

# TRAILBLAZERS

## INDIA'S FINEST IN-HOUSE COUNSELS

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EDITION 2017





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EDITION 2017



An Indian Corporate Counsel  
Association Endeavour

Published by Magic Lawyers, 2017

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Design: UNEEDUS  
Printed at PRINTWORKS, New Delhi

October 2017



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### EDITION 2017

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Editor-in-Chief: Ambika Nair

Published by



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*This edition of Trailblazers is dedicated to the lawyers mentioned in our last book,  
the ones featured in this one, as well as all those who we have not been able to feature yet.*

*This book is but a half-measure to acknowledge all that they have done for the legal profession,  
and the development of India's economy.*

\* \* \*

We would like to thank all of the following people who have been kind enough to write a testimonial for the in-house counsels who feature in this book:

- **Aditya Arora**, MD - India, Intelenet Global Services
- **Aditya Ghosh**, President & Whole Time Director, IndiGo
- **Ajay Chaudhary**, National Head - PFG, L&T Financial Services
- **Alka Panda** (IAS), Director General, Bureau of Indian Standards
- **Amarjit Singh Batra**, CEO, OLX India
- **Ashish Kapoor**, President, Molson Coors India
- **Banmali Agrawala**, President & CEO, GE South Asia
- **Captain Roshan Joshi**, SVP Flight Operations, Tata SIA Airlines Pvt. Ltd.
- **Chandan Barve**, Vice President & Director, Board Member, Sun Life India Service Centre Pvt. Ltd.
- **Deepak Bhatnagar**, President, Sales & Marketing, Sula Vineyards Pvt. Ltd.
- **Dr. L.S. Kanodia**, Chairman, Datamatics Group
- **Elarman Ashraf**, Managing Director, Xerox India Pvt. Ltd.
- **Faisal Uddin Mir**, CEO, Synchrony Financial
- **Girish Budhiraja**, Chief Marketing Officer, SBI Card
- **Gopi Krishnan**, General Counsel, WNS Global Services (P) Ltd.
- **Gopinathan Padmanabhan**, Chief Innovation Officer & President - Global Delivery, Mphasis Ltd.
- **Greg Moran**, CEO & Co-Founder, Zoomcar
- **Harsh Dhingra**, Chief Country Representative, India, Bombardier Transportation
- **Harshavardhan Chitale**, Managing Director and Vice-Chairman, Philips Lighting India Pvt. Ltd.
- **Hemant Dhingra**, Director Finance, RHC Holdings Pvt. Ltd.
- **Israel Ismail Louis**, Vice President and General Counsel, Growth Markets, Philips Lighting Global
- **Jeff Godwin**, Senior Counsel, Bechtel Corporation
- **Joerg Erlemeier**, Chief Integration Officer & COO, Mobile Networks Nokia
- **John Deshong**, Principal Vice President & Head of Global Tax, Bechtel Group
- **K N Neelkant**, CEO & Managing Director, CG Power & Industrial Solutions Ltd. (formerly Crompton Greaves Pvt. Ltd.)
- **A Mahendra**, Assistant Vice President - Sales & Business Development, Water Treatment Solutions, Recycling and Waste Recovery, Indian Subcontinent, SUEZ India
- **Mandeep Singh Kumar**, Chief Commercial Officer, GE Healthcare - India & South Asia
- **Mohit Kabra**, Group CFO, MakeMyTrip India Pvt. Ltd.
- **Mr. Ajay Vij**, Managing Director - India, Geographic Services Lead, Accenture
- **Mr. Rajesh Kaul**, President, Sony Pictures Networks Distribution India Pvt Ltd.
- **Mr. Thierry Lespiaucq**, Board Member, Volkswagen Group Sales India Pvt. Ltd.
- **Mukundan K V**, Chief Assurance & Risk Executive, All Cargo Logistics Ltd.
- **Munesh Makhija**, CEO, GE India and GE China Technology Centers, Chief Technology Officer, GE South Asia and GE China, GE Global Research
- **Nalin Negi**, CFO, SBI Card
- **Nitin Sood**, CFO, PVR Pvt. Ltd.
- **Nitu Samra**, Finance Director, LeasePlan India Pvt. Ltd.
- **Paolo Casoni**, Group General Counsel, Perfetti Van Melle
- **Pontus Müntzing**, VP Finance Asia & Turkey, Oriflame
- **Pradip Menon**, Director Finance, AkzoNobel India Pvt. Ltd.

- **Pratyush Dasgupta**, Vice President, Engineering, Aricent
- **Rahul Goyal**, GM – India & SEA, ADP India Pvt. Ltd.
- **Rahul Kohli**, Chief Executive Officer, Fertiliser Business, Aditya Birla Group
- **Rajeev Kr Saxena**, VP-Business Development & Planning, Mankind Pharma Pvt. Ltd.
- **Rakesh Sarna**, Managing Director and CEO, The Indian Hotels Company Pvt. Ltd.
- **Ratul Puri**, Chairman, Hindustan Powerprojects Pvt. Ltd.
- **Ravi Kirpalani**, CEO & MD of thyssenkrupp, Regional Headquarters, India
- **Ravi Varanasi**, Chief Business Development Officer, National Stock Exchange of India Pvt. Ltd.
- **Sanjay Baweja**, Chief Financial Officer, Suzlon Group
- **Sharad Tyagi**, Managing Director, Boehringer Ingelheim

India Pvt. Ltd.

- **Sirjiwan Singh**, Managing Director, Wockhardt Group United Kingdom
- **Tony Dent**, Director, Legal Affairs – Asia Pacific, Harley-Davidson Motor Company
- **Uday Prabhudesai**, Director Technology Sales, Honeywell
- **Ujjwal Batria**, Country CEO & Managing Director, Nuvoco Vistas Corp. Ltd.
- **V. Satyavenkata Rao**, Chief General Manager, IFCI Ltd.
- **Varun Bhatia**, Managing Director, Growth Outcomes LLC, San Francisco, California
- **Vijay Jasuja**, CEO, SBI Card
- **Vinayak Pai**, Head of Global Petroleum and Chemicals Business (Interim), Jacobs Engineering

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### *Acknowledgements*

*While practice makes perfect, the creation of this book was, in many ways, more difficult than the last. That made us all the more glad to have Ambika Nair back with us, providing a sense of renewed enthusiasm, understanding, and inspiration. Her experience in, and knowledge of the legal publication world is unparalleled, and we were grateful for all the time she put into this edition.*

*We were also glad to welcome back to the table Shubho De, our brilliant designer, who is responsible for the beautiful book in your hands. Shubho's passion for beating the clock, and working 25 hours every day was invaluable in ensuring that this publication reached you in time.*

*Of course, there are a number of team members who helped in bringing the book to life, through their hard work, generous support, and expert advice.*

*(In no particular order)*

*Chandni Chauhan*

*Tissya Mandal*

*Kopal Garg*

\* \* \*

There is a silent revolution taking place - a revolution where Indian industry is becoming the bellwether of corporate governance and sound economics. And leading that revolution, modestly, but with a steady hand, are the in-house counsel. Lawyers, strategists, counsellors, business partners, visionaries, conscience-keepers - the in-house counsel is all of these and more. And this second edition of Trailblazers once again celebrates them - the unsung heroes of modern India's booming economy.

In an increasingly interdependent world, every move that big industry makes has a bearing on not just the market, but also on the way India is perceived by the world as a law abiding nation. That is a huge burden for industry to bear, but bear it must, and guiding it along the path of good governance and ethical standards is the in-house counsel. It is a delicate balancing act - navigating the regulatory maze without losing sight of the corporation's objectives, staying compliant, pre-empting risks, being a specialist and a generalist, a lawyer and a businessperson. But these are tough nuts - women and men unfazed by the burden they bear, blazing a trail in India and abroad. They are in a sense India's ambassadors, letting the world know that this is a safe place to do business, because there are corporate governance norms and business processes that the in-house counsel will ensure are always implemented.

But this book doesn't just acknowledge in-house counsel as hard-nosed lawyers, business partners or corporate conscience-keepers; it celebrates them as socially conscious people, as musicians, poets, short story writers, global citizens, loving parents and loyal friends - well rounded human beings who deserve to be feted.

**Ambika Nair**  
Editor-in-Chief

- i Message from Mr. Suresh Chandra, Law Secretary
- ii Message from Mr. Sudhanshu Pandey, Joint-Secretary Department of Commerce
- iii Message from Mr. Ashok Sharma, Founder President ICCA
- iv Message from Mr. Bhargav Bhuyan, Secretary General ICCA
- v Message from Mr. Ramit Singh, The RASICH Group

### INDIA'S FINEST IN-HOUSE COUNSELS

- 1. AB Kiran | Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA)
- 2. Aditi Chopra | Microsoft Corporation India Private Limited
- 4. Ajai Kumar Jain | Nuvoco Vistas Corporation Limited
- 6. Ajay Mankotia | New Delhi Television Limited (NDTV)
- 8. Ajay N. Thakkar | All Cargo Logistics Limited
- 10. Anoop Khatry | Suzlon Energy Limited
- 12. Aparna Rawat | L&T Financial Services
- 14. APK Chettiar | Tata SIA Airlines Limited
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- 18. Ashish Tiwari | thyssenkrupp
- 20. Ashutosh Das | Molson Coors India
- 22. Bharat Singh | Jacobs Engineering India Private Limited
- 24. Bijendar Pal Singh | Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation
- 26. Damandeep Kaur | Intelenet Global Services Private Limited
- 28. Damini Marwah | Axis Bank Limited
- 30. Debolina Partap | Wockhardt Limited
- 32. Deepak Maharishi | Bombardier Transportation

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- 46. Hari Dasan EVK | Tata Capital Financial Services Limited
- 48. Harsh Arora | Perfetti Van Melle India
- 50. Kamal Kishore Avutapalli | MakeMyTrip Limited
- 52. Karan Veer Chopra | Oriflame India Private Limited
- 54. Khozem Mirza | Aditya Birla Management Corporation Private Limited
- 56. Kishore Shetty | Schneider Electric India
- 58. Lakshika Joshi | Aricent
- 60. Lavanya Chandan | OLX India Private Limited
- 62. Mahesh Sreenivasan | RITES Limited
- 64. Manish Kumar | Zoomcar India Private Limited
- 66. Maushami Dasgupta | PVR Limited
- 68. Medhanshu Mishra | LeasePlan India Private Limited
- 70. Minni Katariya | Hindustan PowerProjects Private Limited
- 72. Navita Chaubal | Wipro GE Healthcare Private Limited
- 74. Nishi Saigal | Indian Oil Corporation Limited
- 76. Nitin Mittal | Philips Lighting India Limited
- 78. Pooja Sehgal Mehtani | Sun Life India Service Centre Private Limited
- 80. Prarabdha R. Jaipurkar | Suez India
- 82. Prateush Sharma | Mankind Pharma Limited

- 84. Priya Mehra | InterGlobe Aviation Limited
- 86. Rajeev Chopra | Accenture Services Private Limited
- 88. Rajeev Merkhedkar | Nokia Corporation
- 90. Rashmi Kathpalia | Technip India Limited
- 92. Ravi Rajagopal | CG Power & Industrial Solutions Limited
- 94. Sanjay Nambiar | YES Bank Limited
- 96. Seema Singh | Abbott India Limited
- 98. Sharad Sharma | Honeywell International India
- 100. Shyam Kumar Kudari | Synchrony Financial
- 102. Siddharth Anand | H-D Motor Company India Private Limited
- 104. Sivaram Nair | Mphasis Limited
- 106. Sudhanshu Rai | AkzoNobel India Limited
- 108. Sudip Gupta | ATC Telecom Tower Corporation Private Limited
- 110. Sunayna Bhatia | RHC Holding Private Limited
- 112. Swarna Sathish | ADP India Private Limited
- 114. Tejal Patil | GE South Asia
- 116. Tilak Raj | Bureau of Indian Standards
- 118. Ugen Tashi Bhutia | SBI Cards & Payments Services Private Limited
- 120. M Vasudev Rao | National Stock Exchange of India Limited
- 122. Vijay Kamath | Volkswagen Group Sales India Private Limited
- 124. Vinay D. Dwarkadas | Sula Vineyards Private Limited
- 126. Vishal Garg | Ericsson India Private Limited



The Indian Corporate Counsel Association (ICCA) has, over the years, continued to work for the legal profession by finding innovative ways to help foster knowledge sharing and interaction.

