

ALB  
EMPLOYER OF  
CHOICE 2013

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THE REGION'S BEST EMPLOYERS, UNVEILED

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**T**he survey has been closed, the votes are in, the results have been compiled, and we can now announce the ALB Employer of Choice 2013. Perhaps the biggest takeaway from this survey is the feeling of contentment resonating across the region when it comes to the work that people are doing: Some 64 percent of Asian respondents say that their work is extremely satisfying or very satisfying, and another 34 percent rate it as just satisfying. Additionally, respondents also consider themselves fairly well paid, with nearly 48 percent stating that their remuneration is either above or well above the market standard, and another 44 percent being remunerated in line with the market. Two-thirds of the respondents note that the salary structure and overall salary transparency at the firm is either good or excellent.

When it comes to career growth, more than 80 percent of Asian respondents state that the opportunities for training or other career development at their firm are either good or excellent. However, this doesn't mean there are no areas for improvement. "The firm should implement its mentoring programme very strictly," says an associate at a law firm in India. "One-to-one training needs to be given more importance." Meanwhile, a counsel at a Malaysia law firm wants "more focus to be given to the litigation unit, as currently it seems like all attention is more focused on the corporate side of the firm." Overseas opportunities and exposure are on the wishlist of a number of respondents. "The firm encourages the associates to attend various seminars and workshops. It also provides the compensation for the junior to take the bar courses and/or the bar exam," says one associate in Indonesia. "The downside is that it only encourages seminars within the country, and not seminars abroad." And an associate at an Indian law firm wants "more opportunities to travel to attend seminars to understand cutting-edge solutions to the latest legal problems." Some 93 percent of respondents also say that mentoring opportunities are between good and excellent.

The path to partnership in a firm is also an important area of concern for lawyers in the region. And while a solid majority of

## METHODOLOGY


THE ALB EMPLOYER OF CHOICE RANKINGS WERE COMPILED TAKING INTO ACCOUNT RESPONSES FROM THOUSANDS OF LAW FIRM EMPLOYEES, RANGING FROM MANAGING PARTNERS TO SUPPORT STAFF, AS WELL AS OUR OWN MARKET KNOWLEDGE. THE SURVEY WAS OPEN IN THE MONTHS OF MAY AND JUNE, AND LAW FIRMS HAVE BEEN RANKED ON THE BASIS OF JOB SATISFACTION, REMUNERATION, WORK-LIFE BALANCE, CAREER PROSPECTS, MENTORSHIP, JOB SECURITY AND OTHER ASPECTS; WITH RESPONDENTS BEING ASKED TO SUBMIT THEIR VIEWS ANONYMOUSLY TO HELP MAINTAIN FAIRNESS AND OBJECTIVITY. LAW FIRMS ARE LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER.

respondents say they found it either very or extremely transparent in their firm, tellingly, nearly a third state that it is only "somewhat" transparent. "I am not sure I understand the requirements to be a partner in this firm," says one associate in Indonesia. There are too many variables to be considered." An associate in Hong Kong is even more blunt: "This is by far the greatest negative of what is otherwise a good place to work. The path to partnership is very unclear, and in fact, a closely guarded secret." Meanwhile, a lawyer with an international firm in China says that "associates do not know how far they have reached on the counsel/partnership track. Promotions sometimes lack consistency."

One of the key things respondents look at is the work-life balance offered by firms, and the related possibility of burnout. Nearly three-quarters say it is either good or extremely good at their firms, with an associate at a law firm in Hong Kong praising his partners for appreciating "the importance of work-life balance" and being "very understanding and supportive in general." Another associate in

Indonesia says: "The workload varies. When the workload is low, the associates are free to leave the office as early as possible, as long as the work gets done." A fifth of respondents, however, note that their work-life balance is significantly less than ideal. "Frankly, it is based on which partner monitors you," an associate in Malaysia says. "Unfortunately, mine doesn't really care about life outside work." Complains an associate at one of Korea's larger firms: "There is very little vacation, and weekends are not respected at all."

