Chambers GC Influencers

INDIA 2019

Thursday, 14th February 2019
Hyatt Regency Delhi

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

For more information visit chambers.com
Meet the most influential General Counsel in India 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

Shuva Mandal 6
Mukesh Bhavnani 7
Tejal Patil 8
Pramod Rao 9
Bhaskar Chandran 10
Neena Gupta 11
Dev Bajpai 12
Rajagopal Venkatakrishnan 13
Rajiv Bakshi 14
Ashok Gupta 15
Naveen Raju 16
Damini Marwah 17
Hemant Kumar 18
Jigar Shah 19
Jatin Jalundhwala 20
Inderpreet Sawhney 21
Kalpana Agarwal 22
Augustine Quadros 23
Deepak Jacob 24
Nitin Banerjee 25
Ipsita Dutta 26
Debolina Partap 27
Rajesh Bagga 28
Deepak Chauhan 29
Padmaja Chakravarty 30
Shuva Mandal
Tata Sons

Mumbai-based Shuva Mandal serves as Group General Counsel for Tata Sons, the holding company of Tata Group. Having joined the company in July 2017 from Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, he has quickly carved a reputation as a “major figure” within the Indian in-house community due to the strategic and transactional clout he has brought to the role. His main areas of focus include driving M&A strategy for the group, oversight of major precedent-setting disputes, regulatory issues and the roll-out of new legal technology across the group’s legal department. As one market source reports: “He is unquestionably a very able, clever, good lawyer, and works closely with the chairman and the leadership team.” Another interviewee singles him out for his “extremely powerful position, being very influential, and for very much knowing the market as well as its issues, having worked on the biggest transactions in this country in the last few years.”

Several interviewees additionally single out the particularly “global and international” outlook that he brings to the role. Prior to his current position, Shuva has an illustrious track record as a private practice lawyer. Having started his career in 2000 following graduation from the National Law School of India University, he spent 15 years working at AZB & Partners as a leading corporate partner, before joining the Mumbai office of Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas as partner in 2015.
Mukesh Bhavnani
Bharti Enterprises

New Delhi-based Mukesh Bhavnani heads the legal department at Bharti Group, where he has acted as Group General Counsel since re-joining the company in 2016. He is a hugely experienced advisor with over four decades of experience serving as counsel to some of India’s top conglomerates. Having started his career at Godrej in 1981, he spent over a decade as the general manager for legal issues within the company, also spending time at Vedanta. Besides his experience in several prominent Indian conglomerates, he worked in Dubai for Jumbo Electronics Company.

He is particularly highlighted for his broad-ranging expertise and seniority, one source reporting: “There is no question that he is significant in the market and clearly important within the Bharti group, he is a very able guy, and his name should be in any list of the top GCs in India, without doubt.” Another interviewee remarks upon his “global experience,” emphasising his role in shaping strategic growth overseas: “He worked at Coca-Cola, he was general counsel at Essar Group, then Vedanta, and now he is at Bharti. These are three Indian corporates where Mukesh has played a pretty pivotal role in their expansion globally.” Amongst a variety of major mandates in which he has played a key role, was the recent sale of over 5.7 million shares of Future Retail for approximately INR3 billion to Edelweiss Group.
Tejal Patil currently serves as South Asia General Counsel, having joined the organisation in 2004.

Based in New Delhi, Tejal manages a legal team of more than 50 professionals who handle work spanning India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal. Focusing on corporate governance and compliance issues, she is also well known for her involvement in raising awareness on women’s equality issues and promoting the role of women within the company as innovators, leaders and change-makers. She additionally acts as co-leader of the GE Women’s Network for Asia-Pacific. Her academic background includes a law degree from Government Law College in Mumbai and a qualification as a solicitor in England & Wales as well as in the Bombay Incorporated Law Society.