I am glad to see that after last year's book on India's Finest In-House Counsels, they are not only continuing the series, but also recognising the efforts of external counsels by showcasing them as part of a separate, exclusive book.

As a lawyer, and a part of the Ministry of Law & Justice for over three decades, I value the role that both external and in-house counsel play in our legal eco-system, and the over-all development of our nation.

While there is a distinction in the role that in-house counsels and external counsels play, what must be remembered at all times is that they will always be lawyers first, and therefore their allegiance must always lie to the rule of law and the clients, which cannot be ensured without the highest levels of integrity, dedication, and most importantly, honesty.

I congratulate ICCA for bringing out this book, and hope that the Counsels mentioned therein would continue to accomplish greater heights in the years to come, in association with ICCA.

**Suresh Chandra**

Law Secretary

Ministry of Law & Justice

Department of Legal Affairs



I was delighted to attend last year's launch of “Trailblazers: India’s Finest In-House Counsel”, a high-quality publication which highlighted the achievements and contributions of corporate counsel.

The distinguished lawyers that serve the courts, people, businesses, and our country indeed play a very important role in reiterating the rule of law which is the very foundation of our democratic governance. I am glad that the Indian Corporate Counsel Association (ICCA) has endeavoured to facilitate lawyers working at law firms also in addition to the corporate counsel that they represent. Their effort in creating this publication was commendable and I am glad to see that this year they are continuing their work by honouring other worthy corporate counsel, and in fact also launching a second series on law firm partners.

Legal services are the backbone of a growing, commercially strong economy and the defining feature of its development, both domestically and internationally. Each policy or regulation promulgated by the government must finally be advanced by its lawyers on-the-ground, and it is therefore critical for any country which aims to have a high rate of economic growth to have a robust legal system and lawyers providing expert advice to its corporations and financial institutions.

Associations and forums like ICCA play a critical role in shaping the legal services ecosystem, by fostering dialogue, creating channels of communication, and providing opportunities for meaningful conversations.

I wish them the very best, and hope that more of us join them in honouring lawyers, and the pivotal role they play in our economy today. I am sanguine that lawyers will continue to play a responsible role in our society in order to ensure that justice is made available speedily and at an affordable cost to everyone who seeks and needs it.

**Sudhanshu Pandey**

Joint Secretary  
Ministry of Commerce & Industry  
Department of Commerce



I am delighted that the months of hard work on the part of the team paid off, making the 2nd Edition of our book possible.

Each year, as new corporate counsel join our ranks, I am always happy to see fresh, bright and sharp young lawyers choose to practice on this side of the profession. Over the years, I have also seen many of them steadily climb up the ladder and become leaders in their own right, while in turn providing support to their young teams below them.

The corporate counsel sphere in the Indian legal sector is facing a change, with more and more companies realizing the worth of larger internal legal teams, and bringing in experienced and ambitious lawyers to head the function, whose expertise demands a seat at the management table.

This year, we have taken up the cause of championing these outliers, with regards to the mandated surrender of their Bar Licenses once they join the in-house community. While the ethics code embedded in The Advocates' Act is not disputed, there is scope for a healthy discussion on this issue, that ICCA will take up for the benefit of the larger in-house community.

Every year, ICCA hopes to not only give corporate counsels an opportunity to meet and interact with each other, but also engage in spirited debate on topics of relevance. For example, our series on the Liberalisation of the Indian legal sector were immensely helpful when we were formulating a draft Bill on the entry of foreign lawyers, which we submitted to the Government of India. Our community has therefore made its contribution in a truly tangible way, and I hope that we continue to make a meaningful impact on important issues of the day together, in future as well.

It continues to be a great privilege for ICCA to serve the In-house legal community.

**Ashok Sharma**

Founder President, ICCA

Fellow, Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (London)



ICCA was established in 2011 with the objective of providing in-house counsel with a platform to gather together as a community of professionals, to interact and consult with one another on issues of strategic relevance and economic importance. It was also meant to be a stage where corporate counsel could connect with like-minded individuals from across the globe, and organically learn about best practices from across the world.

Over the last six years, ICCA has taken on larger initiatives and singular measures to increase interaction between corporate counsel, and shining a spotlight on their achievements through this book is our way of honouring their contribution to the legal industry and to the Indian economy.

I am truly grateful to have so many well-wishers on board, to assist us in innumerable ways, from our advisory committee who guide our selection process, to our Senior members, who continue to nurture the organization even after having retired as corporate counsel, to our editorial team, who helps us bring it all together with sheer hard work. They are the backbone of ICCA, not just for the publication of this book but throughout the year.

I must reiterate my appreciation for Mr. Ashok Sharma, our Founder President, who has taken on the mantle of this responsibility with enthusiasm, and was the one who first inspired the trust the Ministry of Law & Justice reposed in us, in recognizing us as the representative body of corporate counsel in the country.

We hope to continue with our work in the coming years, getting more and more members involved in the interactions, and hopefully bringing about positive, tangible change in the role, duties, perception, and rights of in-house counsel in India.

**Bhargav B. Bhuyan**  
Secretary General, ICCA



Good ideas deserve replication, and in our case, expansion. We are glad to be working with the ICCA again in publishing a second volume of *Trailblazers*, shining a spotlight on some more deserving corporate counsels, their journey, and how they have contributed to developing our economy by safeguarding its constituent organisations.

While the second edition does a commendable job of showcasing these brilliant legal minds, I want to point out that our work is far from done. There are a number of corporate counsels who have equally supported and built up their organisations who have not been featured, yet, and they are the unsung heroes of this community, and as valuable to the corporations they serve.

This publication was the reason that inspired us at The RASICH Group, to look for relevant opportunities to work more actively on their behalf. We thus devised ECM (External Counsel Management) Services, to provide a bridge between in-house counsel and law firms, by facilitating the selection process of law firms.

It exemplifies the transparent, communication-driven solutions that we believe in, which will truly engender ease of access to specialist, quality-driven lawyers, and enable corporate counsels everywhere to make informed and cost-effective decisions.

We are also working on other path-breaking initiatives which we hope will take into account the needs of in-house counsel, since the current realm of legal ancillary services (beyond IT) have not reached the shores of our corporations yet.

With liberalisation the foremost agenda of the government, we believe that such services are the need of the hour, since it is the in-house counsel who is the consumer of legal services and is therefore one of the most important stakeholders in the legal sector.

This book is one iteration of our resolve to provide such services; may we have many more!

**Ramit Singh**

The RASICH Group

Founding Editor - Magic Lawyers

Advisor - Indian Corporate Counsel Association

Contributing Editor - Managing Your Legal Organization





True, we (lawyers) build no bridges. We raise no towers. We construct no engines. We paint no pictures - unless as amateurs for our own principal amusement. There is little of all that we do which the eye of a man can see. But we smooth out difficulties; we relieve stress; we correct mistakes; we take up another men's burdens and by our efforts we make possible the peaceful life of men in a peaceful state.

—(*John W. Davis*)



## **AB KIRAN**

**DGM (Legal)  
Indian Renewable Energy  
Development Agency Limited (IREDA)**

### **Kiran's Personal Philosophy**

**Strike a balance between work and  
personal life. Neither of them can  
be ignored.**

**“As a Corporate Counsel my role is to  
ensure that all business needs are  
taken care of within the four corners  
of the law.”**



**A**B Kiran is a commerce and law graduate who heads the Legal department of the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited, a Government of India company. As the DGM (Legal) he leads a team of 10 lawyers, advising the organization on litigation and corporate strategy.

Kiran started his career as a private practitioner in Tirupati and Hyderabad, where he was for three years. He subsequently shifted gear to become Deputy Chief Law Officer at the United Bank of India.

An ardent admirer of our current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, Kiran relaxes by listening to music or watching cricket. A passionate interest in different cultures drives him to travel far and wide, within and outside the country.

“Learn to strike a balance between the business needs and the legal requirements” is his advice to those aspiring to head in-house legal departments. He also cautions against being pushed into signing off on “anything that you believe is in contravention of certain provisions of the law”.

# **ADITI CHOPRA**

**Director and Legal Counsel  
Microsoft Corporation India  
Private Limited**

## **Aditi's Personal Philosophy**

**Simplify**

**Focus on the solution, not the problem**

## **Testimonial**

**"I worked with Aditi during her time at IBM. She was the lead attorney for IBM on several key transactions during her time there. She built strong client relationships and provided advice that balanced legal risk with business priorities. Her professionalism and dedication to the success of her clients was apparent to everyone who worked with her. Aditi was a pleasure to work with and was certainly an asset to the team."**

**Gopi Krishnan, General Counsel -  
WNS Global Services (P) Ltd.**



A golfer and a chef - that is Aditi Chopra. Or at least that is what she is when she's not submerged in her work as Director and Legal Counsel in Microsoft Corporation India Private Limited. A lawyer with 15 years of experience, which straddles both large law firms and leading corporates, Aditi currently heads many of the industry verticals at Microsoft, while also working with the Partner network in the Corporate External and Legal Affairs team. She is active on many forums and part of regular industry workshops.

Aditi has worked with some of the finest law firms in the country, including Dua Associates and Amarchand Mangaldas, before she moved to work as an in-house counsel with international blue chip organisations such as IBM, Naspers and TV 18 (a Reliance Group Company). At Amarchand, she was exposed to diverse issues of law such as foreign investment, venture capital, private equity, strategic structuring, general corporate advisory and capital markets across varied sectors. She brought that experience to Ibibo (Naspers' entity in India), before moving to IBM India where she led the largest business line - global technology services. She was responsible for legal and regulatory issues as well as negotiating large outsourcing contracts, some worth \$1 billion. Aditi then moved to TV 18, a listed media conglomerate and part of the Reliance Group, where she was responsible for the overall affairs of the company with a special focus on emerging Fintech.

With her vast experience with both law firms and corporates, Aditi's understanding of what it takes to be an effective in-house counsel is invaluable. "A deep understanding of the drivers of the business client is a must. We need to be invested in the success of the organisation while being the gate keepers of the company," she says.

A wine connoisseur, Aditi relaxes by cooking for her friends on the weekend or watching the sunset in Goa when she manages to take a few days off.

## **AJAI KUMAR JAIN**

**General Counsel-Legal,  
Compliances and Secretarial  
Nuvoco Vistas Corp. Ltd.  
(formerly Lafarge India Ltd.)**

### **Ajai's Personal Philosophy**

**Be honest to yourself  
Always beat deadlines  
'Continuous feedback is the  
breakfast of a leader'**

**Ajai believes that a corporate counsel must always be part of the 'risk and reward' of the business and not merely a support function. He must turn the legal department into a profit centre instead of running it as a cost centre. He must understand the needs of the internal customer and always look at the broader picture of each transaction/assignment. Ajai believes a corporate counsel must act as a 'techno-commercial lawyer instead of merely a legal technician'.**



Ajai Kumar Jain has a personal philosophy that most would find hard to follow. He believes in constantly beating deadlines, however protracted a project may be. As General Counsel-Legal, Compliances and Secretarial with Nuvoco Vistas Corp. Ltd (formerly Lafarge India Ltd) - a business that manufactures cement and readymix concrete for gigantic construction projects, this means he can never let his guard down. He must always be on high alert for potential risks that his company might face and hit the ground running with his nine-member team as soon as he has even a whiff of an issue. Ajai's department handles matters relating to Corporate laws, Competition law, Infrastructure contracts and Industrial, Land, Mines and Power regulations.