When it comes to job security and feeling valued within a firm, respondents are generally upbeat. Two-thirds of those who have taken the survey admit to feeling either highly valued or absolutely indispensable within a firm's set up, while more than 70 percent say they were either extremely or very secure when it comes to job security. And when it is about the ways their firm can improve, respondents have a varied wishlist. An associate at a Chinese domestic firm says that despite management being generally good, the human resources section within the firm has a long way to go. A counsel at a law firm in Thailand wants more thorough training for lawyers, and also enhancements to the knowledge management system. As the Korean legal industry continues on its road to opening up, a partner at a Korean law firm says that lawyers and other support staff will need to increase their proficiency in English and other foreign languages in order to serve their foreign clients better. A number of respondents have asked their firms to step up the pace of hiring. "More investment in people and infrastructure is needed if the firm is to continue to stay ahead of its competitors," says a counsel in Hong Kong.

Nevertheless, lawyers across the region seem to be fairly content with their firms. When asked if they see themselves at the same firm in five years' time, close to 37 percent respond "absolutely" while another 37 percent respond "most probably." And more than half the respondents say they will "absolutely" recommend the firm to a friend. "My employers have created a satisfying and easy-going working atmosphere here, and all the colleagues are extremely nice to each other," says one associate at a Chinese domestic law firm. "I feel inspired and encouraged all the time. Most importantly, I am able to develop my legal skills here." 

## CHINA

## WINNERS

AnJie Law Firm  
Global Law Office  
MWE Law Offices  
Shanghai Young-Ben Law Firm  
ZhongLun Law Firm

## HONOURABLE MENTION

Han Kun Law Offices



GLOBAL LAW OFFICE

Job satisfaction is high among respondents in China, with 97 percent saying that they are at the very least satisfied with the work they are doing, and for more than 80 percent of the respondents, the opportunities for training and professional development range from good to excellent. Additionally, three-quarters of respondents praised the work-life balance at their firms, and two-thirds said they feel either highly valued or indispensable. The upshot is that more than 70 percent expect to see themselves in the same firm in five years' time, and 85 percent will gladly recommend it to a friend.

China's top employers, according to the survey's respondents, have managed to create an ideal environment for lawyers, especially the junior ones, to learn, thrive and feel

like important team members. For example, there is **AnJie Law Firm**, which possesses, as an associate notes, "a very good cooperative atmosphere between partners. Everybody cares about the others no matter who he/she is." A lawyer for **Global Law Office** praises the "harmonious working environment, excellent learning environment and a bright future" that the firm possesses. At Shanghai-based **MWE Law Offices**, associates laud the "excellent leader" and "friendly and distinguished team members" who help junior lawyers realise their "personal value." The "superb interpersonal relationship" at **Shanghai Young-Ben Law Firm** is particularly mentioned, with lawyers noting that its partners

are "quite caring and understanding." And finally, **ZhongLun Law Firm** is hailed as a "good platform for lawyers to begin their careers, as it lets them handle influential cases." Another associate praises the "very relaxing" working environment where "attorneys are provided with excellent legal resources and office assistance."

## HONG KONG

## WINNERS

Deacons  
King & Wood Mallesons  
Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe  
Paul Hastings  
Skadden, Arps, Slate,  
Meagher & Flom



SHANGHAI YOUNG-BEN LAW FIRM

In Hong Kong, one of the most developed legal markets in Asia, competition for talent is fierce, and law firms are pulling out all stops to retain their best talent. The job satisfaction rate remains high, at 93 percent, but almost a quarter of the survey's respondents believe they are underpaid, and not many believe that the salary structure or transparency is ideal either. Less than 30 percent also think



the path to partnership is not very transparent. Hong Kong firms generally score well when it comes to professional development and opportunities to receive mentoring. Surprisingly, for a city known for a culture of very hard work, more than 85 percent of the respondents believe they have a semblance of a work-life balance.

Of the winners, **Deacons** is praised for the way it allows younger lawyers a great opportunity to develop their careers. "The scope and variety of very challenging work for major international clients are impressive," says one associate in the IP team, while another notes that the firm values work-life balance, "which is important to many people. It is rare to find a law firm where you can practise law but with well-balanced hours." **King & Wood Mallesons** is lauded for the autonomy it provides to associates, and "how it offers good partners to work with." At **Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe's** Hong Kong office, one associate notes the "friendly and professional environment," while another says that the firm offers a lot of senior-level supervisory responsibility that would usually be the preserve of partners in other offices. At **Paul Hastings**, an associate praises the firm's "great opportunities to build your own career, including a lot of exposure to high-profile transactions and clients." Finally, **Skadden Arps** has, according to a lawyer there, "best working environment and firm culture. I can get along with the partners very well," while a senior partner says that the Hong Kong office "truly has a supportive and wonderful atmosphere."