Market sources remark upon her impressive legal capabilities, singling her out as a very influential counsel who is “very efficient and highly regarded,” and “a strong force” in the in-house sphere. A further source additionally emphasises: “She is what I would call a proper heavyweight; for anyone to be taken on as head of legal at GE, which is not a straightforward role, speaks for itself.”
Pramod Rao
ICICI Group

Pramod Rao started his in-house career at ICICI Group in 1996, spending 15 years at the firm and recently returning to the company in August 2018 as group general counsel. His impressive track record also includes a five-year tenure as general counsel at Citibank, as well as experience in private practice with Indus Law. Throughout his long-standing career he has been a member of numerous boards and is recognised as a banking and finance specialist with a focus on regulatory issues. During his stint at Citibank he chaired the Citi India Diversity Council, and has been active in promoting greater diversity in the workplace, gaining respect and recognition from peers for his efforts in this field. In August 2018 he returned to ICICI as Group General Counsel, where he brings his impressive expertise and track record to bear in his role managing a team of over 300 professionals. He also currently serves as chairman at Increasing Diversity by Increasing Access (IDIA). A market source reports: “He is someone who doesn’t hesitate to do things out of the box; he is willing to look at issues in a different way, rather than taking a straitjacket approach. He doesn’t hesitate in going that extra mile to get the regulators’ blessing to ensure he is on the right side of the law. He finds business solutions and at the same time he doesn’t cross the line; his sector is highly regulated so he understands it.”
Bhaskar Chandran
GMR Group

Group General Counsel of GMR Group Bhaskar Chandran joined the company in 2016 from Tata Teleservices. He is a highly-regarded senior counsel with extensive experience in several in-house roles in India including stints at Enron, SJK Steel, Monsanto and Syngenta. Chandran graduated from Madras Law College in 1986 and started his legal career at the Madras Bar Council before moving on to an in-house role at Pirmex Pharmaceuticals. Highlighted for his focus on complex disputes and arbitrations in highly-regulated sectors, he is also renowned for his regular involvement in forums, conferences and panel discussions on key market topics.

Described by interviewees as “very good, thoughtful and considered,” he is noted for his long track record, having “been in this business for a long time.” His sound team-management skills and coordination with external counsel are particularly highly praised: “He is a very sharp individual with a very sharp head, who controls all the verticals well,” one source observes, also adding that “He works well with external counsel, as does his team.”
Neena Gupta currently serves as Group General Counsel at InterGlobe, having joined the company in 2008. A Delhi University graduate, Neena holds both a bachelor’s degree in law, and a post-graduate degree in Marketing and Human Resources Management obtained from the Fore School of Management in New Delhi. She has also spent time in private practice, having practised as a partner at J. Sagar Associates between 2000 and 2007.

Praised by interviewees for her skilful oversight of InterGlobe's M&A and strategic development, she is considered to have played a "very important role" in the group's growth and diversification, which has seen the company expand across multiple areas in the last decade, including hotels, retail outlets, and delivery centres as well as budget airline IndiGo. She is praised for her well-rounded ability to ably tackle both the legal and commercial aspects of her job: “She plays a much broader role than general counsel, executing important strategic mandates but also sourcing opportunities, and is central to the way the group is evolving. She has a very important role, and is increasingly working on business growth. She is very influential within the group.”

In addition, Neena stands out for her commitment to diversity issues, including leading the Diversity & Inclusion Committee at InterGlobe, which regularly brainstorms with employees from various regions and departments in order to formulate new strategies and policies.
Dev Bajpai is described by market sources as “a very thoughtful and measured individual who is central to Unilever,” who is considered “very influential and well respected.” He joined the company in 2010 from ICICI Venture Funds, where he was a senior director for legal and compliance matters. At Hindustan Unilever he is Company Secretary, responsible for legal and corporate affairs, and in 2017 was appointed executive director as part of the eight-member board, a sign of his considerable clout within the company.

Under his leadership, the legal team has advised on a number of major transactions, most recently including its merger with GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare, which was announced in December 2018. Sources also praise his impressive oversight of the team, noting that “the way he handles his team internally, his approach is very pragmatic.”