A fellow member of ICSI and a commerce and law graduate, Ajai has more than 33 years of experience as a lawyer and company secretary, handling M&A and matters pertaining to Regulatory, Finance and Taxation. He believes strongly in sharing his experiences with young lawyers, training them to take calculated risks, acquainting them with the nuances of business etiquettes and developing their soft skills, which he believes are far more important than technical skills.

Lawyers aspiring to be in-house counsel, he believes, must have a strong commitment to transparent and compliant business practices, apart from a knowledge of corporate laws, taxation laws, foreign exchange laws and accounting practices.

Ajai spends his personal time watching cricket matches or Hindi movies. He hopes that one day he will get a chance to discuss *Sholay* with his all-time favourite actor, Amitabh Bachchan.

## Testimonial

**"Ajai is a thorough professional, bright, and most importantly, committed to the Organization. Ajai has a solution and result oriented approach and collaborates very well with the business to find solutions that help to take practical decisions. He has an entrepreneurial streak, which has brought in an ownership culture within the legal team under his leadership. He takes special joy in nurturing young lawyers."**

**Ujjwal Batria, Country CEO & Managing Director**

## **AJAY MANKOTIA**

**President-Corporate Planning &  
Operations.  
New Delhi Television Limited (NDTV)**

### **Ajay's Personal Philosophy**

**Success never happens by chance.  
It has a lot to do with perseverance  
and being tenacious.  
Be open to criticism and listen to others.**

**"The role of a GC requires day to day legal  
tasks as well as proactive risk  
management. Being a part of the core  
management team, a GC is required to  
provide strategic and wide-ranging  
counsel which often helps in mitigating  
or managing risk and ensuring  
compliance."**



Ajay Mankotia has been the President of Corporate Planning and Operations at New Delhi Television Limited since September 2008, overseeing the group's corporate planning and strategy, legal, secretarial and compliance matters, tax and shared services.

Ajay was with the Indian Revenue Service as Commissioner and has 26 years of significant experience in tax policy and administration. He is an Economic Honours graduate with a masters from the Delhi School of Economics and a Diploma in Public International Law from The Hague Academy of International Law.

Ajay is a prolific writer, contributing articles on tax, vigilance, sports and music to *India Today*, *Huffington Post*, *Quint* and *The Economic Times*.

His advice to those looking to head legal teams is to develop skills that extend beyond being an expert in law. "Within the parameters of what's legal and what's right, the job offers opportunities for innovation, leadership and decision-making at the highest levels".

He lists Harish Salve, Fali Nariman and Soli Sorabjee as lawyers he admires - Harish for his perfect mix of technical perfection and emphatic assertion in court, Fali for his quick intellectual comprehension of the facts and the law and Soli for his expansive knowledge and understanding of the law.

Weekends for Ajay could mean catching a play or listening to his prized vinyl album of Jethro Tull's "Thick as a Brick".

# **AJAY N. THAKKAR**

Head Legal (Global)  
All Cargo Logistics Ltd.

## **Ajay's Personal Philosophy**

Work passionately and strive  
for excellence  
Maintain proper work/life balance

The role of a general counsel is to be responsible and ensure that the organisation is acting within the law and to manage and mitigate legal risks. It involves providing legal advice on various issues, including compliance with the laws. "The role nowadays is no longer limited to managing the legal risk associated with the business that they work within. Corporate counsels now need to partner with the business, understand its issues and produce viable and tangible solutions within the ambit of the law," he says. He must understand the pressure points, strategy and objectives of the business and effectively communicate the risks and legal issues involved in any decision to the management, so that the management can make informed strategic decisions within acceptable limits of legal risk.



**H**ard work and tenacity inspire Ajay Thakkar. The ability to fight against all odds in the pursuit of excellence is a goal he strives for. These are the qualities that he saw in the lawyer he looks up to - Ram Jethmalani - a man who arrived in Mumbai as a refugee after partition and rose to great heights in the profession by dint of sheer hard work. It is this inspiration that has driven Ajay in the 17 years that he has been in the field of corporate legal, corporate secretarial and insurance work.

Currently the Global Legal Head of All Cargo Logistics Ltd. with operations in more than 160 countries, Ajay is a Fellow member of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India, Fellow member of the Insurance Institute of India, a Masters of Law from University of Mumbai and a Bachelors of Commerce from University of Mumbai.

His knowledge of the laws and compliance requirements in Europe, South Asia, South East Asia, Africa, Middle East, Australia & CIS have led him to hold positions of responsibility in RPG Life Sciences, Mumbai; Mega Life Sciences, Bangkok; Tata Motors Ltd., Mumbai and Essel Propack Ltd., Mumbai.

Ajay advises those who aspire to be legal heads of organisations to be conscious of the right balance between legal principles and practical business issues. “He should try to focus on resolving and mitigating the risks associated with the business rather than just highlight the risks. He has to work like a business partner.”

## **Testimonial**

**“Ajay is a knowledgeable and intelligent person; he has a sound knowledge of various laws and regulations across many geographies; he is a very dedicated and committed person to his work. He understands the internal stakeholders' requirements very well and delivers great output within a given time. He is a thorough legal professional who provides excellent legal services at a reasonable cost to the organization.”**

**Mukundan K V, Chief Assurance & Risk Executive, All Cargo Logistics Ltd.**

# **ANOOP KHATRY**

**General Counsel  
Suzlon Energy Limited**

## **Anoop's Personal Philosophy**

**Have a steady work-life balance**

**"Practice what you preach"**

**"A corporate counsel must be a good leader with an astute business sense and the instinct to take judgement calls for the company. The scope is not confined to giving legal advice to the company, but also having an in-depth understanding of the business and the industry and market dynamics. A corporate counsel is a leader and visionary, contributing constructively to the growth and expansion of the company. Needless to say, integrity in approach and an ethical sense of direction is also a must."**



**A**noop has worked with Indian business houses, multinationals and large listed companies in the Energy, Civil Aviation and Telecom markets in Delhi and Mumbai, giving him in-depth insight and exposure to the legal and regulatory aspects of these highly regulated sectors. Starting his career in 2002, Anoop worked with Bharti Airtel for a four-year stint as Manager-Legal, before moving to Essar Telecom Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd., then Emaar MGF Land Limited and subsequently to Suzlon in 2010, where he was Head - Corporate Legal for a year. He landed a position at InterGlobe Aviation Limited (IndiGo) as Associate General Counsel, staying there for two years and seven months, before moving back to Suzlon, where he assumed the role of Group General Counsel.

Anoop has handled all legal and regulatory aspects of the power and energy, aviation, telecom, telecom infrastructure, infrastructure and the real estate sectors, as well as international commercial contracts and multi-jurisdictional transactions. As General Counsel he handles project finance, banking and finance, capital market transactions, day to day operations, litigation and tax related issues, general corporate advisory work, corporate compliance and internal company policies, while also providing guidance and legal support to each business unit and department.

Anoop believes the head of an in-house legal team must not only be a good lawyer but must also have the skill to evaluate and weigh multiple impacts of a decision or a course of action. Additionally, he must be capable of looking at overall issues and risks, including security, financial, regulatory and legal risks. Anoop likes to paint as a hobby. He swims to relax and hopes to meet Sylvester Stallone some time in his journey through life. Travelling his family rejuvenates him and he makes sure that his team members unwind too.

## **Testimonial**

**“I have worked with Anoop for over 10 years. He has always been a thorough professional and a commercially astute lawyer. He stands out in his ability to close deals and is extremely hard working. He is also a great team player and his ability to work with his peers is incredible. Anoop is a good mentor to his juniors and seeks to encourage and develop them. He shows tremendous empathy with his team and his juniors are ready to work equally hard to deliver the desired output. He is efficient and effective with his time management, an advantage to the senior leadership in Suzlon. He is solution driven, consistently looking for beneficial outcomes. Anoop embodies integrity and courtesy in his conversation and written communication.”**

**Sanjay Baweja, Chief Financial Officer, Suzlon Group**

## **APARNA RAWAT**

**Head Legal, Housing Finance  
and Private Equity.  
L&T Financial Services**

### **Aparna's Personal Philosophy**

**Have a focused approach, know the work  
at hand, and prioritize  
Delegate appropriately  
Encourage your colleagues, peers  
and juniors**

**A corporate counsel provides not just  
legal solutions to recurring transactional  
issues but is also a leader when it comes  
to sculpting the organisation's point of  
view. "For a corporate counsel, it is not  
only her legal knowledge but also her  
business acumen which is at play."**



**A**parna Rawat is Head Legal, Housing Finance and Private Equity, L&T Financial Services. Starting off in the company a year and half back, Aparna rose in the ranks to her present position, providing strategic advice on stressed assets, private equity sell-down deals, drafting and negotiating infrastructure (project finance) agreements and legal documents for real estate construction funding, corporate and fund (Private Equity Fund and Infrastructure Debt Fund) related loan products, among a host of other functions. Working through complex financing deals is what she is passionate about and what won her the L&T Financial Services Star Award for 2016. Her more than 12 years of experience has seen Aparna working with Srei Infrastructure & Finance Limited as well as with leading law firms such as AMC Law Firm, NESAR Associates (SAMRIDHI) and Dhir & Dhir Associates, where she provided advice to several market-leading corporates.

When she is able to, Aparna seeks out quiet moments for herself to read the Shrimad Bhagwad Gita or go for long walks in Garhwal, her favourite vacation spot, or simply meditate on all the things she is grateful for. She hopes that one day, like Kalpana Morparia, CEO, JP Morgan India Pvt. Ltd., whom she admires, she will be recognised not just for her knowledge of the law but also for her business acumen. Leading a team of in-house counsel, she advises, comes with its own set of challenges. A general counsel must be able to work on multiple matters with the same efficiency and precision, while at the same time promoting team work and encouraging team members to come out with their best.

## Testimonial

**“Aparna joined L&T Financial Services (LTFS) from an esteemed financial platform and has been with us for the last one and half years. In a short span of time she has exhibited superior skills in the preparation, finalisation and negotiations of project financing transactions with LTFS’s business partners. She has been involved in the most large and complicated transactions which LTFS has concluded in the last one year. Aparna has an innate ability to quickly grasp the finer nuances of a transaction. She is able to process large volumes of information quickly and formulate an effective strategy for each transaction. Aparna is very personable and easily gains the trust of her peers, customers and colleagues. Her contribution and relentless efforts along with our business team have resulted in a faster turnaround of transactions, leading to increased business volumes, which in turn has resulted in an increase in the overall profitability of the organisation.”**

**Ajay Chaudhary, National Head - PFG, L&T Financial Services**

## **APK CHETTIAR**

**Company Secretary and Legal Head  
Tata SIA Airlines Limited**

### **APK Chettiar's Personal Philosophy**

**Have self-belief  
Be professionally focused towards  
the challenges at work**

**The role of a corporate counsel is that of a  
legal representative of the organisation,  
its business and its employees. He is an  
'advisor' on legal matters"**



**A**PK Chettiar has been a corporate counsel for over 25 years, 13 of them with various wings of the TATA Group. Currently employed as Company Secretary and Head Legal with TATA SIA Airlines Limited, a JV between Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines, he was GM (Legal) & Company Secretary of Mount Everest Mineral Water Limited, a listed FMCG subsidiary of Tata Global Beverages Limited from 2008 to 2014 and Deputy Company Secretary with Tata International Limited, the largest manufacturer of leather products and the international arm of the Tata Group from 2004 to 2008. His functions include litigation strategy and management, transactions, company secretarial work, including board activities, liaising with regulatory authorities and compliance, including FDI compliance. His remit includes the protection of the company's intellectual property in India and abroad.

