Chambers
GC Influencers

CHINA 2019

Friday, 11th January 2019
JW Marriott Hotel, Hong Kong

Programme
Engaging content, networking and celebration with leading General Counsel and top ranked lawyers globally.

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Meet the most influential General Counsel in China today.

Chambers has provided insight into the legal profession for over 30 years. During this time, in-house lawyers and third-party experts have shared their views on the value and importance placed on the role of the General Counsel. No longer just the ethical and legal heart of a business, these professionals now sit as influential participants at board level. Effective managers, industry pioneers, diversity and CSR champions: these Influencers show the way.

Research Methodology: Our GC Influencers have been chosen following research among private practice lawyers and other in-house counsel. We identified the key areas in which GCs have displayed substantial influence:

- Effective management and development of an in-house team
- Navigation of substantial business projects such as M&A or strategic business change.
- Development of litigation strategy and understanding the pressures faced within industry
- Bringing diversity & inclusion and CSR to the forefront of industry.
- Ability to influence and respond to regulatory change

Our aim is to celebrate excellence within the legal profession. This dynamic hall of fame encourages collaboration among the in-house legal community. Our GC Influencers have created best practice pathways endorsed by both private practice and other in-house lawyers.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Aaron Shao</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Timothy Steinert</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Victor Liang</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Zhang Xi</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Qing Nian</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Desmond Chan</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Victor Luk</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Qiao Gangliang</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Victor Shen</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Ferheen Mahomed</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Fiona Phillips</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Christopher John Sanderson</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Wang Weiwen</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Wang Yan</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Marcus Tsang</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Song Zhe</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Stephanie Cheung</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Brett Graham</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Zhao Bin</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Gan Xinyan</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Cao Hui</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Xi Xiaohong</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Brent Irvin</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Zhang Wei</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Sun Bin</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shanghai-based Aaron Shao has served as China legal head for Abbott Laboratories since 2015. Having graduated from Shanghai International Studies University in China and Columbia University in New York, during his earlier career he spent time in private practice with Jones Day and Hogan Lovells, followed by a stint with a large PRC law firm. He additionally holds an MBA from Washington University in St. Louis. His in-house career was launched at SPX Flow Technology, where he served as Regional General Counsel for five years, playing a key role in building up the firm's in-house legal capabilities. He is especially singled out by sources for his strong expertise in handling regulatory issues. His strong team leadership and commercially attuned approach are also praised. As one interviewee explains: “Some in-house teams can lack innovation, but Aaron finds a balance in terms of controlling and supporting business departments, as well as between headquarters and the local operations. He proactively gets involved in deals and drives the business forward.”
Mr Timothy Steinert
Alibaba Group

Before joining Alibaba as General Counsel in 2007, Timothy Steinert was a highly rated capital markets partner in the Hong Kong office of Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP. A fluent Mandarin speaker, Tim has played an essential role within the company for over a decade and was a key figure in the company’s record-breaking IPO on the New York Stock Exchange in 2014. He has helped to spearhead Alibaba’s remarkable rise, with the company recently recording a 10th straight quarter in which it posted more than 50% year-over-year revenue growth. Interviewees laud the “great job he has done at the helm of the company” and consider him to be a “very well respected individual in the Chinese tech space.” The company has made use of Tim’s exceptional transactional experience over the past few years, undertaking a series of headline transactions, including its USD2.5 billion privatisation of Intime Retail, its USD1.2 billion acquisition of Ikang Healthcare as part of a consortium and its USD9.5 billion acquisition of Ele.me.
Mr Victor Liang
Baidu Inc