Bajpai also maintains a strong focus on corporate governance and ethics and is recognised as an influential figure with a strong academic background. He holds a law degree from Delhi University and is a fellow member of the Institute of Company Secretaries, who also attended an Executive Program for Corporate Counsel conducted by Harvard Law School. In his over three decades of experience he has also worked with other major corporations such as Maruti Udyog, Marico and Indian Hotels Company.
GC Influencer

INDIA

Rajagopal Venkatakrishnan
Reliance Industries

Mumbai-based Rajagopal Venkatakrishnan has served as Senior Vice President of legal affairs at Reliance Industries since 2015. Before joining the company he was based in Singapore for five years as Director of Legal and Business Development for Asia-Pacific at Manpower Group. His extensive experience – he graduated from Madras Law College in 1988 – makes him an expert in M&A, contract management and litigation strategies, as well as a very influential counsel, especially within the telecommunications sector. Market sources report: “He has really taken a leading role within that group and he is a GC with a significant role within the market.” His impressive resume also includes spending a decade at Siva Group in Chennai, where he worked on high-profile projects in the areas of telecommunications services, energy and shipping.

In his current role, Rajagopal has been at the helm during a period in which Reliance Industries has led, together with other major conglomerates, a trend towards greater investment in the in-house legal team, bolstering its ability to oversee major transactions as well as other key strategic issues. In recent years, the team has continued to expand its traditional petrochemicals and refinery business into the telecoms, media and retail spheres, including recently investing USD32 billion in Jio, a fast-rising mobile services provider. An interviewee confirms his inclusion as a top general counsel: “He is the go-to man: he is very powerful.”

Chambers GC Influencers
INDIA 2019
Rajiv Bakshi
JSW Steel

JSW Steel’s Group General Counsel Rajiv Bakshi boasts more than three decades of experience as an in-house lawyer. He commenced his career in 1984 at Shriram Foods and Fertiliser Industries, later leaving his footprint at companies such as Dalmia Cement and Lafarge India, before bringing over his knowledge to JSW Steel. Market sources are quick to highlight him as a highly-influential and business-savvy counsel, reporting: “He knows what his company wants and how to find a commercial solution.” He is also highlighted for his involvement in growing and professionalising in-house legal teams, and has played a key role in the recent and highly-publicised transaction regarding the acquisition of distressed company Monnet Ispat. A consortium led by JSW Steel was close to finalising the deal when the bankruptcy tribunal in charge insisted on including small operational creditors, which led Bakshi and his team to assist the company in stepping in and raising its bid by INR250 million, which turned the deal into a successful one. Another interviewee concludes: “He is lovely and passionate about the law, and he occupies an important position in the market.”
Ashok Gupta took over the role of Group Legal Counsel and Chief Legal Officer at Aditya Birla Group in 2010, having previously overseen the legal team covering the South Asian region at Hindustan Unilever. He attracts strong recognition for his work in managing complex transactions, including his experience on multinational divestitures, acquisitions and mergers.

Market sources report favourably on Gupta’s strong team management capabilities, one stating: “He is passionate about building the quality of his team.” Another interviewee adds: “He is one of the most senior people in a very big group, he is quite unassuming, yet is very strategic.”

Interviewees regularly single him out as an influential market figure, who is “very up-to-date on his knowledge of the law and someone who likes to be involved in key matters.” An example of this is the central role he played on the 2018 Idea Cellular–Vodafone India merger, with Aditya Birla Group acting as majority shareholder of Idea, transforming the new company into one of the largest telecoms companies for subscribers and revenue in India.
Mumbai-based Naveen Raju has served as General Counsel and Executive Vice President for Group Legal Services at Mahindra & Mahindra since 2014. He is described by peers as someone who is in “a power role as general counsel, a very well-known and significant figure.”