Prior to working with the TATA group, APK Chettiar was Company Secretary with Mukand Engineers Limited from 1996 to 2002 and later Senior Manager - Secretarial and Compliance with HDFC Asset Management Company Limited for two years from 2002. He started his career in 1991 as a Deputy Company Secretary. APK Chettiar is a philatelist who likes to relax at home over a special meal with his wife.

## **Testimonial**

**"It has been my pleasure to work with Mr. Chettiar for the last three years. He is a very thorough and competent professional who always has the company's best interests in mind. He has an exceptionally strong eye for detail that has been a benefit to our company on many occasions. He also has a very calm demeanour that has enabled smooth negotiations with service providers. Mr. Chettiar's strong sense of organisation has helped him to always gain the upper hand in negotiations over contracts. Mr. Chettiar has been able to develop a professional team of lawyers, who have under his guidance and training become an effective support for the organisation."**

**Captain Roshan Joshi, SVP Flight Operations, TATA SIA Airlines**

# ARNAZ HOMI KOTWAL

Associate Vice President - Legal  
Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts Safaris

## Arnaz's Personal Philosophy

“Good thoughts, good words and  
good deeds”

Think and act strategically

Live with zest, enthusiasm and  
unending energy

A corporate counsel, Arnaz believes, must understand, protect and further the organization's growth and the employees' interests. She helps to set the moral compass for the company and communicate compliance responsibilities so that all actions and decisions made by every employee enhance the brand, support the corporate objectives and do not put any aspect of the company's reputation or future at risk.

## Testimonial

“Arnaz is a true guardian of our brand and is a great example to many of us by consistently demonstrating undivided focus and dedication to her profession as she structures complex international deals that promote our growth strategy. She enriches our business and our brand by innovative contributions to legal and employee matters.”

**Rakesh Sarna, Managing Director and CEO,  
The Indian Hotels Company Limited**



**C**ompete fairly, do your personal best and win - these words of wisdom from her father have served Arnaz well in a predominantly male-dominated profession. And it is this spirit of competition, a strong work ethic and a sense of adventure that have seen her excel in her over 20 years of experience overseeing multi-million-dollar legal matters of over 100 hotels in several jurisdictions. At the Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts Safaris, where she is the Associate Vice President - Legal, Arnaz leads teams on complex transactions, provides commercial advice and skilfully nurtures long-term joint venture partnerships, while at the same time dealing with all levels within a multinational organization. She also manages complicated dispute resolution and alternative dispute resolution matters.

Arnaz has lived, studied and qualified both in India and in England. A stint with Executive and Leadership programs conducted by Cambridge University and Harvard Business School have helped her develop insights into corporate accountability and sustainable leadership in global markets. Widely travelled in North America, Europe, Australia, South Africa and Asia, Arnaz has an acute perception of cultural perspectives that help her bring multifaceted deals to closure. Despite her positive foreign experiences, she has great pride in the Indian ethos of 'community', 'family' and 'giving'. These values motivate her to better the condition of employees, particularly women employees. And it is this passion to help women in the organization that led Arnaz to shape, implement and promote a Prevention of Sexual Harassment policy in 2003, well over a decade before it was mandated by legislation.

Arnaz loves the thrill of shark-cage diving, deep-sea diving, trekking and paragliding, though she does find time to wind down with yoga, a swim or a round of golf. She believes a worthy lawyer must have superior knowledge and a creative mind combined with impeccable ethics. It is for this reason that she considers Nani Palkhivala her legal hero. "He was unconcerned with personal gain and inspired all of us to be better versions of ourselves."

She is clear about what it takes to lead an in-house legal team. First, develop a team of lawyers to comprehensively cover the entire gamut of law and apply it commercially. Second, encourage the team to always hone their legal prowess and push themselves to excel. Third, inspire the employees to achieve company goals by leveraging the strengths of each team member. Fourth, consistently inculcate and exemplify fair practices and align the team to the corporate culture. Fifth, always protect the company legally and minimize and mitigate all risk.

## **ASHISH TIWARI**

**Regional General Counsel &  
Company Secretary  
thyssenkrupp - Regional  
Headquarters - India**

### **Ashish's Personal Philosophy**

**Be Optimistic! Things will fall into place  
Every day brings new firsts  
Don't assume, learn by doing**

**“The role of corporate counsel has evolved beyond being a traditional legal head and become more of being a strategic partner to business and a trusted business advisor.” It has become integral to achieving the company's business objectives.**



An evolving to-do list and his mother's spectacles distinguish Ashish Tiwari's work desk from the rest. Both of these have never left his table over the last 18 years that he has been working as a lawyer, first with a corporate law firm, then with Venky's Group, RSB Group, Cummins, and presently, with thyssenkrupp, where he has been since 2014. A deep sense of order guides Ashish, enabling him to handle M&A activities, JV strategies, strategic litigation, contract management and the regional implementation of group policies and regulations. Ashish has led the acquisition of auto component and construction equipment aggregate manufacturing companies in the US and EU, explored and supported various joint ventures opportunities in India, China and the US and has played an important role in the divestment of certain business undertakings on a going concern basis. Ashish is a member of the thyssenkrupp Global Legal Leadership team. As a member of thyssenkrupp's leadership team, he significantly contributes to the formulation of global legal strategies, global policies, projects, regulations etc. from the global perspective, and plays an important role in creating a thyssenkrupp world class legal department.

For those looking to head up legal departments, he emphasizes the importance of understanding the strengths and weaknesses of team members, promoting what he calls 'constructive conflicts' and 'learning from mistakes'. These are some of the core values to leading a pro-active and efficient legal and compliance division. A movie with his family, a round of golf or a vacation at Tarkarli beach, in south Maharashtra, helps Ashish relax after the hectic pace of his work.

## Testimonial

**"I was delighted to learn that Ashish has been shortlisted by the Advisory Committee of Indian Corporate Counsel Association as one of "India's Finest In-House Counsels". Ashish is a key member of my leadership team and his strategic orientation coupled with an eye for detail and in-depth knowledge of the law has been a great asset. Ashish can always be relied upon to get the job done and I have greatly enjoyed working with him".**

**Ravi Kirpalani, CEO & MD, thyssenkrupp - Regional Headquarters, India**

# ASHUTOSH DAS

Director - Legal, Compliance &  
Corporate Affairs  
Molson Coors India

## Ashutosh's Personal Philosophy

Patience and a never say die attitude  
are the key to success  
There is no short cut to success

The role of a corporate counsel is business critical, Ashutosh asserts. Particularly in the increased regulatory environment, it has reached a point where even erstwhile business decisions now need to be vetted by legal before execution.

## Testimonial

“Mr. Das has been instrumental in leading our ethics and compliance program in India and helping to create a culture where employees are committed to winning the right way. He leads by example, rolling up his sleeves and working alongside the team to achieve our goals. His knowledge of Indian law, Indian business and U.S. regulatory requirements has helped us bridge any gaps in understanding and has enabled us to move the business forward. We are very fortunate to have Mr. Das on our team.”

**Caroline McMichen, Molson Coors Global  
V.P., Ethics and Compliance, Denver (US)**



**T**he rough and tumble of university level hockey has trained Ashutosh Das to understand group dynamics, the importance of strategy and the need to always listen to the team if you want to have them on board. Hockey and almost two decades of professional legal experience have honed him into the go-to person for all the companies he has worked in, especially during times of critical need. In his current role in Molson Coor, this has meant complying as quickly and peacefully as possible with the Bihar Prohibition and the recent Supreme Court Order banning liquor vends on highways.

A law graduate from Delhi University with a Master's in commercial law, Ashutosh has been instrumental in representing industry during the formulation and implementation of the Food Safety and Standards Act. He has also represented industry at various forums of the CII, FICCI and Assocham and was part of the task force that represented Industry to the ministry. He was a key member of the team responsible for the transition after Miller's acquisition by Molson Coors. Ashutosh has previously worked with Wrigley, Pernod Ricard and Xerox, in different capacities in their legal and compliance functions. Lawyers who aspire to head legal departments must not just understand the issue at hand but also the context surrounding it. Active listening always helps, he believes. Nothing relaxes Ashutosh more than catching up on sleep or reading Tintin or watching a rerun of his favourite movie, Satte pe Satta with his family.

## **Testimonial**

**"Ashutosh Das has been a great addition to team Molson Coors. He joined us in the summer of 2015 and that was the time we were going through one of the darkest phases of the India business from a legal and compliance standpoint. In a situation like that it was very easy for anyone in his position to get on an adrenaline high, especially when you have a clear and full mandate to steamroll anyone that comes in your or the business' way, he showed remarkable patience in trying to first understand the challenges that were there and then gave tailor-made solutions for specific problems and held hands at the time many thought the business was becoming untouchable. His team style of play not only got us out of the woods, but also established India's credentials as one of the most improved businesses in a very short span of time. I wish him all the best and we are proud to have him on our team."**

**Ashish Kapoor, President, Molson Coors India**

# **BHARAT SINGH**

**Associate General Counsel  
(Jacobs Group) - Asia  
Jacobs Engineering India Private Ltd.**

## **Bharat's Personal Philosophy**

**Set goals and believe in one's ability to achieve them. Setbacks are part of the game**

**"It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit"  
Harry Truman**

**"It is vital for a corporate counsel to understand the business of the company and grasp the various issues that impact it. Managing legal risk within the boundaries of regulations is important, but the role also demands that the solutions offered fit the broader strategy and objectives of the business. He must be a business 'enabler' offering strategic advice based on both commercial and legal analysis, for this is how an in-house counsel can really add value to a business. Leadership skills are another key asset - both in terms of managing a legal team and being able to influence decision making amongst senior management".**



**B**harat Singh is a man of the world in the true sense of the term. When he's not at work, he is trekking in the Himalayas or sailing in the Adriatic Sea or across the British Channel or quite simply exploring other cultures, both within and outside the country. He clearly welcomes challenges - the tougher, the better. So, when in 2010 he was tasked by Jacobs Engineering Group, where he is the Legal Head for Asia, to set up an in-house legal function within Jacobs India, he did it effortlessly. Today, he leads a team of eight members that support the company's business domestically and provide legal and risk management services to Jacobs' offices worldwide, particularly those located in the US, UK, Middle East and the Asia Pacific region. His role involves advising senior management on legal and business issues across the full breadth of the company's operations and includes the negotiation of complex business contracts relative to the petroleum and chemicals, infrastructure and manufacturing industry, handling acquisitions, managing legal claims, and ensuring regulatory compliance (including US regulatory compliance, particularly with the FCPA).

Bharat began his career at Karanjawala & Co., New Delhi - a premier commercial litigation firm. He then moved to the chambers of Senior Advocate Dushyant Dave and subsequently to Amarchand Mangaldas (now Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas), where he gained skills in drafting and negotiating contracts relative to projects and acquisitions - a valuable complement to his litigating skills.

Bharat suggests that early days are a steep learning curve for those working towards leading inhouse legal teams, in terms of the nature of issues one must tackle daily. A specialist mind-set must quickly adapt to familiarity with a variety of areas of the law, including contracts, intellectual property, labour/employment, litigation, tax, competition, corporate and privacy matters, among others. He emphasises the importance of team work. "Effective leadership entails empowering people who work with you".

