

5 MINUTES WITH... MEI LIN GOH

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Please click [here](#) for a tribute to our late dear friend and colleague Mei Lin Goh.

MEI HEADED OUR SINGAPORE OFFICE. SHE SPECIALISED IN CROSS-BORDER ASSET, PROJECT AND STRUCTURED FINANCE TRANSACTIONS IN THE MARITIME AND LOGISTICS, OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS AND ENERGY SECTORS. SHE WAS NAMED LLOYDS LIST ASIA PACIFIC INDIVIDUAL LAWYER OF THE YEAR 2017.

Q: Tell us about your career to date. What were you doing before you joined Watson Farley & Williams?

A: I began my legal career in 1991 as a barrister with the Crown Prosecution Service in London before returning to Singapore in 1994. I spent three years with Khattar Wong & Partners, Singapore (then WFW's correspondent law firm) during which time I was requalified both in Singapore and in Malaysia. In 1997, I joined the Singapore office of Sinclair Roche & Temperley (SRT, S'pore) and when in September 1998 they were acquired by WFW I moved across with the rest of the team. I'm not sure that WFW wanted me along but I was determined that if the cappuccino machine was going, I was going with it!

Q: Did you always want to be a lawyer?

A: I remember stating that I wanted to be a lawyer when I was seven years old but to put things in context, I also wanted to be an air stewardess. In reality, it was through a process of elimination that I ended up as a lawyer – I didn't have enough musical talent to be a piano teacher and none of the other traditional professions interested me.

Q: Tell us a bit about your career path with the firm. What led you to your specialisation?

A: I fell into the maritime sector. At Khattar Wong, there was an empty office in the maritime department and I was offered a position in that department upon qualification – the international nature of the work appealed to me and it was a fun and lively department.

Q: Tell us about your highlights as head of the Singapore office

A: Having more opportunities to connect with partners from other offices, to have greater interaction with other teams in Singapore and the chance to work more closely with the different business services teams, both in Singapore and in London.

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Q: What are three things we should know about the team?

A: I would say (i) there is a great team spirit; (ii) we are a sociable team who work hard and play hard; and (iii) I love our diversity and energy. Being head of the Singapore office is a privilege given the team that we have.

Q: What challenges do your clients face in their sectors and how does the team respond?

A: Many of our clients are in a market where there are fewer opportunities, pricing pressure and a real risk of counterparty default. Ensuring we have a good understanding both of the market and of our clients puts us in a better position to spot opportunities (both for the clients and for ourselves) and to provide assistance which is beyond typical legal advice.

Q: You must have been proud that the firm was named Maritime Law Firm of the Year by Asia Legal Business in May this year. To what do you attribute that success?

A: Our team has worked very hard over the years to build up our market share of the work in Asia (which is significant) and to build our reputation, with clients and competitors alike, as a top tier firm in the maritime sector.

Q: What do you think is the most significant barrier to female leadership? What will be the biggest challenge for the generation of women behind you?

A: I do not believe that in WFW there are barriers or ceilings just because someone is female. The biggest challenge though is still trying to balance family and work pressures / requirements, as these increase with leadership and even now, although there are more men getting involved in domestic matters, the bulk of the responsibility still falls on the woman. Women also do have to be prepared to put themselves forward more and to speak up – not to be aggressive or demanding but not to be afraid about coming forward.

Q: How would you describe Watson Farley & Williams?

A: In general, I would say ambitious, un-stuffy, and friendly and whilst there are structures in place, it is not bureaucratic.

Q: Why do you think it is important to maintain connections with past colleagues?

A: It's a good thing from a business perspective. Whether our people leave us for a role in-house or stay in private practice, staying in touch could create mutually beneficial opportunities to work together. We would also like to feel that former colleagues would recommend us as a good place to work and even consider re-joining in the future. It's also natural to want to keep in contact with team members who have over the years become friends.

Q: What do you like to do when you are not working?

A: Spending time with my family, reading and travelling.