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Style of Work No.158

Global law firm White & Case navigates complexity with a one-team approach

Globally integrated to support Japanese companies

Founded in 1901, White & Case LLP is a globally integrated law firm with 45 offices in 31 countries worldwide. The firm opened its Tokyo office in 1987, which has served the needs of Japanese companies while cultivating a collaborative workplace for both foreign and Japanese law qualified lawyers.

Jun Usami, the firm’s Tokyo office executive partner, highlighted the firm’s global capability as one of its greatest strengths. This was evident when White & Case advised Panasonic on its acquisition of Blue Yonder, a US end-to-end supply chain software provider with an enterprise valued at approximately US\$8.5 billion.

“We work very closely with our clients from the beginning to the end of each deal,” said Usami. “For a deal like Panasonic’s acquisition of Blue Yonder, we form a core team at the Tokyo office, which then works in collaboration with our global teams. For larger-scale transactions, there may be as many as 100 members working together as a team.”

Registered Foreign Lawyer Paul Harrison works primarily on the development and financing of large projects. “I have been working on a Mozambique LNG project financing since 2015, which raised approximately \$US14 billion from several financial institutions in the US, Europe, Africa and Asia,” said Harrison. “One of my roles was to advise the Japan Bank for International Cooperation and Nippon Export and Investment Insurance. To undertake this large and complex project, we formed a substantial team based in Tokyo and several overseas offices. We supported the client while dealing with difficult situations arising from the pandemic and civil strife in Mozambique. This example displays our strength as a global law firm.”

Clara Shiota, also a Registered Foreign Lawyer, handles debt financing for sponsors and have extensive experience advising private equity funds. “Last year, I advised CVC Capital Partners, a major European investment fund, on the financing of the acquisition of Shiseido’s personal care business,” said Shiota. “This was CVC’s largest investment deal in Asia, including Japan. It was a pleasure to be part of such a large-scale and complex deal.”

A focus on teams and collaboration that crosses borders and jurisdictions is fundamental to the White & Case style of work. At the Tokyo office, Japanese and foreign lawyers from various practices sit side by side. This allows lawyers in the Tokyo office to work in a global environment, collaborating with colleagues around the world without leaving the country.

A work environment that brings out your best

Japanese lawyer Ayako Kawano handles real estate, M&A and business restructuring matters. “I often have opportunities to work on deals for global private equity funds,” said Kawano. “Working with our network’s real estate teams helps me access the most up-to-date information and new perspectives. One advantage of working in a one-team operation is having the opportunity to collaborate with diverse colleagues and to serve the needs of a wide range of clients, which is one of the most enjoyable aspects of my job. My colleagues have a strong entrepreneurial spirit and value teamwork. Many of our attorneys have a good balance of both.”

“This is because we live and internalize our values,” said Usami, referring to the firm’s three core values: pioneering, united and human. “We became a global law firm from a small US office and we are always working on cutting-edge cases because of our pioneering spirit. We are a united firm that builds deep, long-lasting relationships with our clients and with each other. We embrace the diversity and inclusion of our colleagues because we value humanity. Our day-to-day work remains firmly anchored by these three values.”

White & Case’s learning and development program for young lawyers and its workplace policies reflect how the firm puts ‘human’ first. “We assign responsibilities according to ability, regardless of age or experience,” commented Harrison. “And we ask each lawyer to contribute to the team to the fullest extent possible. With the pandemic and a large number of lawyers working from home, the partners emphasize communication with associates and team members. We ensure that our attorneys are not isolated or overloaded with work, that they are aware of what steps to take next, and that they have the support of those around them. Each core practice group also has regular team meetings and anchor days—in-office work days—which ensure opportunities for face-to-face interactions. We are committed to creating an environment that maintains the quality of our services while offering flexible work options,” he elaborates.

Along these lines, the firm implemented an agile working policy. “This policy is designed to allow people to choose the way they work, regardless of how or where they work,” Shirota explained. “It allows us to design our careers without being forced to choose between work and home. The word ‘human’ also means to be honest with yourself so that you can maximize your potential. I am convinced that this is the place for that to happen.”