Victor Liang is Vice President and General Counsel at Chinese multinational technology company Baidu. Before joining Baidu in 2005, he worked at the Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China. He has also previously worked with Jun He Law Offices and as a visiting attorney at the New York office of Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP. As the long-standing head of legal functions at the company, Victor played a crucial role in the company’s successful IPO in 2005 and has helped to support the company’s extraordinary growth during the subsequent years. Recently he has overseen several highly significant transactions, including the company’s USD1.9 billion divestment of its financial services business to a consortium led by TPG and The Carlyle Group. He is praised by sources for his strong leadership on this transaction, one interviewee explaining that “Victor and his team deserve significant credit for their excellent work on that transaction; they ran that process very well.”
Based in Beijing, Dr Zhang Xi is General Counsel for Greater China at German multinational pharmaceutical and life sciences company Bayer. Xi started her career at the German law firm Beiten Burkhard before moving in-house, initially becoming General Counsel at chemical company BASF, and later at Celanese Corporation. Xi has been involved in numerous high-profile mandates during her tenure at Bayer, including its landmark USD66 billion merger with Monsanto which made it the biggest seed and agricultural-chemical maker in the world and required approvals from regulators in 30 countries, including China. Interviewees attest to her influence in this sector, with one commenting: “Dr. Zhang has many years of experience in the industry and is amongst those who have the highest seniority in the healthcare area.” She is further praised for her “strong day-to-day running of operations and management.” Her work primarily focuses on legal, compliance and data privacy matters, and she remains a respected thought-leader in this space.
Ms Qing Nian
BeiGene

Splitting her time between the company’s Boston and Beijing offices, Qing Nian is the Assistant General Counsel, Corporate & APAC, for clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company BeiGene. BeiGene focuses on the development of molecularly targeted and immuno-oncology drugs for the treatment of cancer. Nian’s impressive legal career began as an associate in Goodwin Procter’s Boston office, later achieving partnership and subsequently relocating to the firm’s Hong Kong-based Technology & Life Sciences Group. Whilst being relatively new to her role, having moved in-house in 2018, Nian has a long-standing relationship with the company and was part of the Goodwin Procter team which advised on BeiGene’s successful USD800 million follow-on offering of US-traded shares in January this year. Her corporate deal experience is singled out for praise by interviewees who remark upon her “very strong deal management skills.”
Mr Desmond Chan  
China Everbright

Desmond Chan, General Counsel and Company Secretary at China Everbright, based in Hong Kong, has been with the company since 2007, previously acting as director and board member for Everbright Securities in Shanghai. He obtained a law degree from The University of Hong Kong as well as a master's in corporate governance obtained from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His focus as General Counsel includes managing complex cross-border transactions in the private equity, venture capital and hedge funds areas, and he is also well-versed in regulatory compliance. The recent work highlights of his team include the company’s acquisition of Boreal Group, a Norwegian public transport operator, from Luxembourg-based Cube Infrastructure. He offers impressive depth of expertise having worked in law firms and as in-house counsel for over two decades.
Mr Victor Luk
CK Infrastructure Holdings

Hong Kong-based Victor Luk serves as General Counsel for CK Infrastructure, having worked with the company for the past two decades. Over the course of his extensive career at this global infrastructure company, he has built up highly impressive corporate capabilities, spearheading the team’s work on numerous high-profile cross-border acquisitions and divestments in the energy, transportation and waste management sectors amongst other areas. The team has continued to be highly active on major transactions in recent times, including through the 100% acquisition by CK Infra Holdings and CK Asset Holdings of Ista International from CVC Capital in 2017.
Shanghai-based Qiao Gangliang has served as Vice President and General Counsel for Asia-Pacific at multinational technology company Danaher since 2015. He is regarded as one of China’s most highly-reputed senior counsel, heralded by sources as “a highly-influential figure and a household name for many partners and in-house counsel.” He possesses extensive experience in the legal field both in China and the US, having started his career as a law clerk at the United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan upon graduating from Georgetown University. He was the first Chinese citizen to work with a US federal judge, an experience that he later chronicled in his best-selling book, ‘The Court Is Now In Session!’ He went on to spend four years working with Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP in New York and Beijing, before moving in-house in the year 2000. Having rapidly risen to prominence in his first in-house roles as General Counsel with GE Healthcare and GE Capital China, he made the leap into the technology sector through his appointment as General Counsel for Siemens in 2009, where he was responsible for all legal and compliance issues in the North East Asia region.
Victor Shen of consumer goods multinational Henkel has held the position of Chief Legal Counsel for Greater China & Korea since 2006. Prior to his current role his impressive track record also includes acting as Chief Legal Counsel of Kao (Japan) China and Legal Manager of Carrefour Group Dia China. With two decades of in-house experience under his belt, Victor is highly regarded for his ability to work across a range of strategic transactions, compliance, antitrust issues and compliance work. He is also heralded by market sources for his business-minded approach. As one peer explains, he is “someone with very broad coverage who is able to cover many angles, going beyond the purely legal aspects of an issue.”
Ms Ferheen Mahomed
Hong Kong Exchange & Clearing