## INDIA

### WINNERS

Amarchand & Mangaldas &  
Suresh A. Shroff & Co  
Khaitan & Co  
Trilegal

Job satisfaction levels are high in India, where the old family-controlled structures of old are giving way to more merit-based systems within which lawyers are trained, and expected to deliver according to international standards. This is particularly seen

in a spate of new corporate law firms that have cropped up in the past decade or so, but some of the more established names are also attempting to transform from within as they keep abreast of current trends. As such, there are few complaints in relation to salary structures or career development paths, and most respondents appear content with what the firms are currently offering them. Areas of improvement include the legal research and IT systems, and lawyers have also called for aligning their firms' policies to more international ways of working.

Of the winners, **Amarchand & Mangaldas** is praised for its "good work-life balance" and "friendly, intellectually challenging environment." To an associate at **Khaitan & Co**, the "job is very challenging and everyday is a learning opportunity." However, overwhelming praise comes from associates at **Trilegal**, where one lauds the "patient and understanding training and leadership from the partners and counsels in the firm. The firm has taken very good care of us and we feel very well looked after." Says another: "Unlike other firms, there are no 'unwritten norms' or stereotypes which the firm expects those working here to adhere to."

## INDONESIA

### WINNERS

Ali Budiardjo, Nugroho,  
Reksodiputro (ABNR)  
Assegaf Hamzah & Partners  
Soewito Suhardiman Eddymurthy  
Kardono (SSEK)

Despite being one of the most exciting emerging markets in Asia at the moment, Indonesia has some way to go when it comes to its legal profession. Compared to the overall population, there are a relatively small number of lawyers. And many of the firms are family owned, which are still striving to reach the levels of management and professionalism that is the hallmark of top law firms even in the developing world. Associates responding to our survey also point out a less-than-ideal situation when it comes to mentoring, an opaque path to partnership and other

problems. However, job satisfaction remains pretty solid, and lawyers seem content with the work-life balance they are offered as well. The firms that get the highest ratings from the Employer of Choice Survey 2013 demonstrate an international outlook and these are **Ali Budiardjo, Nugroho, Reksodiputro (ABNR)**, **Assegaf Hamzah & Partners (AHP)**, which recently tied up with Singapore's Rajah & Tann, and **Soewito Suhardiman Eddymurthy Kardono (SSEK)**.

## JAPAN

### WINNERS

Anderson Mori & Tomotsune  
Atsumi & Sakai  
Nishimura & Asahi

Confidence runs high among the Japanese respondents to the ALB Employer of Choice Survey 2013. When asked how the firm can improve, one lawyer responds: "I do not see any reason to answer this question, as I think the firm is well organised and structured." Work is satisfying at the least for the overwhelming majority (97 percent), remuneration appears to be competitive, and most respondents see good opportunities for training and professional development. Nearly half the respondents "absolutely" see themselves in the firm in five years' time, and nearly as many will unhesitatingly recommend it to a friend.

Among the winners, an **Anderson Mori & Tomotsune** counsel describes the "smooth work" and "good support from the team" along with high career prospects. At **Atsumi & Sakai**, a partner praises the diverse work culture - "This firm respects diversity (i.e. there are lots of non-Japanese lawyers and female lawyers), and is trying to create a work environment to satisfy employees' needs" - while a paralegal lauds the "respect and consideration from attorneys and staff alike. It's a hard working environment, but rewarding." Meanwhile, at **Nishimura & Asahi**, an associate points to the "very harmonious working atmosphere, great support, international outlook and good clientele."