Prior to his current position, Naveen was head of legal at Reliance, where he worked for almost a decade and a half, gaining experience in the oil and gas sector, acting on both domestic and international matters, and providing legal support to major transactions as well as on disputes including arbitrations. He graduated in 1996 from the National Law School of India University and maintains a high profile as an active speaker within the legal community, regularly sharing his insights on the expansion and development of the in-house lawyer’s role in India. Raju currently manages a team of almost 50 lawyers, with dedicated sub-teams specialising in litigation, M&A and intellectual property.
Damini Marwah has held the position of General Counsel at Axis Bank since 2016, during which period she has continued to rise in prominence as a leading in-house lawyer in the banking sector. Her previous experience also includes stints at IL&FS, Citibank India and ICICI Bank, experience which has made her an expert in banking and regulatory issues, and an active speaker at relevant conferences and seminars. She is well-versed in project finance, structured finance and private equity investments, and is also highlighted for her sound grasp of regulatory issues. Her role further encompasses oversight of the firm’s litigation strategy.

Marwah is a law graduate from Mumbai University and holds a Master’s degree obtained from Georgetown University Law Center in the USA. A market source is swift to single her out as an influential general counsel who “is impressive, hands-on and understands the business very well.”
Hemant Kumar
Larsen & Toubro

With over 30 years of legal experience, Hemant Kumar is recognised for his impressive technical knowledge, as well as for his position as an influential figure who “holds a lot of clout” in the market. As one market observer reports: “His legal acumen is great as well as his analysis of the issues - I am impressed that he is able to point out the right kind of issues.”

He has been General Counsel at Larsen & Toubro since 2016, having moved on from Essar Group to join the global technology, construction and financial services conglomerate. In his role, he helps to drive Larsen & Toubro’s continued investment in the expansion of its in-house legal capabilities. He is experienced in high-profile disputes, including litigations and arbitrations, and also heads up the team’s work on strategic M&A work. His impressive track record also includes acting as a Government Advocate, as well as roles with Reliance, State Bank of India and Steel Authority of India among others. He was also involved in the drafting of the Mining Bill in 2011 and has been active in the area of tackling diversity issues in the workplace.
Mumbai-based Jigar Shah joined KKR India in May 2018 to head the legal and compliance department in a move that was widely reported in the press as this was a newly-created role. Graduated in 1992 from the University of Leicester with a law degree, he also completed an LPC from The University of Law. He is highlighted for his experience and influence within the banking, finance and private equity spaces, regularly acting on complex transactions in this highly-regulated sector. A market source reports: “He’s a GC who is involved from the structuring stage itself and is well compliant with regulatory aspects. He is continuously in touch with outside counsel to ensure they are on the right path for various transactions.” Shah’s previous experience includes a ten-year stint at Deutsche Bank in London, Hong Kong and Mumbai, followed by half a decade as Managing Director and Head of Legal at JPMorgan Chase & Co India.
Jatin Jalundhwala
Adani Group

Adani Group’s Company Secretary and Senior Vice President of Legal, Jatin Jalundhwala, is highlighted as an “excellent practitioner” who deftly helps Adani to navigate strategic issues faced by a “large and complicated” business such as this. Market sources identify him as an influential counsel, one explaining: “He is very sharp on his domain knowledge, has a very clear eye on his parent companies’ risk profile and is very responsive on giving strategies to counsel.”

Jalundhwala manages the group’s corporate, regulatory and tax issues and is regularly involved in high-profile disputes and transactions, overseeing legal issues across the group’s diverse range of interests, including in mining, oil and gas, logistics and power generation. He is also active on local and domestic arbitrations and is a regular conference speaker in this area, recently presenting at the 2018 ICC India Arbitration Conference in Ahmedabad. Prior to his current position, he has also served on the board of Claris Lifesciences.
Inderpreet Sawhney, Group General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer at Infosys, has a distinguished track record of more than 25 years of experience in the legal and technology fields. She is a law graduate from Delhi University and completed an LL.M. from Queen’s University in Kingston, Canada. Prior to her in-house career, she was the managing partner of a law firm in Silicon Valley where she advised on several complex cross-border transactions. Before taking on her current role in 2017, Sawhney has also held the positions of General Counsel at Wipro and in-house counsel at ITC.

