Chambers GC Influencers

JAPAN 2019

Tuesday, 26th February 2019
Hilton Tokyo Odaiba

Programme
Introduction

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The importance of a dynamic and progressive approach to expanding in-house legal departments is taking on increasing significance within Japanese businesses. The demands of driving growth in international markets encourage the steady increase in the functions required of the legal department and the emergence of new structures to facilitate successful outcomes. The general counsel and legal division general managers highlighted in this list are recognised for the contributions they have made and the examples they have set in the development of in-house legal culture.

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 and strategic business change.
- 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. Our GC Influencers have created best practice pathways endorsed by both private practice and other in-house lawyers. In spotlighting their achievements, this list encourages collaboration among the in-house legal community.
# Contents

- Mr Laurence W. “Larry” Bates  
- Mr Naosuke Fujita  
- Ms Yumiko Ito  
- Ms Angela Krantz  
- Mr Tatsuya Morita  
- Mr Shinobu Obata  
- Ms Jenifer Rogers  
- Mr Akira Saito  
- Mr Kenji Tagaya  
- Mr Yuichi Takano  
- Mr Mitsuya Yasui
Mr Laurence W. “Larry” Bates

General Counsel, Chief Risk Mgmt. Officer, Chief Compliance Officer, Executive Officer & Director
Panasonic

Mr Larry Bates is recognised by legal professionals – both in-house and in private practice – for his leadership in expanding the role and status of in-house lawyers within Japanese companies. Prior to joining Panasonic and assuming his role as a board member and General Counsel and Chief Compliance and Risk Officer, he fulfilled key roles as general counsel at LIXIL and GE and also served as president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan in 2013. Described as “the guru of the GC community in Japan” by a Chambers and Partners interviewee, he routinely attracts praise for his commitment to bringing global best practice to Japan.
Mr Naosuke Fujita rejoined Goldman Sachs’ in-house legal department as its general counsel in March 2009 following spells at international law firms in Tokyo. He is committed to strengthening equality and corporate culture and is regarded as “a unique individual with long experience who is enthusiastic about Goldman Sachs’ diversity activities and corporate social responsibility initiatives.” His commitment to advocating for LGBT equality is further demonstrated in his role as co-founder of the Lawyers for LGBT & Allies Network.
Ms Yumiko Ito is credited as a leader who “knows how the GC role works in a large international company and has introduced that into the Japanese business.” The same interviewee goes on to single out her achievements in “adapting the structure of a global company to the domestic Japanese situation.” She previously held in-house counsel roles at a number of international companies and this experience is appreciated by interviewees, who cite her as a model of progressive in-house legal management.
Ms Angela Krantz

Associate General Counsel and Legal Director
Amazon Japan

Ms Angela Krantz practised in international firms in Tokyo before taking on general counsel roles at Mitsubishi UFJ Merrill Lynch PB Securities Co., Accenture and Amazon Japan. Her management of a large Japanese legal team within an international company is singled out by interviewees, who regard her as “a very capable and very strong in-house leader.” Another comments: “Angela Krantz is a very good GC who has built a good team that is much bigger and more active than other technology companies’.”
Mr Tatsuya Morita is recommended as “a rising star who is starting to really push Sojitz’s in-house team; he’s building a very diversified team that is testing structures and building out its own know-how.” Another interviewee observes that he is “keen to grow the international experience of his team and is ambitious about what the legal function can do for the company.”
Mr Shinobu Obata is head of the Association of Corporate Legal Departments. Interviewees single him as “very internationally minded” and admire his accomplishments in “really reshaping and leading the legal team, taking on foreign ideas about how to move to a more decentralised model and taking on new ways of approaching legal teams and compliance.” With a long and distinguished career at NEC, he draws further plaudits for the evolution of his leadership and the development of his teams alongside the company’s evolution into a high-tech leader.
Ms Jenifer Rogers

General Counsel Asia Pacific

Asurion

In addition to her role as General Counsel Asia Pacific at Asurion, Ms Jenifer Rogers serves as an external director for Mitsui and for Kawasaki Heavy Industries. As well as applauding the achievement of becoming the first foreigner to occupy a position on the Mitsui board and her role in developing corporate governance in Japan, interviewees say: “She’s heavily involved in the American Chamber of Commerce and active in the business community, which plays into how she runs her legal team; she’s built one up from scratch and is very active in the legal community.”
Mr Akira Saito became General Manager of ITOCHU’s Legal Division in April 2017, inheriting the leadership of one of corporate Japan’s most progressive legal departments. Interviewees say: “He is impressive to deal with and makes the legal function as relevant to the business as possible. He communicates clearly and is a natural leader who is very supportive of his staff.”
Mr Kenji Tagaya heads a strategic legal section with a remit to proactively contribute to JERA’s corporate planning division. He is noted for his focus on maximising the impact of the in-house team and refining the relationship between internal and external lawyers and on the development of his team members’ specialist expertise. Interviewees say: “He’s a very good lawyer who is doing a good job of building out the in-house team at JERA.”
Mr Yuichi Takano is recommended for his commitment to technological innovation within Mitsui’s legal division and his proactivity in streamlining how the company interacts with external counsel. He is credited with cultivating “a team that focus on business priorities,” and another interviewee states: “He’s pushing hard to ensure Mitsui is leading in digitalisation and the remodelling of in-house teams. He’s taking that department paperless and constantly asking law firms what they think Mitsui should be doing. Takano-san is at the forefront of that, and going forward it will be critical for law firms to integrate with that.”
Mr Mitsuya Yasui wins praise for his drive to increase the number of functions taken on by Japanese general counsel, and is praised for having been very influential in building the general counsel’s remit within a Japanese organisation. His openness to sharing his experience and encouraging others in the development of their own roles is also noted by interviewees.
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