## KOREA

## WINNERS

Bae Kim & Lee  
Kim & Chang  
Yulchon

Competition is heating up in Korea with the country having started opening up its legal market after signing two free-trade agreements with the U.S. and Europe. Since it will be at least five years before foreign law firms can employ Korean lawyers (and Korean and foreign lawyers can go into partnership together), domestic law firms, and particularly the country's "Big Five" are now doing their utmost to retain their best talent. More than 70 percent of respondents from Korea say they are being paid above or well above the market standard, and more than half think that the opportunities for training or professional development at their firm is "excellent" and that their team is "extremely collaborative." And as that five-year deadline comes around, nearly half the respondents expect to be at their firms.

The competition between firms in the Korea section of the survey has been extremely tight, but eventually three winners

have emerged ahead of the pack. "Korea is a dynamic place to be, and our firm has a great work environment relative to other firms here I believe," says one senior associate at **Bae, Kim & Lee**. "The work culture is 'driven' which means great professional opportunities." Another praises the "good reputation, friendly working environment and democratic partnership structure." At **Kim & Chang**, an associate lauds the "exciting" work that "makes me feel alive." Meanwhile, at **Yulchon**, the "professionals are cooperative, friendly, and creative," with one associate praising the "excellent collaborations among lawyers in different areas of expertise."

## MALAYSIA

## WINNERS

Azmi & Associates  
Skrine  
Tay & Partners  
Zul Rafique & Partners

If the Legal Professional (Amendment) Act 2012 comes into force this year as expected, Malaysia, like Singapore and South Korea, will open its doors to foreign law firms. The legislation is

expected to allow up to five international firms to obtain licences this year as Qualified Foreign Law Firms (QFLFs), which will enable them to set up partnerships with local law firms and to recruit foreign lawyers as well as set up stand-alone offices. So how are Malaysian law firms currently doing? Well for starters, the country has little of the exuberance of other jurisdictions: The majority of respondents seem merely satisfied by their work, while nearly two-thirds believe their salary is merely in line with the market. At the same time, more than 80 percent of respondents believe the opportunities for growth and professional development at their firm are good or excellent, with most happy with opportunities to receive mentoring. Job security is high, although more than a third don't see themselves in the same firm in the near future.

At **Azmi & Associates**, a senior associate notes that "the learning curve is good and the people are supportive. The senior partner will come and meet lawyers and staff and motivate us whenever he has spare time." A partner at **Skrine** notes how they are "able to work in areas which are at the cutting edge of the law, ranging from international arbitrations to complex shareholder disputes." A senior associate at **Tay & Partners** believes "the firm is constantly giving the opportunity to learn. The wide variety of work we get here enables young lawyers to try out new areas of work." Meanwhile at **Zul Rafique & Partners**, an associate says they "have been provided with the opportunity to gain exposure and knowledge to multiple platforms of the law, which in turn influences my way of thinking and perception of everything that is happening around me."



BAE KIM &amp; LEE

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DREW & NAPIER

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- Asian Legal Business

We thank our lawyers and staff for their vote of confidence.

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**Azmi & Associates** is a full-service Malaysian-based regional law firm that subscribes to the belief that we would succeed only if we deliver prompt, high-quality and cost-effective services to our clientele.

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Azmi & Associates continues its commitment to enhance internal expertise and explore the global markets to broaden our horizon. Our resources extend internationally due to the strength of our alliances with Terralex Network (based in Florida, USA) and First Law International (based in Europe).

We are committed to serving our clients effectively and efficiently. We endeavor as a firm to be responsive to our clients' needs; we serve with knowledge, knowledge, skill, loyalty, creativity, perseverance and care. Due to this effort, Azmi & Associates has been chosen as Employer of Choice for the year 2010 and 2011 by the Asian Legal Business Magazine.



*Friendly faces of Azmi & Associates*

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- Competition Law
- International Law Division



# PHILIPPINES

## WINNERS

Quisumbing Torres (Member firm  
of Baker & McKenzie)  
SyCip, Salazar, Hernandez &  
Gatmaitan

A senior associate with **Quisumbing Torres** states three reasons why the firm is one of the best places to work in the Philippines: "Lawyers are empowered. Transactions are fulfilling. Compensation is very competitive." Meanwhile, at **SyCip Salazar Hernandez & Gatmaitan**, a lawyer points out that "the type of work is intellectually interesting, professionally challenging and financially rewarding."