Ferheen Mahomed became the first General Counsel of Hong Kong Exchange & Clearing in February 2017. She brings a wealth of experience and is well known in Hong Kong’s finance community having previously sat as a member of the product advisory committee of the Securities and Futures Commission of Hong Kong and on the Asia-Pacific legal and regulatory committee of the ISDA. Her impressive track record also includes working as Executive Vice President of business development for Pacific Century Group, as Group General Counsel for CLSA Limited and as General Counsel for Asia-Pacific of Société Générale. In her current role she has supported the roll-out of the HKEX’s mutual market access programme, including through the introduction of Bond Connect in July 2017. She has an expert command of regulatory issues, and her remit extends to encompass leading the teams at the London Metal Exchange and LME Clear. She also sits on the board of the Asian University of Women, an organisation dedicated to improving access to education and career opportunities for women in the region.
Ms Fiona Phillips
HSBC

Fiona Phillips is based in Hong Kong and became Asia-Pacific Regional Head of Legal for HSBC’s Retail Banking and Wealth Management division in 2017. A former Associate in Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP’s London and Amsterdam offices, Fiona has been a part of HSBC’s legal team since 2010, spending time in its London, Dubai and Hong Kong offices. She is an expert in fintech and has played an essential role in the company’s digital transformation in recent years, with the bank investing USD2.3 billion in improving its artificial intelligence (AI) and digital capabilities around the globe. An interviewee lauds her performance, reporting: “Fiona is masterminding HSBC’s technological innovation project, which is challenging and something no bank has done before. She has taken an innovative approach in-house, such as making her team go on coding courses, with the aim of getting staff up to speed on tech developments.”
Christopher John Sanderson has been Director of Legal Services & Regulatory at Hutchison Telecommunications Hong Kong since 2012 and is responsible for legal and regulatory affairs. Joining the HWL Group in 2001, he has played a crucial role within the company and has garnered many admirers, with one interviewee labelling him “absolutely brilliant, very pragmatic, bright and one of the best telecom counsel internationally.” He was instrumental in the company’s USD1.86 billion sale of its fixed-line telecoms assets to I Squared Capital in 2017. This strategically important transaction has allowed the company to invest heavily in 5G (fifth generation) technology within the last year, with Christopher working closely with the Hong Kong government on the legal aspects and regulatory challenges associated with its roll-out of this technology.
Ms Wang Weiwen
InterContinental Hotels Group

Wang Weiwen serves as InterContinental Hotel Group’s (IHG) Vice President, Business Reputation and Responsibility, Greater China, leading the business’s legal function. Her career to date has led her to work in private practice in New York, Singapore and Hong Kong and for multinational businesses as in-house counsel in mainland China. She leads a legal department that is well integrated into the group’s business functions, playing a vital role in the development of IHG’s expansion into the luxury segment of China’s hospitality market. This expansion has seen IHG acquire a 51% stake in the Regent Hotels and Resorts brand and up-brand the InterContinental Hong Kong to a Regent hotel, and gives IHG the option to acquire the remaining shares in Regent in a phased manner from 2026.
Mr Wang Yan
iQiyi

Wang Yan (Rocky), is based in Beijing and is the Legal Director at iQiyi, one of the largest online video platforms in the world. Yan is an intellectual property specialist and has played an essential role leading the company’s increasingly tough stance on copyright infringement, overseeing a vast increase in the number of copyright cases and take-down notices filed by the company in the past few years. One recent high profile example is the USD4.4 million suit filed by iQiyi against Bytedance over alleged copyright violation relating to The Story of Yanxi Palace. 2018 marks an important year for iQiyi, having successfully completed its USD2.25 billion IPO on the Nasdaq, one of the largest IPOs globally this year.
Mr Marcus Tsang
Li & Fung

