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Chapter Spotlight: Singapore

Interviews and Profiles





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GENERAL COUNSEL, EMERGING MARKETS, ASIA PACIFIC AND JAPAN

GLAXOSMITHKLINE

PRESIDENT OF ACC SINGAPORE

Tell us about your background.

I started my career at Clifford Chance in 1989 and joined GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) in 1995. Having spent six years in private practice in London and Hong Kong, I was keen to work for a company with a global presence. The regulated world of OTC and prescription medicines proved to be a very appealing draw. I have never looked back and have been very fortunate to have had a very varied career in London, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New Jersey, and now Singapore. I have had the privilege of being general counsel to GSK's global consumer healthcare business, as well as being the chief compliance officer to GSK during the very challenging and public issues that faced the company in China during 2014. My current role is general counsel to GSK's international pharmaceutical businesses spanning Argentina to Japan, and comprising over 100 legal professionals based in 35 markets.

What are some of the skills in-house counsel need to hone and advance their careers?

To be successful as an in-house lawyer requires several key skills and qualities. In any complex international business, a sound understanding of how the business works and how the "mechanics" play with relevant laws and regulations is critical. In-house counsel should understand how to translate legal constraints, opportunities, and requirements into a straightforward position that makes sense to business clients. Clear and effective communication is very important in a business environment and delivery must be well prepared and reasoned. As you become more senior in your career, leadership qualities will be relevant factors in determining how successful you can be. The ability to bring people with you and develop them along the way as you exercise sound judgment is essential. Gravitas, authenticity, and commitment will also be powerful factors in determining success. And luck of course!

How did you first become involved in the Singapore Chapter, and can you highlight some key milestones of the Singapore Chapter?

I moved to Singapore in 2014 and became involved with the ACC Singapore Chapter in early 2015. I had been a member of ACC for many years while living in the United States, where I primarily attended events. When I arrived in Singapore, I thought to try and develop the chapter beyond its current base. I acted as company secretary before becoming president of the chapter at the end of 2016. The Singapore Chapter is a young chapter (around five years old) in a very transient and cosmopolitan environment. ACC tends to appeal to lawyers who work for companies that have overseas operations given its global resources and approach. The chapter is a great way to connect and bond with a variety of lawyers from multiple businesses and serves as a place for both educational opportunities and social networking. We have 15 directors on our board of directors. These directors are creative and willing to spend their time and energy to further the interests of the organization. They come from a range of industries, including social media and technology, which have been instrumental in helping us establish a presence on Facebook and LinkedIn.



How does your chapter promote meaningful connections and provide value to its members?

ACC Singapore provides value to its members through its local educational program, which attracts significant support from the many law firms with a presence in Singapore. The program covers a diverse range of topics and also attracts sponsoring firms from Hong Kong and Korea, as well as collaboration with the Singapore International Arbitration Centre. Our members can of course benefit from the global resources available on the ACC website. In the last 12 months, we have held a couple of roundtable sessions for a smaller number of senior lawyers to discuss leadership and legal privilege. We have several other roundtables in the works including the chapter's first Life Sciences Round Table to be held at a local international law firm. The chapter has started to organize periodic networking events, which are always well attended and fun. We are particularly looking forward to our Women's Event over the summer. Membership is growing and these new initiatives are starting to be recognized as a valuable offering by the members of the chapter. In Singapore, we offer local resources with a global vision.

What are ways your members can become involved in your chapter?

We are always grateful for new ideas and initiatives that would benefit the chapter and its members. I would encourage any in-house lawyers based in Singapore that would like to join ACC to reach out to me or Caroline McConnon, our fantastic chapter administrator. We would be happy to set you up as members and provide you with a schedule of events.

What advice would you give to chapter leaders of small chapters or newer chapters?

Be realistic but determined. Smaller ACC chapters succeed with the help of volunteers with incredibly

busy day jobs. As a result, the success of the chapter turns very much on the willingness of the board to invest their limited time on organizing events and applying their creativity and resourcefulness in developing external relationships with law firms. Try new themes and ensure a good mix of educational and social events. We held our annual strategy planning meeting in November and the work done there provides the basis of the schedule for the year. Finally, have fun — the ACC Singapore board of directors enjoy each other's company and this makes for positive relationships and plenty of laughter.

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