SYCIP, SALAZAR, HERNANDEZ & GATMAITAN

come a time in the near future that the competition for talent grows acute. In general, respondents to the ALB Employer of Choice Survey 2013 remain fairly content with their work - only 2 percent express dissatisfaction of any degree, and nearly 80 percent think the opportunities for professional development at their firm are good or excellent. The heartening news for their employers is that at least three-quarters "absolutely" or "probably" see themselves at the same firm in five years' time.

At **Baker & McKenzie.Wong & Leow**, an associate praises the "great team atmosphere, friendly office, interesting and varied work, great partners with lots of international and local knowledge." At **Drew & Napier**, one of Singapore's Big Four law firms, a senior associate lauds the fact that "the channels of communication are always open, which

makes working quite satisfying." Another one calls the work atmosphere "fantastic." Meanwhile, a lawyer at **Duane Morris & Selvam**, Duane Morris' Singapore JLV, appreciates the fact that "management gives high importance to a personal development plan, and the compensation package is good." **Harry Elias Partnership** is cited for its collegiality. "I like the sort of work I do, and my colleagues are very helpful and supportive," says one respondent from the firm. "We cover each other when necessary. We often lunch together, and my colleagues are pretty much also my good friends." And at **Rajah & Tann**, another Big Four firm, a partner attributes job satisfaction to the fact that there "is sufficient challenge to my job. Also, I have an extremely wonderful team and colleagues in my department, which makes each work day much less of a pain."

# SINGAPORE

## WINNERS

Baker & McKenzie.Wong & Leow  
Drew & Napier  
Duane Morris & Selvam  
Harry Elias Partnership  
Rajah & Tann

In February, Singapore granted four QFLP licences to foreign law firms, with Gibson Dunn & Crutcher, Jones Day, Linklaters and Sidley Austin joining the ranks of Clifford Chance, Allen & Overy, Herbert Smith, Norton Rose, Latham & Watkins and White & Case - the first six firms to receive them. But licence or not, Singapore remains a magnet for UK, U.S. and even Japanese firms to continue to set up shop here. The perception remains that they won't be able to dent the dominance of Singapore's Big Four anytime soon, as the biggest local firms continue to remain on the most eye-catching deals, but there might



DREW & NAPIER

SYCIP  
SALAZAR  
& HERNANDEZ  
GATMAITAN

SyCip Salazar Hernandez & Gatmaitan (SyCipLaw), founded in 1945, is the largest law firm in the Philippines. Although its work centers on business activity, the Firm has offered a broad and integrated range of legal services that cover such areas as family relations, constitutional issues, and other matters of law unrelated to commerce.

SyCipLaw has a wide and varied international law practice in the Philippines. It maintains links with established and leading firms in major cities in Asia, Europe, Canada, the US, Central and South America, Australia and New Zealand. The Firm is a member of leading global law firm networks, including the Employment Law Alliance, First Law International, Interlex Group, Multinational Association of Law Firms, Pacific Rim Advisory Council, World Law Group, and World Services Group.

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## TAIWAN

**WINNERS**  
Eiger Law  
LCS & Partners

An associate at **Eiger Law** praises the “good team, good work environment, and supportive management” at the firm. Meanwhile, a lawyer at **LCS & Partners** says that the “atmosphere at work is great. People are easy to get along with. Work is diverse and challenging.” Says another: “A lot of emphasis is laid upon training and mentoring.”



LCS &amp; PARTNERS

## THAILAND

**WINNERS**  
Baker & McKenzie Thailand  
Rajah & Tann Thailand  
Tilleke & Gibbins

In Thailand, job satisfaction among respondents to the survey hits 100 percent, underlining the fact that the country’s slogan “Land of Smiles” is not just for the tourists. However, more than a quarter believe that the system of receiving mentoring could drastically improve, and for a majority, the knowledge management and IT support at their firms remain an area of concern. Nevertheless, three firms stand out from the pack. “We have fantastic clients who provide a rich and challenging environment,” says a partner at **Baker & McKenzie Thailand**. “We also work with colleagues from other jurisdictions and we learn a lot from them.” A partner at **Rajah & Tann Thailand** appreciates the fact that the firm “treats all employees as a member of family, not employer and employee.” And at **Tilleke & Gibbins**, a lawyer praises the firm for the “great opportunities to improve my professional skills.”



