

## MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION ALUMNI INTERVIEW: IRIS WONG

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Iris Wong was a senior associate in the London Energy and Projects group from 2011 to 2017. She is now Head of Legal and Corporate Affairs at Qila Energy, a developer of anaerobic digestion projects in the UK.

Autonomy, variety and decision-making are all aspects of an in-house role that Iris really enjoys. “While in private practice I was able to specialise in project finance, in my current role I have to do a bit of everything – construction, property, feedstock supply, offtake, corporate and still some financing. I also have to make a lot of decisions, rather than just advising on the possible options and relative pros and cons.” The majority of her ‘fantastic’ colleagues aren’t lawyers, so Iris sees “a lot of other perspectives and ways of thinking.” She misses the facilities of being in a law firm that make life much easier...

*“Word processing, document management systems, email filing...”*

A career in law was in her sights from an early age. “I decided I wanted to be a lawyer when I was 15, got into law school in Auckland at 17 and started working full time at one of New Zealand’s top law firms (Russell McVeagh) when I was 23,” says Iris. Plan B was journalism or a career in the performing arts which she now enjoys from the audience, especially musicals, contemporary dance and Cirque du Soleil.

Iris was a secondee at Qila (and before that at BNP Paribas in Paris) before joining them on a permanent basis. “Secondments are a great way of experiencing the client side and gaining a deeper understanding of what clients want from their external lawyers.”

*“...at each point, I have made decisions with the best information available to me at the time.”*

Iris feels strongly that there is no such thing as a bad decision, so long as you follow a decision-making process that you are happy with to get to the decision. “I don’t break my life down into good and bad decisions,” she says. “I have a way I tend to approach decision-making and I feel that at each point, I have made decisions with the best information available to me at the time. So even if they don’t work out in the end, I don’t look back with any regret as I’m always comfortable with the way I got to the decision.” Iris advises not to waste time beating yourself up for things that happened in the past. The important thing, she says, is: what will you do next, given your current situation?

*“It’s always worth staying in touch with people from your industry”*

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Communicating with and managing very different personalities was a key life skill that Iris took from WFW. “It’s particularly useful for my current role as I am often dealing with demanding investors or contractors and it’s reassuring to know that I can deal with all types of people,” she says. Iris relaxes through doing hot yoga and reformer Pilates. “I’m very interested in nutrition and read a lot of books and listen to podcasts on the subject. I also love beach holidays!”

Iris looks back fondly on her time at the firm; she liked the personal nature of WFW where you “were treated as an individual and got to know people in other teams and offices.” She has kept a direct link with WFW via secondees Alex Collis and Tom Harrison-Cripps and keeps in touch with others in her old team. Iris believes that from a professional perspective, it’s always worth staying in contact with people from your industry as you never know where people will end up. It’s also natural from a personal perspective, she thinks. “Work is such a big part of your life, it goes without saying that some people will stay in your life even after you leave the firm,” quite literally in the case of ‘partner’, George Macheras!