Additionally, many of the firm’s lawyers, including Ayako Kawano, engage in pro bono work. “Recently, I went to the Tokyo Immigration Bureau with an associate to give an oral statement on an application for refugee status,” said Kawano. “Since we had to submit

evidence using United Nations reports and other documents, it was necessary for a native French speaker to review the evidence as part of this process. An associate working on this pro bono matter quickly contacted an associate in the Paris office to review and analyze the case from a French perspective. At our firm, we seek best practices in pro bono cases as much as we do in our client cases, and our associates in each country are always ready to lend support to our work.”

Professional development programs designed for “True international lawyer”

Marina Tatsumi—a Japanese lawyer who joined the office in 2019—wanted to obtain a UK law qualification while rotating through various practice groups as part of her new associate training. She studied hard and passed the law qualification exam in the UK. After three years of experience in M&A, project finance and other Tokyo office practices, she moved to the London office this spring. She now works on large transactions for global companies under the supervision of a London office partner.

“She will return to the Tokyo office in a few years as an experienced Japanese lawyer practicing English law,” said Harrison. “I am confident that she will have acquired a high level of transaction management skills and know how to conduct business at a global level by then. Our network is unique in that it not only supports technical growth—such as acquiring foreign legal qualifications and knowledge of cross-border matters—but also enables associates to broaden their horizons by immersing themselves in different countries and cultures and by sharing their experiences with a variety of people.”

The firm places great emphasis on associate mobility to offices within our global network. White & Case’s mobility program ranges from a short-term international assignment program that lasts three to six months to permanent transfer, as in Tatsumi’s case. The number of associates participating in the mobility program is increasing. “We hope that this will allow us to groom Japanese lawyers who share a common goal of serving clients’ global legal services needs, are not bound by the Japanese legal framework, have international experience and can be marketed as true international lawyers,” added Usami.

Looking to the future, Usami said, “With social conditions changing drastically, our clients are under pressure to transform their businesses. Examples of such changes include energy transitions and digital transformation. We follow and anticipate business trends that affect our clients’ business in light of the Japanese market and the global situation, and constantly seek to add value to our clients and meet their needs, as we continue to grow as a firm. The three core values that underpin our firm’s culture drive us to challenge conventional thinking and give us courage to break new grounds and maintain our position as a leading international law firm.”

Written by: Yuko Sato

Photo by: Shinya Ohira



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ホワイト&ケース法律事務所

高度かつ複雑な案件にワンチームで挑む！ 世界有数のグローバル・ローファーム

**事務所
探訪**

Style of Work

「本報記者 藤原 隆之」

日本企業向けに、グローバルな視点から、高度かつ複雑な案件にワンチームで挑む！世界有数のグローバル・ローファーム。本記事では、東京事務所を訪問し、その特徴や取り組みについて詳しく紹介する。

東京事務所は、2019年に設立されたばかりだが、すでに多くのクライアントを獲得している。その理由は、グローバルな視点から、高度かつ複雑な案件にワンチームで挑むという姿勢にある。本記事では、東京事務所を訪問し、その特徴や取り組みについて詳しく紹介する。

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宇佐神 隆

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Photos and captions:



Tokyo office executive partner Jun Usami



The Tokyo office of the 2500-lawyer firm has grown into 50 lawyers, drawing upon a diverse team of lawyers qualified in Japan and foreign countries, and provides a wide range of legal services. Practice areas include corporate/M&A, finance, energy, project finance, disputes, competition, IP, international trade and real estate. Tokyo office lawyers work across practices and offices in the firm's global network.(Photo taken April 2022)



From left: Jun Usami, Ayako Kawano, Clara Shiota, Paul Harrison



Learning and development for young lawyers emphasizes on on-the-job-training. There are also frequent opportunities to join internal trainings provided by the Tokyo office, as well as regional and global training programs. Day-to-day conversation is English, which allows non-native speakers to naturally improve their fluency in the language. Harrison said, “However, your ability as a lawyer is more important than your English proficiency.”



Editor’s Note



Ms. Shiota led a fundraising campaign to support Ukrainian refugees by producing and selling eco bags. Before the pandemic, White & Case held an annual World Cup soccer tournament, combining sports and charitable efforts. The 2019 event drew more than 1,000 people from 31 counties. Mr. Harrison has been a regular participant in this soccer tournament.

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