China practice because they all contribute unique talents and perspectives.

AMC: What is your hinterland (ie, what are your interests outside of Paul, Weiss)? How do you control your time so that you can pursue them?

Chan: I really enjoy my work. Every day is different and every day brings a new challenge. I love the many facets of my role where I get to meet new (and existing) clients regularly; developing and nurturing those relationships is extremely satisfying. I very much enjoy drafting and attending negotiations. I am very hands on and play an active role in the transactions that I oversee. Having said that, I make sure to set aside some personal time for myself, and one of the things I make time for every day is exercising. I love going to the gym and I do Muay Thai boxing. Everyone in the office knows that I love to run, box and stay active.

As the first female Asian partner at Paul, Weiss, I am also very passionate about advancing the gender discussion. I fully support causes and events led by organisations like The Women's Foundation, 100 Women in Finance, 30 percent Club and Women in Law Hong Kong. I love reading about the profiles of successful women and their journeys inspire me. I am proud that Paul, Weiss invests in initiatives that promote the advancement of women and women's issues. We make sure these are among our top priorities, and we are one of the few law firms to appoint a Women's Initiative Director. Further, our chairman Brad Karp was recently named "Man of Distinction" by Legal Momentum, a US non-profit organisation advocating for the legal rights of women and girls. Brad is the second man and the first law firm partner to receive this recognition, which reflects his extraordinary dedication and commitment to gender equality.

Jeanette Chan is one of Asia's elite law firm leaders; having helped shape the landscape of the industry for over three decades. As the firm's first Managing Partner of the China Practice, Jeanette has been able to balance her legal prowess, service to clients, business development, and day-to-day management of Paul, Weiss' China practice, which has led to the team's continued success. In addition to her vast legal advice, Jeanette leads the China Practice and the day-to-day running of the Beijing and Hong Kong offices. Jeanette's practice focuses on cross-border mergers and acquisitions and private equity investments, with a particular emphasis on joint ventures and in the telecommunications, IT and media markets in the Asia Pacific region. She has been an active participant in those markets in the Greater China region since 1994, when mainland China and Taiwan first opened their telecoms industries to foreign investors. The other industries Jeanette has been actively involved in include insurance, education, pharmaceuticals, health care, and automobile. She also spent almost two years as the Senior International Legal Adviser of Cable & Wireless, assisting with their operations and business development teams in the Asia Pacific region.

Jeanette is admitted to practice law in New York, Canada and Hong Kong and is a non-practicing solicitor of England and Wales. She completed her BA from the University of Toronto, LLB from the University of British Columbia and LLM from Harvard Law School. Jeanette is frequently recognised by various legal publications such as Chambers, as one of the world's leading PRC law practitioners: particularly in the communications, media and technology industries.