Marcus Tsang has been General Counsel at Hong Kong based supply-chain management company Li & Fung since 2011. Prior to joining the company, he was Asia General Counsel at Office Depot and Group Legal Counsel at Hutchison Whampoa. The company has undertaken several major transactions in the past few years, including the 2014 spin-off and listing of its global brands and licensing business, Global Brands Group. More recently in 2016, the company sold its Asia Consumer and Healthcare distribution business. Marcus played a central role in these strategically important transactions. In the past year, Marcus has spearheaded the legal aspects of the company’s ambitious Three-Year Plan aimed at the digitalisation of its supply-chain business, with interviewees commending his performance and describing him as an “unsung hero in the tech space.”
Song Zhe has held the position of Senior Legal Director of Meituan-Dianping since 2015, helping to shape the continued growth of the online-to-offline consumer services company. He is highlighted for his leading role in building the firm’s in-house capabilities, and in spearheading work across a range of complex compliance and transactional matters. Having previously spent four years as Senior Legal Counsel at Baidu he stands out for his depth of experience in the IT sector. He draws upon 25 years of legal experience across both the public and private sectors. Having started his career at the Higher People’s Court of Hubei, acting as an Assistant Judge, this was followed by a stint at the Beijing Jinzhigiao Intellectual Property Agency, before spending time in private practice as an attorney at Jincheng Tongda & Neal.
Stephanie Cheung is the long-standing Chief Legal Officer and Executive Vice-President of Melco Resorts & Entertainment, one of the world’s largest integrated resort operators. Her legal career started in the corporate departments of Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Stikeman Elliott and Troutman Sanders, prior to moving in-house in 2006. She progressed within the organisation to her current role in 2008 and has since played a significant role on several important deals for the company. In 2016 she spearheaded one of Asia’s largest high-yield issues, the USD1.2 billion senior secured notes offering made by Studio City, a Macau-based entertainment resort and subsidiary of Studio City International Holdings, of which 60% was held indirectly by Melco Crown Entertainment. More recently, she played a key role in the company’s successful spin-off and listing on the New York Stock Exchange of Studio City International.
Mr Brett Graham
Morgan Stanley Asia

Morgan Stanley’s Asia-Pacific general counsel Brett Graham is described by market sources as a “very influential general counsel.” An interviewee reports that he is “vocal in discussions with regulators,” further explaining: “Some general counsel are reticent and their hands may be tied by the institutions, but he has the remit to have those conversations.” Based in Hong Kong, he joined the company in 1997, becoming a managing director in 2005. Prior to that, he practised at Clifford Chance in Tokyo and Hong Kong. His extensive career at Morgan Stanley has made him a household name for legal risk assessment and an influencer in the regulatory space. Graham is a triple-qualified solicitor, with admissions in Australia, the UK and Hong Kong.
Beijing-based Zhao Bin has a long-standing career in the legal profession, having started as a lawyer for Baker McKenzie and DLA Piper over two decades ago, later moving in-house and working for a number of leading IT corporations, including Intel Corporation and Sony. In 2012 he took up a role at Qualcomm, where his current position is Senior Vice President, Legal & GA. He has been involved in numerous high-profile matters, with a focus on competition issues and the protection of intellectual property rights for the company. In one ground-breaking work highlight, he coordinated the team throughout the issues around the preliminary injunctions that were granted against four Chinese subsidiaries of Apple, ordering them to immediately cease infringing upon two Qualcomm patents by the unlicensed import and sale of several iPhone models.
Based in the company’s headquarters in Shanghai, Ms. Gan Xinyan is the General Manager of Legal at Shanghai Pharma, a state-owned pharmaceutical company. She leads a team of over one hundred in-house lawyers and has spearheaded the legal aspects of the company’s ambitious growth plans, with market commentators praising her as an “excellent lawyer” with “ample experience and impressive team management skills” who has “grown the legal department at the company and facilitated their expansion.” She played a central role in the company’s headline USD1.2 billion acquisition of the China distribution business of Cardinal Health, making it the largest distributor in China for imported drugs. More recently, the company’s expansion drive has continued with its indirect acquisition of 26.34% of the equity interest in Techpool Bio-pharma by acquisition of 100% shares in Takeda Chromo Beteiligungs, a subsidiary of Takeda Pharmaceutical.
Ms Cao Hui
Silk Road Fund