## **Testimonial**

**"I have had the pleasure of working with Bharat for four years since I joined Jacobs. Bharat is a perfect example of what I look for in a Corporate Counsel - 'A great lawyer with a keen sense of business'. I trust his judgement in the matters of law but am more impressed with his knowledge of our business and his solution oriented approach to support the business."**

**Vinayak Pai, Head of Global Petroleum and Chemicals Business (Interim),  
Jacobs Engineering**

## **BIJENDER PAL SINGH**

**Head - Legal & Compliance  
Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation**

### **Bijender's Personal Philosophy**

**Give your best and success will follow  
To remain creative, leverage yourself by  
building a strong team, share your  
knowledge and manage by exception  
Take immense pleasure in  
helping others and give back to the  
society in whatever small way one can.**



**B**ijender Pal Singh has had the unique experience of setting up a new bank in India, from scratch. In doing so, he defined and put in place the entire governance structure and compliance framework for the Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation, where he is currently the Head of Legal and Compliance. He framed its regulatory reporting structure and created internal policies and procedure manuals, processes and document standardizations. He is at once the Bank's General Counsel, Chief Compliance Officer, Principal Nodal Officer and Chief of Internal Vigilance of the Bank, looking after its legal, regulatory compliance, anti-money laundering, corporate secretarial and vigilance functions.

He previously headed the legal department for north and east India of HDFC Bank, providing in-house legal support and approvals in matters of corporate loans and security documentation, legal opinions and compliance, contract negotiations, premises acquisitions and leases, corporate and industry level litigations and drafting and vetting of documentation and bank guarantees. Bijender began his career as a lawyer for the Ministry of Defence, before changing track in 1999 to become an inhouse counsel with Canara Bank, where he had a seven-year stint. As the Regional Legal Manager for Ranchi, Agra and New Delhi, his portfolio included recovery and NPA management; in particular, recovery through DRT proceedings, compromise settlements, negotiations with defaulting borrowers and other statutory methods.

As a recognized authority on banking, he is on the Management Committee and a few other board-level committees of the Bank in India.

“Guide your people and let them perform freely,” is his advice to those looking to succeed as legal heads. “Keep motivating your team and appreciate their efforts in front of others.”

Bijender uses his free time doing social work or simply relaxing with his family and friends.

## DAMANDEEP KAUR

GM Legal - Global  
Intelnet Global Services Private Limited

### Testimonial

“Our Legal team guided by you has really brought value to our business outlook by focusing on contracts that our clients can relate to and also give the business teams a sense of comfort, given that all the key T&Cs have been covered by you very well. I also feel that you display immense flexibility and understanding when faced with client perspectives to sticky contractual terms and here again the comfort is that while being flexible you are ring-fencing any risks that may hit us later. On the people side, I feel you are a respected leader in your team and I think they really appreciate the inputs/training you give them to become future legal leaders in their own right. You have also brought about discipline and rigor in legal practices, which is key for any organization of our size.”

**Aditya Arora, MD - India,  
Intelnet Global Services**



Damandeep Kaur's professional experience is as varied as her interest in reading. She worked with a Senior Advocate in the Delhi High Court, and a standing counsel with the Indian Railways in the Supreme Court of India, before moving to a leading KPO - Evalueserve as their corporate counsel. She currently is the Legal Head at Intelenet Global Services, where she and her eight-member team review, draft and negotiate client contracts, manage (from execution to operations) vendor contracts, work closely with the business development team on documents like Request for Proposal, RFI, Tenders and Bids, carry out IPR-related tasks, including trademark registration, patent and copyright protection, and ensure all measures are taken to obtain such protections worldwide. This is but a fraction of what she and her team do.

Her advice, therefore, to those looking to lead an in-house team is laced with caution - "be sure of why you want to lead and be sure that you have the responsibility to ensure that the ones you lead are able to not only develop professionally under your leadership but also personally". The responsibility that an in-house counsel bears towards her company is enormous and for Damandeep, her all-time favourite book, *The Autobiography of a Yogi*, gives her clues on how to shoulder it effortlessly. Weekends for Damandeep mean a get-together with her friends and family on her terrace. Her vacations are usually a Kindle full of books by the beach.

"The role of a corporate counsel is a difficult one. There is a constant need to develop oneself and the department's processes on a real-time basis. The biggest role that a corporate counsel plays is in integrating with other departments and working in tandem with them."

## **DAMINI MARWAH**

**General Counsel and Head - Law  
Axis Bank Ltd.**

### **Damini's Personal Philosophy**

**Always have a collaborative  
approach at work**

**Encourage equal participation, provide  
opportunities to come up with solution  
oriented strategies, and involve the  
team in decision making processes**

**“As a Corporate Counsel, I am focussed  
on ensuring that structures are  
compliant with applicable laws. At the  
same time, I also firmly believe that  
most seemingly complex roadblocks  
have solutions. We work with cross-  
functional business teams and it be-  
comes important to quite literally keep  
the door open to new ideas. The role of a  
General Counsel is to strike the right bal-  
ance and be flexible to accommodate in-  
novative solutions which are compliant  
with the law.”**



**D**amini is the General Counsel at Axis Bank Limited. She has close to two decades of experience and has worked extensively in project finance, corporate finance, structured finance and private equity. Damini also specializes in the restructuring and turnaround of non-performing assets and brings to the table a strong understanding of Indian regulatory and strategic matters. During her term with Axis Bank, the Legal Department has actively contributed towards developing key legislation in the Banking and Finance sector, and has also proactively participated in various high level meetings to discuss and shape important policy and legislative developments. Her wide ranging experience enables her to offer insights on transactions from a variety of perspectives. Damini has a strong reputation in India in the debt financing, restructuring and insolvency space. In the recent past, Damini has contributed as a key participant at high level industry debates and think tank meetings on the recently enacted Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.

Damini believes the greatest challenge for a General Counsel is being the legal gatekeeper while finding solutions within a constantly evolving statutory and regulatory regime. Her advice to those looking to head up legal departments is to constantly remain tuned into legal developments. More importantly, they must partner very closely with business, be pragmatic and find legal workable solutions. “It is imperative for a general counsel to be able to break down complex legal issues, to think ahead and identify possible consequences in early stages of discussion and to express solutions simplistically.”

Among the numerous brilliant lawyers that Damini has interacted with, Zia Mody is one person she looks up to. “It is not just her legal prowess as founder and senior partner at AZB & Partners that inspires me. It is also her value system, her integrity, her vision and her passion for each assignment she takes on that makes her professional journey inspirational”.

## DEBOLINA PARTAP

Vice President and General Counsel  
Wockhardt Limited

### Debolina's Personal Philosophy

Live and let live

“Remember the happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more.” H. Jackson Brown Junior

“A Corporate Counsel must advise top management about risk prevention and risk mitigation. She must ensure that the organisation has a compliance gold standard. She must provide motivational leadership and stay current with the ever-changing global legal system.”



**D**ebolina Partap likes to keep things simple. No big cars for her, no fancy holidays. As the Global Vice President and General Counsel at Wockhardt Limited, Debolina goes about town in her preferred mode of transport, the tuk-tuk, and likes to stay at home on vacation, reading and writing or simply spending quality time with her husband and her son, her ‘treasured possessions’.

At Wockhardt, a company that she has been with for more than 11 years, Debolina leads a team of 17 lawyers, implementing a compliance gold standard for the organization and managing the legal department globally, including litigation and IP management, transactions, corporate advisory, compliance, employment laws and properties.

Prior to Wockhardt, Debolina, who holds an LLM degree, worked with IDBI for more than 13 years where she honed her skills as an in-house counsel. She works best under tremendous stress, she says, waking up as early as 4am to prepare herself for the challenges of the day. Debolina finds inspiration in the former General Counsel at Bharti Airtel, Vijaya Sampat, whom she credits for centre-staging women corporate counsel in India. Describing her as a harbinger and an astute fighter, Debolina says Vijaya always led from the front with poise, presence and sharpness.

She has some practical words of advice for those looking to head legal departments. “Learn from and listen to your team. Don’t scare customers with legal advice, convince them gently about your line of thinking.” As the global legal head of a leading pharmaceutical company, she should know.

## **Testimonial**

**"Working with Debolina and her team on projects related to Europe (Legal and Trademarks) has been an exciting experience for me. Debolina is a "fighter" in true spirit and always brings to the table a completely new perspective on handling difficult situations. Debolina is globally well connected with the best minds in the area of her professional expertise."**

**Sirjiwan Singh, Managing Director, Wockhardt Group United Kingdom**

## **DEEPAK MAHARISHI**

**Head of Contracts & Legal Affairs, India  
and South East Asia  
Bombardier Transportation**

### **Deepak's Personal Philosophy**

**Be aggressive, stick to the truth,  
acknowledge mistakes**

**“A corporate counsel can impact his  
company's approach to bid for multibil-  
lion contracts but at the same time can  
generate confidence in the management  
on the risks to drive more business  
opportunities”.**



A printout of his objectives and a mug of strong black coffee at his desk, Deepak Maharishi stays razor sharp as Bombardier Transportation's Head of Contracts & Legal Affairs for India & Southeast Asia, managing and leading its legal affairs, contract management, negotiations, corporate governance and due diligence. Deepak has been with Bombardier since 2013, when he joined as Head of Legal Affairs & Company Secretary to focus on stakeholder management and drive support for all five business verticals. He took over their Legal and Corporate Affairs department in 2016, a position that he currently holds.

Prior to this, Deepak was General Electric's Company Secretary and part of GE Corporate's core CS team. He handled corporate secretarial compliances, legal entity management and labour law compliances for all GE India entities. Deepak started his in-house career in 2007 in Emaar MGF as Assistant Manager - Corporate Secretarial, gaining exposure to IPOs, JV formations, corporate documentation like FEMA, RBI and compliances. Deepak finds Rajinder Sharma - a known figure in the in-house legal community, extremely inspiring for the passion with which he does everything in his life and his 'great knowledge across industries'. He reminds those who aspire to head in-house legal teams that they are business facilitators and it is critical to acknowledge that and understand the risks. Saying "no" is very easy but thinking about risk mitigation, selling it to the management with an assurance and then implementing it successfully is crucial. Needless to say, this must be done without compromising on integrity. Deepak's favourite thing to do on Saturdays is watch Doremon with his kids. He has a rather unique passion for a lawyer - a love for Microsoft Excel!

## Testimonial

**"Deepak has been instrumental in setting up and driving his department with a complete new vision over cost, speed, quality and simplification. He joined as a legal counsel, and within a span of just four years, Deepak is now handling the legal activities for Bombardier Transportation not just for India but also for South East Asia and all this could be possible because of his commitment to the organization, zeal to learn new things, handling complex situations, quick decision-making and acknowledging mistakes and improving on them. Deepak has a very analytical and business oriented mindset which is really helpful as he is always looking at innovative ways to produce better output at minimal cost. He has always challenged the stereotypes with pathbreaking ideas. In the last few years, he has developed a great acumen for bids, contracts, commercial management and regulatory compliances. He has an amazing ability to pay attention to detail. He has proved to be a key leader regionally and a great asset to our team time and again."**

**Harsh Dhingra, Chief Country Representative, Bombardier**

## **DEEPAK SHARMA**

**Company Secretary & Head Legal -  
India, Middle East & Africa  
Roquette**

### **Deepak's Personal Philosophy**

**Learn by doing. Figure out what you  
want to learn and start to build  
things that reflect that**

**“The role of a General Counsel is no longer limited to managing the legal risk associated with the business that they work within, but the role is increasingly moving from a legal advisor to a business advisor. Effective General Counsels now need to collaborate with the business, understand its issues and produce viable and tangible solutions. The role of an inhouse counsel is to understand the pressure points, strategy and objectives of the business and effectively communicate the risks and legal issues involved. This enables management to make informed strategic choices within an acceptable legal risk profile.”**



Deepak Sharma is a skilled in-house counsel, negotiator and corporate law specialist with more than 15 years of diversified experience in Real Estate, Retail, Telecom, Distribution, Chemical and Food & Pharma industries. He has had the experience of heading multi-fold roles in the legal and corporate secretarial department of various multinational companies, such as Brightpoint, Ingram Micro, Syngenta and Roquette in the Asia Pacific region, with specializations in M&A, Private Equity, Contract Negotiation, Litigation, Compliance & Training, IPR and Risk Advisory. He has been instrumental in setting-up the legal department of some of the big companies he has worked with and awarded various corporate awards for his contributions. He is known among his peers as someone who transforms 'you can't do it' into 'how you can do it' by providing practical solutions without compromising on compliances. Integrity comes first in his list of 'Values' and it is absolutely not-negotiable.