TILLEKE &amp; GIBBINS

## VIETNAM

**WINNERS**  
Rajah & Tann Vietnam  
Tilleke & Gibbins  
VILAF

Vietnam is the other jurisdiction in the survey with a 100 percent satisfaction feedback from respondents. At the same time, a significant number feel salary structure and the

opportunities for training and professional development can be improved, as can the transparency when it comes to the path to partnership. “I honestly do not know what criteria the firm uses to promote its partners,” says one associate. However, work-life balance seems to be enviable, with more than 80 percent praising it at their firm. More than two-thirds of the respondents believe they are with the firm for the long haul.

Of the law firms, **Rajah & Tann** makes the cut for the “exposure and opportunities” it provides to junior lawyers. An associate at **Tilleke & Gibbins** says they “really enjoy the work that I do and get along extremely well with all the members of our team.” And **VILAF** is praised for its “supportive atmosphere that allows us to learn and grow together as lawyers.”

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*of* **CHOICE**  
**2013**

*for*

**THAILAND**  
**and VIETNAM**

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## WHAT IS YOUR POSITION?

Managing Partner	1.0%
Partner	18.6%
Counsel	3.5%
Associate/Senior Associate	42.1%
Paralegal	5.3%
Trainee	2.4%
Support staff	19.8%
Other	7.3%

### How would you rate your job satisfaction?

Extremely satisfying	28.2%
Very satisfying	35.1%
Satisfying	33.8%
Unsatisfying	2.4%
Very unsatisfying	0.6%

### How would you rate the remuneration for someone at your level?

Well above the market standard	16.9%
Above the market standard	30.6%
In line with the market	44.1%
Below the market standard	7.8%
Well below the market standard	0.6%

### How would you rate the salary structure and overall salary transparency at the firm?

Excellent	25.0%
Good	39.6%
Average	29.5%
Poor	5.1%
Very poor	0.8%

### How are the opportunities for training or professional development?

Excellent	41.4%
Good	39.9%

Average	16.2%
Poor	1.9%
Very poor	0.7%

### How would you rate opportunities to receive mentoring in the firm?

Excellent	28.7%
Very good	31.0%
Good	33.8%
Not good	5.5%
Poor	1.0%

### How transparent is the path to partnership?

Extremely transparent	22.6%
Very transparent	37.1%
Somewhat transparent	31.7%
Not particularly transparent	6.6%
Not transparent at all	2.0%

### Do you see yourself in this firm in five years' time?

Absolutely	36.4%
Most probably	37.2%
Perhaps	20.9%
Unlikely	4.6%
Absolutely not	0.9%

## WHAT COUNTRY ARE YOU IN?

China	18.8%
Hong Kong	13.2%
India	3.7%
Indonesia	4.7%
Japan	3.6%
Korea Republic	19.8%
Malaysia	7.5%
Philippines	0.6%
Singapore	16.1%
Taiwan	1.2%
Thailand	5.9%
Vietnam	4.8%

### How would you rate the knowledge management/IT support at your firm?

Excellent	37.3%
Very good	40.4%
Good	19.0%
Not great	2.7%
Poor	0.5%

### How would you rate the work-life balance at your firm?

Extremely good	23.2%
Good	50.6%
Just about there	20.1%
Poor	5.1%
Non-existent	1.0%

## HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH THE FIRM?

0-2 years	38.9%
2-5 years	24.9%
5-10 years	19.6%
10+ years	16.6%

### How valued do you feel in the firm?

Indispensable	14.4%
Highly valued	53.4%
Somewhat valued	28.5%
Hardly valued	3.2%
Completely dispensable	0.5%

### How do you feel about your job security?

I feel extremely secure	24.5%
I feel very secure	47.6%
I feel somewhat secure	23.7%
I don't feel very secure	3.5%
I don't feel secure at all	0.7%



## Employer of Choice - India

Asian Legal Business 2012 and 2013

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### OUR PRACTICE AREAS

CORPORATE, M&A AND PE

BANKING AND FINANCE

RESTRUCTURING

PROJECTS, ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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TAXATION