Her knowledge spans a wide range of areas, with extensive experience in handling regulatory changes and compliance issues. She is also highlighted for her work in championing diversity issues, having worked with organisations SABANA, Foundation for Excellence and Indus Women Leaders, among others, and receiving recognition for her work on these issues with several awards including the 2006 Minority Bar Coalition Unity Award and 2013 NASABA Corporate Counsel Achievement Award.
Mumbai-based Kalpana Agarwal heads the legal team at Kotak Mahindra Bank. She joined the company in 2004, and during her time with the company has built up impressive expertise handling complex regulatory issues and corporate transactions as well as overseeing litigations. Her role includes a focus upon business strategy, as well as due diligence and compliance work, and she is also credited for her sound management of an expanding team of in-house lawyers. A market source highlights her important role within the company: “The legal compliance of a corporate investment bank is very important in terms of risk assessment, and we have worked with Kalpana, who is excellent.” Agarwal has dealt with some challenging regulatory issues the bank has faced, including the submission of a petition challenging the Reserve Bank of India’s rejection of its proposal to reduce promoter shareholding. This was in response to the central bank’s request to all banks to reduce promoter stake to 20% of paid-up capital by 31 December 2018, and 15% by 31 March 2020.
Augustine Quadros currently serves as Senior Vice President for legal matters at HDFC Bank in Mumbai. He is highly regarded in the market for his corporate and compliance capabilities, one interviewee reporting: “He does get involved on high-level issues and although he has flexibility for his team to lead transactions, when there is a critical issue impacting the bank, he will step in,” further concluding: “He is highly respected – they are regarded as being highly regulatory-compliant and the credit goes to Augustine.”

The team is often involved in complex transactions, including the IPO of one of its subsidiaries, HDFC Standard Life in November 2017, which was listed at a 7% premium over its issue price. The team also works on technological innovation within the sector, including work in the area of blockchain technologies.
Deepak Jacob
Star India

Having graduated from the University of Madras in 1994, Deepak Jacob started his legal career as an associate at a local law firm before landing his first role in the media and telecoms sector as in-house counsel at Reliance, followed by a three-year stint at eBay. Since then, he joined Star India, where he has led the legal team for over a decade. He is widely recognised as an influential counsel, especially for his deep sector expertise in the TMT arena. As one market source states: “On the media and telecoms side, Deepak Jacob is a star, he would be hugely well thought of in the media industry.” He manages a team of over 75 people and is responsible for all legal and regulatory aspects of the broadcasting network, including complex litigations and all types of disputes. Jacob also demonstrates his influence in the legal industry by being a member of the Joint Task Force established by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for the implementation of the digitalisation roadmap of the cable TV sector in the country, and is also a representative at the Broadcast Content Complaint Council.
Nitin Banerjee was appointed General Counsel at Vedanta in December 2018, and also continues to head the legal team at Cairn Oil & Gas, part of the Vedanta Group, which he joined in late 2017. His impressive track record also includes holding senior positions at Vodafone and BG Group.

He is a highly experienced counsel, who graduated from Delhi University and holds law qualifications both in India and the UK. His areas of expertise include overseeing all legal and compliance matters within the company, leveraging his background in private practice and experience working abroad in order to provide seamless advice throughout the group.

Banerjee regularly advises on complex oil and gas commercial matters, leading the team on projects, acquisitions and divestitures as well as on compliance and regulatory matters. Going forward he will have the chance to further demonstrate his skills on the corporate side, with over USD3 billion earmarked for the expansion in capacity of Electrosteel's plant in Jharkhand, which was acquired in 2018.
Ipsita Dutta joined Morgan Stanley in Mumbai to head the legal department in November 2016, having previously practised as a partner at Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas.