Deepak is a qualified lawyer and an associate member of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India and regular speaker at conferences organized by various industry bodies and lawyers' associations.

With "Integrity", "Hard work mixed with smart work", "You are not required to please everyone", "You should know how and when to say 'NO' with strong reasoning", "Always don dual hats - that of a lawyer and business advisor", and "Don't be afraid to speak your mind out", as his guiding principles, Deepak advises General Counsel aspirants to be opinionated and unafraid when advising the management. The key to being a successful General Counsel is to be able to prioritize work and to understand the business perspective when proffering legal advice because businesses are moving so fast, that it is almost impossible to have absolute certainty on the outcome of ones actions. In this environment one should know the 'benefits of the action' and the 'risks of inaction'. In addition, since nowadays the information is so vastly and abundantly available, it is easy to immerse in that to the detriment of acting swiftly and decisively. Therefore, a General Counsel has to get at ease with often making decisions based on good but inadequate information; this is something, which doesn't come naturally to lawyers. Deepak is an avid long distance runner and 'running at least one half marathon every 15 days' is his fitness mantra. He has had a few podium finishes in long distance running.

# DEEPIKA CHAUDHRY

Executive Director-Legal APAC  
XEROX

## Deepika's Personal Philosophy

Life is all about striking the right balance  
and achieving your maximum potential  
You are the only one standing between  
you and your success

“The professional effectiveness in this  
role is predicated on one's ability to get  
things done. This in turn is achieved by  
relentless pursuit of that delicate  
balance between 'supporting' and  
'controlling' internally and developing  
and nurturing professional associations  
within the Industry,” says Deepika.



For Deepika Chaudhry, there is nothing quite as soul-satisfying as growing and nurturing plants. An experienced yoga practitioner, who strongly believes in balancing all five pillars of her life - family, work, health, spirituality and friends - Deepika has more than 15 years of experience in leadership positions in market leading multinational companies. Currently the Asia Pacific Executive Director, Legal in Xerox, she has previously worked with, among others, Microsoft Corporation India as its Director, Licensing and Compliance, where she led the Legal, Compliance, Regulatory and Secretarial functions of all four legal entities of the company in India; IMIL as General Counsel and Vice President, Legal; and Aricent as its General Counsel and Legal Head. In her current role at Xerox she advises boards, manages stakeholder relations, services clients, ensures compliance - both internal and statutory, and represents the company in public policy and other regulatory matters. With such diverse experience, it comes, then, as no surprise that she won an award of 'Female General Counsel of the Year' in 2014.

She treasures her personal time, for it is this that helps her manage the challenges that come with the position she holds in Xerox. Holidaying by the sea, spending time with family and friends or just pottering around in her garden are some of the ways in which she unwinds.

While her favourite book of all time is 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Deepika - herself a highly effective counsel by any standard - has some sage advice for young lawyers aspiring to become in-house counsel. "There are no short cuts to success. Consistent performance, building relationships and continuously re-inventing yourself is the key to success."

## Testimonial

**"I had the pleasure of working closely with Deepika Chaudhary since I joined Xerox India Limited as the Managing Director and Regional VP more than 2 years back. Deepika has always provided the business in India and the region with invaluable and on-time consultative and executive support, her knowledge and expertise of the legal environment and regulatory requirements not only enabled the business to grow but also brought many of the long-standing cases to a satisfactory closure. I really appreciate her continued support and wish her every success, both personally and professionally."**

**Elarman Ashraf, Managing Director, Xerox India Limited**

## **DELVIN JACOB MATHEWS**

**General Counsel and Compliance  
Officer, Member of the Board of Directors  
Boehringer Ingelheim India Pvt. Ltd.**

### **Delvin's Personal Philosophy**

**There are different right paths  
Be willing to constantly look for the  
most appropriate path to tread**

**“An effective in-house counsel must  
partner with the business and provide  
tangible solutions. The success of a  
corporate counsel lies in having a  
solution-oriented approach to each  
issue. It also lies in providing balanced  
advice to the business on managing  
legal risks and seizing the right  
opportunities.”**



**D**elvin Jacob Mathews is the General Counsel and Compliance Officer for Boehringer Ingelheim India Pvt. Ltd., where he has brought with him close to two decades of legal experience. Starting off in 2001 as a Senior Associate in BRP & Co., Delvin moved in 2008 to Jubilant Enpro Pvt. Ltd. as their Legal Manager and then to Bosch and Siemens Home Appliances Group to head up their legal division. He has been with Boehringer Ingelheim since 2015 and is currently also on its Board of Directors. From advising the management on the potential risks in business decisions, doing risk analyses of business proposals in the background of the organization's business strategy, handling litigations, including driving its strategy, providing guidance on sensitive HR-related issues including termination, severance, mutual separation, employment templates, employee grievances, handling external employees to IPR-identification, registration, litigation and representing the company before all government agencies, including the police, Delvin has his hands full.

Nothing, therefore, gives him more joy than spending his free time with his three children and hearing them say that they too want to be lawyers like their busy dad.

And for those aspiring to head in-house teams, his advice is simple - be willing to work as a team.

## **Testimonial**

**“Two of the most important aspects of a strong in-house counsel are real life experiences in managing cases and a deep understanding of the complex legal processes. By virtue of his background as an active practicing lawyer, Delvin has the depth and range of matters material to both the topics. He also has a strong business orientation which is so important for being a business partner and difficult to bring about by an external counsel. A combination of all these aspects means much better guidance to the organization on not just managing legal issues but also conducting business in a highly competitive environment while preventing legal issues.”**

**Sharad Tyagi, Managing Director, Boehringer Ingelheim India Pvt. Ltd.**

## **DIVYA KUMAR**

**Sr. Vice President Legal &  
Company Secretary  
Datamatics Global Services Limited**

### **Divya's Personal Philosophy**

**The only disability in life is a  
bad attitude**

**Respect every individual, even if  
you differ with them**

**Whatever you do, give it your best**

**“A corporate counsel's key focus is to be  
a business enabler while monitoring  
governance. Her strength lies in finding  
effective solutions for the business,  
when there is a conflict between risk  
exposure and legal norms.”**



**G**ratITUDE and humility are core to Divya Kumat's beliefs. She may be at the top of her league at Datamatics Global Services Ltd., but Divya will never forget how her family came together to help her recover from a near fatal accident at the age of 16. Twentythree major surgeries later, a positive attitude, strong support from her loved ones and a steely determination have seen Divya win a gold medal in her LLM and numerous other awards for excellence in her work, either as a General Counsel, a leading woman Company Secretary or a business leader. She is a fellow member of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (FCS) and a merit holder in ICSA, London.

As Executive Vice President, Chief Legal Officer and Company Secretary at Datamatics Global Services Ltd. for more than 13 years, Divya leads all the legal and secretarial initiatives for more than 25 group companies in India and overseas and is a key player in the inorganic initiatives of the group, including joint venture collaborations, mergers, acquisitions, and amalgamations in India and overseas. She is credited with formulating and enforcing several legally binding policies and frameworks including the Contract Management policy, Insider Trading policy, Whistle Blower policy, and Investor Grievance policy, to name a few.

Bringing her 21 years of experience to bear, Divya advises those looking to become legal heads of their companies to stay current, never stop learning and be technology savvy. "Develop the skill to listen; become meticulous in your understanding of legal work; value the time of others". Divya writes poetry or goes for a long swim to relax.

## **Testimonials**

**"Divya goes beyond the call of duty to ensure the smooth functioning of the company. Her contribution has been invaluable. She has more than fulfilled the trust reposed in her."**

**Dr. L.S. Kanodia, Chairman, Datamatics Group**

**"I would like to compliment Divya on her strong negotiation abilities, deep commercial understanding of the business and her persuasive approach where she convinced me to accept a settlement far lower than what I believed to be the right amount."**

**Varun Bhatia, Managing Director, Growth Outcomes LLC, San Francisco, California**

# **FAIZUR REHMAN**

**Head - Legal Affairs  
Fortum India Private Limited**

## **Faizur Rehman's Personal Philosophy**

**Keep pushing yourself till you achieve  
the desired result**

**“The role of a corporate counsel is  
versatile. He is the conscience keeper of  
an organisation. Hence a balance should  
be maintained between supporting the  
business and choosing the right thing for  
the organisation.”**



**F**aizur Rehman is Head - Legal Affairs and Company Secretary at Fortum India with more than 14 years of experience in the field of legal, business negotiations, risk mitigation, compliance and corporate governance. As a member of Fortum India Management Team and Director of its group companies, he plays an integral part in ensuring the multi-dimensional growth of the organization by giving research based advice, representing the business in corporate deals, mitigating risks, providing solutions for smooth operations and the ethical governance of the company.

Faizur Rehman has worked previously with Schneider Electric India Private Limited as Assistant General Manager, Legal and Company Secretary, GIVO Ltd. as Secretary and Legal Head, HERO Global Design Ltd. as Secretary and Legal Manager and Amira Foods (India) also as Secretary and Legal Manager. His work has involved drafting agreements, including EPC Contracts, MOUs, Consortium Agreements and Lease Agreement for factories and commercial offices across India, Service Agreements and NPP Agreements and reviewing bids and tenders. He has been responsible for conducting board meetings, the acquisition of a business via a slump sale, deployment of a corporate programme on Principles of Responsibilities (POR) on a pan India level, and ensuring statutory compliances, among a host of other activities.

Being a sports enthusiast has taught him an important lesson - teamwork and hard work are key to success. Both of these are essential for a person aspiring to lead an in-house team. He also must be a partner to the business and a solution provider that people in the organization are not afraid to approach.

Faizur Rehman unwinds with his family, usually over dinner at a restaurant.

# **GURURAJA RAO**

**Senior Director- Legal  
Sony Pictures Networks Distribution  
India Private Limited**

## **Gururaja's Personal Philosophy**

**Be focused and complete your  
tasks on time**

**Stay committed, dedicated and  
loyal towards work**

**Work hard, party harder**

**“The role of a corporate counsel is not confined to just managing the legal risks associated with the business. A corporate legal counsel is a partner to the business team, understands their issues and proactively produces viable and tangible solutions. He must demonstrate the ability to be a business ‘enabler’ which would help to contribute to the profits of the company. The role also envisages an understanding of the pressure points, strategy and objectives of the business, with the counsel effectively communicating the risks and legal issues involved in any decision-making process to the top management, to enable them to make informed strategic choices.”**



A qualified company secretary with a post-graduate degree in law, Gururaja Rao has 18 years of experience ensuring effective corporate governance and compliance, and rendering legal and regulatory advisory services across a variety of industries. A yearlong engagement with GSK in 2005 as their Legal Manager, was followed by his appointment as Assistant Vice President - Legal and Company Secretary by the People Group. Subsequently in 2008, Gururaja joined the Reliance ADAG Group as Vice President - Legal and Company Secretary, where he worked for close to six years vetting legal documents and resolving critical legal issues, specifically in the Broadcasting, Entertainment and Media Industry, overseeing tender documentation, a corporate code of conduct and ethics, privacy policies, property rights, joint venture agreements, content acquisition and telecom rights. He has been with Sony Pictures Networks Distribution India Private Limited since 2014 as their Senior Director - Legal.

