

Corporate legal practice

Corporate lawyer **Benjamin Kong** from Raja, Darryl & Loh finds the time to tell **GRADMalaysia** about his particular area of law – despite having multiple corporate exercises running at the same time and meeting the demands of an energetic supervising partner.



Hold on a moment, don't turn the page! If you are thinking of giving corporate law a miss, then try this on for size: if you are an adrenaline junkie, are target- and solution-orientated and believe that being constantly challenged is an essential ingredient for your professional growth as a lawyer, then you will fit right in.

What is 'corporate'?

In its conventional sense, 'corporate' is all about the corporate finance deals you read about in the financial

section of our newspapers and *The Edge Daily*. Deals like mergers and acquisitions, floating a company on Bursa Malaysia and raising funds for a company by issuing private debt securities in the form of bonds, commercial papers, etc.

However, is the above all there is to corporate practice? Corporate is so much more than the above. It is basically about pandering to the needs of your corporate clients, ie financial institutions, multinationals, public-listed companies, corporations, small and medium enterprises, etc.

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As a corporate lawyer, you will be one of your client's most trusted business advisers – basically its corporate strategist, assisting the client in its expansionary and/or corporate plans or exercises. You



will also be the client's first port of call whenever they require legal assistance – be it for matters relating to litigation, industrial disputes, intellectual property etc.

Great variety

Corporate needs and plans are diverse – no two files are exactly alike. For example, if you are lucky enough to land yourself in a broad-based corporate commercial practice, you may find yourself assisting your supervising partner on special projects that touch on – amongst other areas – constitutional law, land law, tort, trust, insurance law and intellectual property law. So, a working knowledge of non-core corporate and commercial law subjects, plus a sound grasp of contract law, company law, securities law and commercial law – what a supervising partner may call 'the basics' – is essential.

Dispelling some myths

You will not be a desk jockey. Your work will take you to quite a few places – some interesting, others not so much. Meeting clients outside the firm and going 'outstation' around Malaysia to attend to client matters are part and parcel of corporate practice.

When you are more senior, you may even find yourself going on business trips abroad if your clients should ever think of expanding into a different country. You may find yourself working on what is called 'cross-border corporate transactions.' Malaysian clients are becoming adventurous – Vietnam, Cambodia, Hong Kong, China and Australia are hotspots for investments at the moment.

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Advocacy skills are required. It is quite a fallacy to think that those who are not able to hack it in court end up being corporate lawyers. As a junior you may get away with being just a backroom lawyer (although some supervising partners are known to drag their juniors along to most meetings) but as you become more senior you will find yourself thrust to the fore – when you must deal directly with the clients. This quite often involves the provision of legal advice on the spot. You will also be required to cross swords with opposing counsel in negotiations when your client is trying to seal a corporate transaction.

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Skills required for being a corporate lawyer

Language, law and logic: good language skills are required as you will be drafting contracts and rendering legal opinions. You must also know the law, have strong analytical skills and be commercially

savvy, so as to be able to provide your clients with real workable legal solutions for their problems.

You need to be a team player: corporate projects are huge. You will find yourself working as part of a team. An ability to take instructions and to lead (when you are more senior) is therefore essential.

Passion and determination: you need to be passionate about corporate practice and have the determination to see projects with tight reversion time through to the very end.

You need to be able to laugh at yourself: you need to be able to do this in order to maintain your sanity.

Corporate practice can be very interesting, challenging and deeply satisfying on a personal level. It is also high-profile. It can be rewarding to see your work contributing in a positive manner to a client's corporate aspirations. Nothing beats the feeling that you get when a client thanks you for a job well done. ●



About the author

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corporate and commercial practice at the law firm of Raja, Darryl & Loh. He graduated from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 2006. He has been with the firm for two years, including pupillage.