

# A master OF LAW

Larry Kwok (BEC '79, LLB '81, LLM '86)

For alumnus Larry Kwok, the most satisfying part of his career is not its financial rewards but the opportunity it gives him to play his part as a lawyer and an accountant in helping to map and shape China's economic future

"IT IS A very meaningful job for lawyers, accountants and investment bankers to raise funds to help modernise China," says the corporate lawyer. "China has an insatiable appetite for global capital to build and develop the country as well as its industries."

Born and raised in Hong Kong, Larry finished his high school education in Australia and decided to remain in the country to enrol at the University of Sydney in 1975. He chose to study both law and economics, reasoning that the combination of the two disciplines would be the most useful foundation for his future career. "I received training not only in the rules and regulations of society, but also the rules that govern the market and the economic world," he recalls. Larry particularly remembers being inspired by the lectures of Professor Raymond Chambers and by tutor Peter Wolnizer, now Professor Wolnizer, the Dean of the Faculty, who "left a very deep impression" in his memory.

After graduating in 1981, Larry joined the accountancy firm now known as Ernst & Young and worked there for three years, gaining a strong grounding in accounting. But law is where he would make his professional mark, moving into the field in 1986 when he joined the Hong Kong office of the US-based law firm Baker & McKenzie.

Larry went on to co-found his own practice under the name Kwok & Yih, building it into one of Hong Kong's leading firms. After ten successful years, the partnership merged with Mallesons Stephen Jaques in 2004, providing the Sydney-based legal giant with a platform for further expansion in Asia.

Today, Larry Kwok is Managing Partner, Hong Kong and Mainland China, at Mallesons Stephen Jaques with responsibility for Hong Kong and Mainland China operations. One of Hong Kong's most respected corporate attorneys, he is known for handling complex deals, mergers and acquisitions and initial public offerings,

as well as consulting for Chinese and international corporations. He has been a pioneer in helping privately owned enterprises from Mainland China list on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange: a key milestone was assisting the Hong Kong IT company Pacific Century CyberWorks to achieve a reverse takeover of the Hong Kong listed company Tricom in 1999, a deal which kick-started the IT boom in Hong Kong.

When asked for the secrets of his success in doing business in Hong Kong and Mainland China, Larry shares three pieces of advice. First, he says, it is vital to be aware of cultural differences, both between Australia and Hong Kong and between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Secondly, businesspeople and professionals need to show empathy by always considering the deal from the client's perspective. Thirdly, they must be good at whatever it is they do and commit themselves to getting even better: "You need to continue to renew your skill base and embrace change: the trick is always moving."

In tandem with his career in corporate finance, Larry is also keenly involved in giving back to society. He has taken on a variety of responsibilities on government, professional and community bodies covering a diverse range of areas: hospitals, social welfare, traffic accident victims, NGOs, consumer protection, anti-trust, financial markets, insurance, telecommunications and disciplinary and appeal tribunals. He became a well-known figure in his home city through his role as Vice-Chairman of the Consumer Council of Hong Kong, a consumer rights advocacy and protection agency. Larry is also closely involved with Mainland China affairs and was appointed by the government of the People's Republic of China as a member of Political Consultative Committee of Guangxi.

Contributing in this way, he says, both enriches his life and helps to diversify his knowledge, although it can often mean working more than 12-hour days to fit everything in. "I believe it is the balanced life that is most satisfying," he reflects. "I feel really fortunate to have a very lovely and supportive wife, Vivienne, and two young sweet and studious daughters, Georgiana and Philippa, as well as a fulfilling and challenging career, and being entrusted by the government to do public service for the community."

Now, the University of Sydney is set to benefit from Larry's philosophy of public service. He is planning to establish an undergraduate scholarship scheme at his alma mater that will enable Australian students to study in China and vice versa. "I felt it would be a good idea to help promote a better relationship and understanding between Australia and China through an exchange, particularly of young students," he says. "I also owe a lot to the University and my education in Australia, and I wanted to make a gesture of giving something back."

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