Gururaja has immense admiration for Senior Advocate Harish Salve, whom he describes as “undoubtedly the best taxation and corporate litigator in India”. He advises legal head aspirants to be “more than just lawyers”. “The more the in-house counsel learns about an industry, the better they perform as legal and business advisors.” Gururaja emphasises the importance of team building and the ability to collaborate with leaders of other functions such as finance, human resources, information technology, marketing and sales. And lastly, he says, they should not be afraid to make tough decisions and be proactive in finding opportunities without shying away from tough and complex projects.

Gururaja spends his weekends with his wife and two daughters, either watching a movie with them or planning a vacation.

## Testimonial

**“Guru’s analytical ability and years of experience in the Internet, Media and Broadcasting industry enables him to provide thoughtful, thorough, and practical legal advice regarding a wide variety of legal and regulatory issues. His passion for doing an assigned task is infectious and he has demonstrated the highest level of personal and professional integrity. He has developed a strong ability to adapt to different circumstances and ensure that the organization’s interests are judiciously protected. He is a key asset to our organization and a critical member of our leadership team.”**

**Mr. Rajesh Kaul, President Sony Pictures Networks Distribution India Pvt. Ltd.**

## **HARI DASAN E.V.K.**

**Deputy Vice President - Legal  
Tata Capital Financial Services Limited**

### **Hari Dasan's Personal Philosophy**

**Work as if there is no tomorrow  
Live and let live**

**“A corporate counsel plays a very vital role in every stage of a business - as an advisor, as a guardian in identifying inherent legal risks, as a documentation expert, and in case of challenges, deals with it in the best possible way to protect the interests of the organisation.”**



**H**ari Dasan is the Deputy Vice President - Legal at Tata Capital Financial Services Ltd. Launching his career as a lawyer in 1994 at the High Court and lower courts in Chennai, he joined Canara Bank as a law officer in 1998 where he worked for close to five years. He subsequently joined the State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur as Deputy Manager (Law) in 2002 and Vijaya Bank in 2005 as Senior Manager (Law).

With almost 23 years of experience, 20 of them in the banking and financial services industry, Hari Dasan has worked in ING Vysya Bank and YES Bank in the private sector, as well as foreign banks such as BNP Paribas and Rabo India Finance Limited. A stint at Fullerton India Credit Company Ltd., where he was Vice President and Head - Corporate Legal, was followed by his current assignment at Tata Capital Financial Services Limited, where he has been since 2016.

Hari Dasan's areas of specialization include corporate legal advisory, drafting, conveyancing and litigations involving commercial, labour and industrial laws.

Hari Dasan likes to read or workout in his free time. He spends the weekends with his family and friends, planning holidays in the Northeast of India, particularly Arunachal Pradesh.

## **HARSH ARORA**

**Director  
Perfetti Van Melle India**

### **Harsh's Personal Philosophy**

**"My work and life revolve around the principles enunciated in the most revered master guide given by India to the world; the pearls of wisdom showered by Lord Shri Krishna in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita."**

**"The role of a GC is to propagate compliance with the laws. He is a business enabler with the ability to forestall unintended consequences by his proactive approach."**



**H**arsh Arora is a qualified chartered accountant, company secretary and a law graduate from Delhi University. Presently a Director on the Board of Perfetti Van Melle India, a leading confectionery manufacturer, Harsh is responsible for all legal compliance and corporate governance matters here. He has over 30 years of professional experience, 20 of them with Perfetti alone. Harsh has previously worked with Moser Baer India Ltd. He is the current President of the Indian Confectionery Manufacturers and is called upon to speak at many legal conferences.

Harsh is inspired by judgments and writings of Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, Nani A Palkhivala and Justice M Hidayatullah, and is guided by the teachings of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita.

His advice to those looking to head in-house teams is short and sharp - “Be not scared first to face the wrath of the court, before taking the well-cushioned job of a GC.”

Rest isn’t a part of Harsh’s vocabulary. Vacations for him mean the ability to teach students, regardless of the location.

### **Testimonial**

**“Harsh started with Perfetti back in 1993 at the Gurgaon location. He developed the legal and regulatory office at our Indian subsidiary, while promoting the establishment of the Indian Association of Confectionary Products. He contributed to the development of Indian legislation for food additives and flavourings, as well as the legislation regarding gum base, chewing gum finished products and candies. He is well connected with relevant Indian ministries and other relevant bodies like the FSSAI. Harsh has proven himself a hardworking and loyal legal professional with a real heart for the business and a good people manager.”**

**Paolo Casoni, Group General Counsel, Perfetti van Melle**

## **KAMAL KISHORE AVUTAPALLI**

**General Counsel  
MakeMyTrip Limited**

### **Kamal's Personal Philosophy**

**Treat your work as life and enjoy  
what you do**

**Doing a 9-5 job without enjoying is  
torture compared to doing a 8-8 job  
and fully enjoying it**

**The role of a corporate counsel has  
evolved over the years, with active  
contribution to the board and audit  
committee, in addition to interacting with  
a high profile board of directors,  
investors, internal business leaders and  
external parties. “As a corporate counsel,  
you are not only the custodian of  
compliances, IPR and records, but also  
the guardian of business from litigation”.**



**W**hen Kamal Kishore Avutapalli joined MakeMyTrip in 2009, the company was preparing for an initial public offering overseas. Kamal Kishore led the charge successfully and within a year MakeMyTrip was listed on NASDAQ in a spectacular ceremony. There was no looking back for Kamal after that as project after project relating either to fund raising or mergers and acquisitions took centre stage. In the 15 years that he has been in the profession, his current position has been the most exciting. It has involved regulatory compliances globally including US, Europe, APAC, India and Middle East; US SEC, SEBI, NASDAQ, NSE & BSE, RBI & FEMA, and IPR-related compliances; M&A, including negotiation, diligence, closing of transaction documents, interaction with high profile board of directors and handling board and committee meetings and drafting & vetting high stake business agreements and litigations in various countries.

Kamal Kishore began his career at D. Hanumantaraji & Co. as a management trainee. He then moved to the National Stock Exchange of India Limited as a Senior Executive Officer in the listing department. A two-year stint later, he was appointed as the Company Secretary and Compliance Officer at GSS Infotech which launched a \$30 million IPO during his tenure.

Kamal recommends a strong network of ‘intelligent lawyers’ as a support for those aspiring to head in-house legal teams. “Be super alert towards the developments around you. Unfold the law and find solutions and be a business enabler, not a business hurdle”.

A home-cooked meal, a game of tennis and a good night’s sleep help Kamal Kishore hit the ground running.

## **Testimonial**

**“Kamal has been with MakeMyTrip since 2009 and plays a significant role as the GC of the MMT Group globally, which now includes Goibibo and redbus. In addition to handling critical works like compliances, litigation, contracts, IPR protection etc., he also plays an important role in all the significant transactions of the company. He is a good team player and manager. He leads a team of 15 professionals comprising lawyers and qualified company secretaries.”**

**Mohit Kabra, Group CFO, MakeMyTrip India Ltd.**

# KARAN VEER CHOPRA

Regional Legal Director - Asia & Turkey  
Oriflame India Pvt. Ltd.

## Karan Veer's Personal Philosophy

Work smart and in a well-informed  
manner

Always try and spend quality time with  
your loved ones

“A corporate counsel is a business  
supportive lawyer who works with an  
effective cross communication approach for  
any assignment. If the situation demands, he  
must not hesitate to push back when the  
exposure is much larger for the  
organization.”

## Testimonial

“Karan has been instrumental in building a  
strong legal function for our India business as  
well as for the Asia Region. Aiming to provide  
Oriflame with the highest level of legal  
protection, navigating the company through a  
highly regulated and complex legal  
environment, he is at the same time  
working closely with the business to find  
pragmatic solutions. His legal  
professionalism in combination with a  
strong business acumen has made Karan an  
invaluable partner for the business and  
myself as the Head of Asia Finance.”

**Pontus Müntzing, VP Finance Asia & Turkey,  
Oriflame**



A technology and cricket enthusiast and a very effective negotiator - that sums up Karan Veer Chopra, the Regional Legal Director of Oriflame, a leading direct-selling cosmetics and health foods company. Dominating his portfolio here is the legal strategy to meet the challenges of establishing a direct sales framework in the Asia and Turkey region. By all accounts, the company has benefitted from Karan Veer's years of diversified legal experience, particularly in providing strategic legal advice for the business, closing complex transactions and negotiating and executing high value contracts.

Karan started his legal career at the law office of a former Additional Solicitor General of India, followed by a role as Senior Associate at J Sagar and Associates. During his term with the firm, he advised and represented leading business houses across an array of commercial transactions, advisory work and contractual documentation. His first foray into the role of an in-house counsel was in 2011 with Tekelec (former NASDAQ listed IT company), as their Corporate Counsel, in charge of their overall legal operations in South Asia. A senior member of the region's management team, he successfully negotiated multi-million-dollar IT supply and services contracts with leading IT service providers and managed all aspects of corporate compliances and regulatory affairs for the company.

Karan joined Oriflame in 2014 as their Regional Legal Director (Asia & Turkey) and also Chairs the India Legal Compliances Committee. Mapping business requirements and providing legal advice on company laws, FEMA and related authority regulations, FMCG, direct selling, import and export, consumer protection, real estate, labour, IT and intellectual law are just a fraction of his remit. Karan works closely with the Group's head of functions and is widely appreciated for providing timely and key legal advice for the business' growth.

In the in-house legal fraternity, Karan considers Mr. Rakesh Bakshi (Head Legal - Amazon India) as his role model for his "calm demeanour, work ethic, sound legal awareness teamed with a great business understanding". Karan Veer emphasises the importance of team building for a legal head to be successful. "Promote your team to continue to build their legal knowledge and skill sets". But before that he suggests, the general counsel must first understand the requirements and sensitivities of the business and train the legal team to do the same.

Karan Veer's favourite thing to do in his free time is to keep himself updated with latest technology and plan a holiday with his family; New Zealand will always be his favourite vacation spot.

## **KHOZEM MIRZA**

**Chief Representative  
Legal Counsel-South East Asia & China  
Aditya Birla Management Corporation  
Pvt. Ltd.**

### **Khozem's Personal Philosophy**

**While you work, remember that life is for  
enjoyment. Find that perfect balance.  
Retire at your retirement age. There is no  
point in going on working.**

**“The role of a corporate counsel is  
challenging. Daily regulatory changes  
makes the role more interesting”.**



**I**t has been a long and winding road as a lawyer for Khozem Mirza. Starting off with a property lawyer in an English law firm to being a litigator to finally becoming a corporate and IP specialist with patent training in US, it certainly has been an eventful 30 years for Khozem.

His career as an in-house counsel goes back to 1991, when he joined Wockhardt Ltd. and was the Assistant Vice President - Legal for 18 years. He worked on numerous M&As while at Wockhardt, combining his legal knowledge with his familiarity with the US and European markets. He is credited to have worked on five transactions in 18 months, not surprising for someone who describes himself as a workaholic. He is currently based out of Shanghai as the Aditya Birla Management Corporation's General Counsel for Southeast Asia and China.

Khozem works 12 - 14 hours a day, struggling to balance his personal time with work. He does manage an occasional movie or an outing with his family and will sometimes give himself a break by holidaying in Switzerland, his favourite country to visit.

