

The thing about ...

Jiang Yong

Jiang Yong, founder and chief partner of Tiantong & Partners, met with Asian-mena Counsel at the firm's beautiful and serene siheyuan, a traditional Chinese residence, adjoining Beijing's Forbidden Palace, where we put to him a number of questions on behalf of the In-House Community.

By Patrick Dransfield, Co-Director of In-House Community

Asian-mena Counsel: Your stated aim is to live in a litigation-free world – a curious goal for a lawyer. How does this relate to Tiantong's mission and culture?

Jiang Yong: There are couplets in hanging in the main hall of our siheyuan which reads: (但愿人无讼，何妨我独闲). It means: If everyone was litigation-free, it would not matter that us lawyers were idle. Just as good doctors don't hope that people get ill, we believe the

value of a lawyer is helping people solve and avoid disputes. The mission of Tiantong is to participate in the construction of a legal ecosystem with more fairness and justice, and our culture is led by the values of dedication, passion for excellence, innovation and openness. We expect to be a more constructive force in the legal ecosystem, maximise the value of lawyers, and make our contribution to the better realisation of fairness and justice.

AMC: Can you tell us about the location and the unusual design features of Tiantong's offices in China and their rationale?

JY: I have always believed that architecture is the best expression of brand. As a law firm concentrating on complex commercial and civil dispute resolution, we hope to express our passion for excellence through architecture. So, in Beijing, we choose the unique siheyuan near the Forbidden City. In Nanjing, we

chose the top floor of the famous Jin Ling Hotel's Asia-Pacific Business Building. In Shenzhen, we chose the top office of Ping An Financial Centre, which is the 4th highest building in the world, to create the highest law firm in the world. In Chongqing, we chose the 52nd floor of the World Financial Centre to build the highest law firm in western China. All branch offices follow the same decoration style, presenting our ambition to build an integrated law firm across the nation.



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AMC: Tiantong has the highest winning rates among all Chinese law firms before the Supreme Court and various high courts of China – what factors do you think contribute to the firm’s success?

JY: I think the achievements we get today owe to our dedication. As I always said, dedication is the best gift in life, which could show us different sceneries. We concentrate on complex commercial and civil dispute resolution, so that we can develop real depth of expertise and build our organisational structure and business model around it, and find the best way to

deal with it. Thanks to our continuous efforts and singular focus during the past 16 years, we keep improving.

AMC: Tiantong is noted for hiring graduates from China’s top universities rather than lateral hires and yet also has the highest per lawyer revenues in China. Please describe how technology and the millennial generation are shaping Tiantong’s practice of law. Do you subscribe to the view that ‘law is a team sport’?

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JY: The young generation brings energy and the spirit of innovation to Tiantong’s legal practice. Their skilful use of technology and tools help Tiantong’s Three Magic Weapons of Litigation*, especially visualisation and big data, to achieve better results. Growing up in the era of this explosion of information, they naturally have strong ability in information searching and processing, which is part of the essence of legal service. Also, their broad vision and interdisciplinary knowledge helps them to cope better with the cross-border challenge concerning issues in other fields.

I totally agree that law is a team sport, and our business model is built on that idea. Traditionally, one lawyer deals with the whole process of a case alone, but now we break the process into different parts and handle it through teamwork. Secretaries deal with routine work, litigation assistants deal with supplementary matters such as legal research, litigators determine litigation strategy and partners lead the whole programme. In this way, we make legal service more efficient.

AMC: Tiantong first came to our attention with regards to the firm’s embracement of technology and social media, including having over 400,000 WeChat subscribers to the firm’s content. Can you describe both the genesis and development of these innovations?

JY: Such innovations are closely linked with our spirit of openness and sharing. We are always glad to share our experiences with our industry and make a contribution to our legal ecosystem. The rise of the mobile internet perfectly corresponds to this spirit. When we share our experience through articles, people who are interested in this field naturally gather. Valuable and useful content can be communicated widely and accurately in this age. It is the constant high-quality sharing that makes us recognised by many legal practitioners.

AMC: In the past, most of Tiantong’s cases have been referrals from other private practice lawyers rather than directly from clients. As in-house teams have grown in size and sophistication, do you see a change in who engages you?

JY: The source of our cases differs in different periods. In the earliest period, we got most cases directly from in-house. Later, as more and more lawyers recognised our proficiency, they were glad to refer cases to us or invite us to collaborate with them. The amount of cases referred by lawyers gradually grew up to nearly the same as cases from in-house. In recent years, as our influence among the in-house community grows, many in-house counsel prefer to contact us directly. Such cases increase obviously as a result.

AMC: Jiang Yong, your career prior to founding Tiantong included being a judge on the Chinese Supreme Court. Do you think that this perspective allowed you to recognise business opportunities in Chinese litigation that were not appreciated by your corporate law peers?

JY: Yes. When I was in the Supreme Court, I found many lawyers didn't understand litigation very well. The idea that litigation was a competition of guanxi was quite popular at that time. But I knew that although the legal environment did have drawbacks, it was progressing as a whole. In most cases, lawyers lost not because of the malpractice of justices, but because of the bad job they did by themselves. They failed to persuade the judge. I believed if we put efforts in developing litigation skills, there would be a vast marketplace, and that was why we developed the Three Magic Weapons of Litigation in later years.

Actually, along with the promotion of judicial reform in China, judges' independent judgment is increasingly valued, and lawyers' ability to persuade judges becomes more important accordingly. We have been well prepared for that already. It's just like buying stocks at a low point and waiting for them to increase in value.

AMC: Who is your mentor?

JY: When I was in the third year of university, I followed Tian Wenchang for practical practice. He is a famous criminal defence lawyer in China and the way he works influenced me a lot. As to law firm management, I learned a lot from McKinsey. The idea of the Three Magic Weapons of Litigation is from them. When noticing how they abstracted many common tools and processes in their personalised consulting business, I recognised that we could do similar things in the field of litigation. Besides, in the process of Tiantong's national expansion, McKinsey's understanding towards integration and their specific measures also inspired me a lot.

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Jiang Yong, founding and managing partner of Tiantong, with more than two decades' experience of practising law in the dispute resolution area, is solely dedicated to complex commercial and civil cases tried in China. He has devoted himself to making Tiantong one of the most reliable and respected law firms in China.

Grasping the trends in civil and commercial litigation in China, Jiang has creatively adapted the law firm's approach to litigation and process management. *He has established three signature approaches: visualisation, moot court and knowledge management and big data. He combines traditional law practice and new technology, which has helped to greatly increase the firm's efficiency. Meanwhile, he designed a unique three-level team structure, "litigation assistant -litigator-partner", so that the intelligence of the entire firm can be gathered to provide the best solutions to disputes for clients.

Jiang Yong earned his bachelor's degree from China University of Political Science and Law and MBA from Tsinghua University.



Maxwell Chambers is expanding its premises to occupy the adjacent conservation building at 28 Maxwell Road. We are now taking bookings for the new office spaces.

For tenancy matters, please email tenancy@maxwell-chambers.com or call +65 6595 9014.