She brings with her experience of more than a decade in private practice, where she had a focus on regulatory work in the financial services sector. Dutta started her career at the law firm in 2005 following her graduation from West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences. Since coming into her current role, Dutta is credited with building up the capabilities of the India-based legal team at Morgan Stanley. As one source explains: “She has taken over a lot of the responsibility, and a lot of things that would usually have been done abroad have now been moved to her, thus her role has expanded a lot. She is a fantastic lawyer.”
Debolina Partap is a lawyer with almost 30 years of experience in highly-regulated industries such as financial services and pharmaceuticals. Praised by interviewees as a “very, very experienced” practitioner who is “one of the leading corporate counsel in the country,” she has headed up the legal team at Wockhardt since 2006. She regularly handles complex issues involving IP and licensing as well as overseeing the firm’s strategy on major litigation. In one recent work highlight, the company managed to persuade the Delhi High Court to set aside a ban on the company’s anti-inflammatory medicine Ace Proxyvon, which was the first petition of several pending ones, filed against the Health Ministry’s notification, to be decided by the court. Also an advocate for diversity issues with a focus on women’s equality, she has been on several panels discussing the challenges faced by women when appointed to act on leadership roles. Before joining Wockhardt, Partap spent almost a decade and a half at the legal department of IDBI Bank.
Rajesh Bagga, Group General Counsel at Essel Group, joined the company in May 2018, bringing over more than three decades of experience as in-house counsel to head the team at the multimedia conglomerate. He offers a wealth of in-house experience and is very well-versed in regulatory and compliance issues, managing risks and consumer law. Prior to his current role, his impressive resume includes leading the legal team at Reliance for four years, with stints at Tata Motors and almost two decades at Hindustan Unilever. Since joining Essel, Bagga has played a key role in overseeing the group's investments across a range of ventures, commentators confirming that his team has been “very, very active” of late and confirming that his input has “helped to move the company forward.” Amongst recent work, in late 2018 Essel entered into a joint venture with SB Energy, part of the SoftBank Group, to develop a 500 MW solar park in the country. Additionally, Qbera, an online platform that makes unsecured personal loans, has recently raised USD3 million from a unit of Essel Group, who has also agreed to acquire a majority stake in LKP Finance.
Deepak Chauhan
Welspun Group

Welspun Group’s legal department is led by Deepak Chauhan, who joined the company in 2010. He is a counsel with 20 years’ experience in prominent corporates such as thyssenkrupp, Gammon Infrastructure and GVK Power & Infrastructure, who graduated in 1998 from Government Law College in Mumbai. During his career at the textile producer he has dealt with a range of complex issues, including large consumer lawsuits. Market sources are swift to endorse him as an influential counsel who is both commercially aware and technical at the same time. An interviewee reports: “He is a very sound guy who is absolutely on the ball when it comes to understanding his business and applying the law on it,” while another one comments: “He understands his business very well and is legally very sound; he brings a lot of experience to the table and is very fun to work with.” A further commentator states: “He is quite impressive, looks at the business angle very specifically and at the legal aspect, making sure the business doesn’t get too affected.”
Padmaja Chakravarty was appointed General Counsel at Citibank for India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in August 2018. Prior to this role, she was Head of Capital Markets Origination Legal for the Asia-Pacific Region for two years, out of Hong Kong. Currently based in Mumbai, she has been at Citibank since 2012 in a series of senior roles. Her international experience also includes stints in private practice at Sullivan & Cromwell and Linklaters, both in London, where she was involved in investment banking issues, including complex cross-border transactions. Her influence is confirmed by market sources who comment: “She is excellent, I would recommend.” Another interviewee highlights her skills as follows: “She is very young and has global experience; she worked in London for some time, which is the kind of experience she brings to Citibank India. Her role is broad as she has taken on regulatory issues in India relating to cybercrime, anything that they have a problem with, she is a go-to person.”
Engaging content, networking and celebration with leading General Counsel and top ranked lawyers globally.

For more information visit chambers.com