Cao Hui is Deputy General Counsel of the USD40 billion state-owned Silk Road Fund. Following a private practice career, which included terms at international firms in New York and Beijing, she joined the fund in May 2015 and has since played a key role in negotiating investment and financing matters in support of the Belt and Road Initiative. Her expertise and impressive international experience sees her regularly involved in major transactions across diverse jurisdictions and utilising an array of strategic deal structures. One of the fund’s most significant recent ventures saw it investing in a major infrastructure PPP in Kazakhstan, and its activities spread throughout Asia and into Europe and Latin America.
Xi Xiaohong is a very highly reputed name within the legal in-house area and currently serves as the President of Songhong Investment. Market sources hold him in high regard due to his impressive track record, particularly in the area of dispute resolution. As one interviewee comments: “I think he has never lost a single case in 15 years of his career, which is very impressive.” He is a graduate of Beijing University and Oxford, and has over three decades of corporate experience in mainland China and Hong Kong. He is a graduate of Beijing University and Oxford, boasting over three decades of corporate experience in mainland China and Hong Kong. During the early years of his career, he held a position at Everbright Bank in Hong Kong and throughout his successful career has also worked for ChemChina, Dupont and the Hong Kong Airport group.
Shenzhen-based Brent Irvin has served as Vice President and General Counsel at Tencent since 2009. He is also a board member of numerous technology and online gaming businesses, including Grinding Gear Games in New Zealand, Ola Cabs, Gaana and Dream11 in India as well as Tongcheng-Elong in China. Having gained a law degree from Stanford University and an MA in Asian Studies from Yale University, Brent’s legal career began at Shearman & Sterling LLP and Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati, both in California, where he was able to gain experience in general corporate matters, M&A and venture capital for high-profile technology clients before moving to China. His current role includes a key role leading the in-house team on matters relating to IP enforcement, antitrust and corporate governance, as well as managing a sizeable team of around 200 lawyers. He is known to champion innovation and promote diversity at work, an example of the former being the establishment in 2012 of the Tencent Cyber Law Research Centre, as a way of sharing best practices in China.
Splitting his time between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, Zhang Wei heads the legal department at Vanke, one of the leading real estate developers in China, acting as General Counsel since 2015. He is highlighted by market commentators for his excellent team-management skills, one interviewee reporting: “Vanke’s in-house work is highly professional on all counts.” He has more than a decade’s experience working as in-house counsel for major Chinese companies in the finance and real estate sectors such as Legend Holdings and COFCO in the food processing industry. During his career at Vanke, he has been involved in several stand-out matters in capital markets and M&A, including the widely-publicised sale of China Evergrande’s 14% stake in the company to Shenzhen Metro. In 2018, the company co-led an A-round financing for CMC Inc alongside IT giants Tencent and Alibaba, raising CNY10 billion, also leading a consortium of investors in the acquisition of 20 shopping malls from CapitaLand for USD1.29 billion.
Ms Sun Bin
Xiaomi Corporation

Beijing-based Sun Bin has held the position of General Counsel of Xiaomi since 2016, leading and managing a large team on a range of complex legal work. She is a Santa Clara University School of Law alumna, also holding a PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Before joining Xiaomi, she headed the IP management centre as senior IP counsel for BOE Technology Group, where she has built and developed notable skill in handling IP issues, with a strong focus on patent litigation. She is a member of several professional associations including the Chinese National Youth Association of IP and regularly acts as a speaker on industry-leading conferences in the region. In the past year at Xiaomi she has been involved in high-profile matters including an IP lawsuit for alleged patent infringement by Shenzhen-based Yulong Computer, a subsidiary of Coolpad Group, as well as its highly-publicised Hong Kong IPO.
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