His advice to those aspiring to head in-house teams is simple but strategic: review, analyse and respond within the four corners of the law.

He is inspired by Senior Advocate Fali Nariman for his quick grasp of issues and his prompt response and solutions.

### **Testimonial**

**"I have worked with Khozem on a number of occasions in the last ten years. We have worked in a number of areas—M&As, contracts in the area of IP/Joint development, to mention a few. Khozem's speed of response has always been a value to admire. He is dependable and his advice is clear with consequences of the various options outlined clearly. He takes sufficient time to understand the business and the issue at hand."**

**Rahul Kohli, Chief Executive Officer, Fertiliser Business, Aditya Birla Group**

## **KISHORE SHETTY**

**Zone General Counsel  
Schneider Electric India**

### **Kishore's Personal Philosophy**

**We are all born for a purpose. Work in your area of work with a hundred percent dedication.**

**Life is colourful. It just depends from what angle you look at life.**

**“A corporate counsel's role is a very responsible one, handling very complex and high-stake matters. The management always relies on them to make decisions on important issues and this makes the role critical. This is a position of trust and integrity”**



**K**ishore Shetty is the Zone General Counsel of Schneider Electric Group with responsibilities over India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Maldives. Kishore started his career as a private practitioner, first with a few law firms before setting up his own boutique law firm in Bangalore in 2003. He practiced extensively on the civil side in the High Court of Karnataka and Civil Courts at Bangalore. In the year 2008, he decided to move to an in-house legal counsel role and joined ABB in Bangalore as a lead legal counsel in one of its divisions. In 2012, he moved to Sweden as ABB's legal counsel in charge of international contracts, handling challenging EPC contracts mainly on subsea cable projects, offshore windmill projects and HVDC projects in Europe, Africa, Middle-East, India and Southeast Asia. He moved back to India in 2016 as ABB's Regional Counsel for the Southeast Asian region, before taking on his current position at Schneider.

Kishore is a numismatist, a fitness enthusiast and a foodie. He keeps himself grounded by reading excerpts from 'My Experiments with Truth' by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi every now and then.

He advises those aspiring to head in-house legal teams to focus on the right kind of people who are functionally strong and have a zest to deliver. Additionally, "develop leadership skills to manage the team. Be a good listener, analyse problems, communicate clearly and be humble and firm in your opinion".

## LAKSHIKA JOSHI

Global IP Head and AVP Legal  
ARICENT

### Lakshika' Personal Philosophy

There are times of disappointment, distraction, discontentment and there are times of hope, enthusiasm, fulfilment and joy. Take it all in your stride and stay focused on your goals.

“Corporate counsel are now growing to become business leaders, solution providers. They are not merely legal advisors but also strategists and mentors for the boards. “I see my corporate counsel role as that of an artist who uses raw paint and basic wooden brushes to paint a blank canvas into colours of her creativity and fill the environment (business) with vibrancy and positivism.” Lakshika says



Lakshika describes herself as a “student forever”. Variety & innovation are her driving forces and awards & recognition almost commonplace. At Aricent, Lakshika leads the Company to manage and monetize its IP and as part of the leadership team she manages large transactions, framing policy, ensuring compliances and opining on regulatory frameworks. She has numerous awards under her belt, including recognition for being among the Top Powerful Women in Law by the World IP Forum. Before Aricent, Lakshika worked as General Counsel and Head of IP & Licensing at Nucleus Software, which provides lending and transaction banking products to the global financial services industry. She was responsible for overall legal strategy and steering the company towards newer IP models and licensing practices. She has worked across businesses ranging from publishing, music, films, broadcast, entertainment, TV, sports, augmented reality, celebrity rights management, e-commerce, production houses, health and fitness, wellness, medical, IT, ITES and Software.

A qualified lawyer with practice experience at the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court of India, she also gives guest lectures at various law colleges in and around Delhi and has been actively involved in numerous discussions on Technology Law, Licensing, IPR, Data Protection, Compliances and Policy making. Her latest podcast on deciphering Intellectual Property Rights and Licensing is available on Audioboom at iTunes. For all her achievement, awards and acknowledgments there is a small thing that can defeat her - a creepy crawly! Her sighting of one such irritant late on a cold winter night in England, forced her family to spend the whole night in the freezing cold. Lead by example, be invisible, inspire and motivate are her words of advice to those wanting to lead an in-house team. A leader should be able to bring out the best from her team and each of the team members. “Much like the director of a play, a leader encourages the actors, directs them to give a memorable performance.”

## Testimonial

**“Lakshika is a thorough professional and comes with rich experience of corporate legal and IPR matters. Her focus on IPR will help us continue to leverage our strengths on the global stage. She is passionate about her work and is working towards further strengthening our legal IPR division. She stays on top of new developments in different technology areas and associated legal aspects. She has a curious mind and understands complexities of engineering solutions for the innovative ecosystem around us.”**

**Pratyush Dasgupta, Vice President, Engineering, Aricent**

## **LAVANYA CHANDAN**

**General Counsel  
OLX India Private Limited**

### **Lavanya's Personal Philosophy**

**Simpler the better**

**Consistency is over-rated, I contradict myself as I evolve, and always for the better**

**“A corporate counsel is a blend of various corporate functions: most importantly that of a business enabler, often the first line of defence against corporate risks, and the internal conscience keeper driving compliance.”**



Lavanya can teach us all a thing or two about change management. Having moved schools an astoundingly 14 times, he came out with flying colours from law school before joining Trilegal in their Corporate, M&A and TMT practice areas. In 2014, with the objective of setting up the legal function and working closely with business, he moved from corporate practice to OLX as an in-house counsel. After managing various roles across jurisdictions, Lavanya rose up the ranks to lead the legal team in India. He is now an integral part of the OLX global legal leadership team. He provides not just legal support but also strategic business advice, ensuring that at all times, OLX, a market leader in online classifieds, is compliant and has well entrenched corporate governance practices.

An ardent environmentalist, a die-hard liberal, a voracious reader and an avid podcast listener, Lavanya relaxes on the weekend by amusing his seven-month old daughter or planning his next vacation. He lists Amsterdam as his favourite holiday destination and Ramachandra Guha's 'India after Gandhi' as his all-time favourite book.

"Wear your business hat before putting on your lawyer shoes" is his simple advice to lawyers looking to head an in-house legal team.

## Testimonial

**"Lavanya has been pivotal in building our legal team in the region. He has constantly evolved the legal department's focus basis the strategic business objectives. In addition to playing the traditional legal role, Lavanya plays an active role in the business function of Trust and Safety, which is of extreme importance for us. An integral part of OLX's global legal leadership team, Lavanya also provides critical legal support to OLX businesses across the globe. As a legal counsel with strong business acumen, he has been a strategic advisor to the business more than just dispensing legal advice. Being a market leader in online classifieds, from time to time OLX invites attention of the regulators, authorities and customers. Lavanya does a great job at managing expectations and keeping us ring-fenced so that we can focus on the core business. I specifically laud him for his role in addressing some critical challenges like anti-competitive practices and breach of intellectual property by competitors."**

**Amarjit Singh Batra, CEO, OLX India**

# MAHESH SREENIVASAN

Addl. General Manager (Legal)  
RITES Ltd.

## Mahesh's Personal Philosophy

*"Karmanyevadhikaraste Ma  
Phaleshu Kadachana,  
Ma Karmaphalaheturbhurma Te  
Sangostvakarmani"*  
—Bhagavat Gita

(You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your action. Never consider yourself the cause or the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty.)

"The General Counsel's role involves not just dealing with past legal problems, but charting future courses; not just playing defence, but being proactive; not just providing legal advice, but anticipating legal issues and being part of the management in offering business advice. It means being both a partner to business leadership and ultimately the guardian of the company."



**M**ahesh Sreenivasan has over 23 years of professional experience as a lawyer, inhouse counsel and head of Legal Department. He holds a post graduate degree in Law and has also done a Post Graduate Programme in Business Administration from the National Institute of Technology, Kozhikode. He has also received training in Advanced Contract Law and Drafting from Euromoney, Shanghai.

Starting his career as an advocate in the Kerala High Court in 1994, and after practicing for four years on the civil and criminal side, Mahesh joined Lord Krishna Bank, a scheduled bank, as a Law Officer. In 1999, he joined Punjab National Bank and served for nine years in various locations all over India. During 2003-07, while heading the Kerala region he spearheaded the enforcement of the newly enacted SARFAESI Act and was successful in the resolution of numerous chronic NPA accounts. In 2007, he joined IFCI Ltd. and was involved in the documentation for corporate loans and acquisition of NPAs. He was the Legal Expert for the Government of Uttar Pradesh in the disinvestment of Motels owned by the Uttar Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation and 25 Sugar Mills of the UP Cane Co-Operative Society. In 2013, he joined as Addl. General Manager (Legal) of RITES Ltd., and presently heads its legal department. He is also the legal expert to various Metro Projects around the country.

Mahesh is an avid traveller, a foodie and blogger. He manages two websites - [maheshspeak.com](http://maheshspeak.com) and [maheshsreenivasan.com](http://maheshsreenivasan.com) where he writes about banking, contract and commercial laws.

He advises that a person who wants to lead an in-house legal team must have excellent legal knowledge, the ability to learn according to business requirements, a high level of integrity, willingness to put in long hours and finally the ability to say no, if something clearly illegal is being proposed by the management.

## MANISH KUMAR

General Counsel & V.P. Corporate Affairs  
Zoomcar India Private Limited

### Manish's Personal Philosophy

Whatever work you find to do, do  
it with utmost sincerity

There is no failure in the world

A Corporate Counsel must keep an “eagle  
eye” on a company’s business practices  
and invest time in nurturing the team to  
become experts in their domain.

### Testimonial

“Manish has been an integral part of  
Zoomcar’s successful scaling in the last  
two years. Manish has successfully worn  
multiple hats ranging from litigation,  
operations, government relations,  
intellectual property development, and  
contracting. Manish also coordinates and  
liases across multiple teams on a daily  
basis to help drive key business results.”

**Greg Moran, CEO & Co-Founder, Zoomcar**



A 'rising star', a 'start up expert', these are some of the accolades Manish Kumar has accumulated in the 11 years that he has been in the profession. Currently the General Counsel & V. P. Corporate Affairs at Zoomcar India Private Limited, Manish established the legal team in Snapdeal.com and contributed immensely to its success story in the initial years, by managing more than ten rounds of large investments that it received, and handling multiple mergers and acquisition threats. He was also a key contributor to the listing of DLF's landmark IPO. His areas of expertise include FEMA, Listing Agreements, Corporate Governance, Compliance, Private Equity Funding, Contracting, Litigations (Civil & Criminal), Advocacy programmes with the Government, Liaising with Law Enforcement Agencies, Mergers & Acquisitions, ISO Certifications, Standard Operating Procedures, and policies including, but not limited to, Anti-bribery and Anti-Corruption Policies.

Manish has also been the Company Secretary at ZTE Telecom (India Operations), where his remit included FEMA, corporate, labour and indirect tax compliances control, drafting and vetting of agreements, policies of companies, handling board and general meeting procedures, compounding of FEMA violations in funding and import remittances and compliance for overseas direct investment. At Yadu Corp, where again he was the Company Secretary, Manish was responsible for the acquisition of two companies through detailed discussion and drafting of documents.

Manish frequently engages with Think Tanks including the NITI Aayog on policy formulations and implementations. Every lawyer is a source of information for Manish. He has no hesitation in learning from interns and believes that constant interaction among members of the legal community is an absolute must. "There is no short cut to success but there is a simple way to success - be logical in your approach" is his advice to those looking to head in-house legal teams. He lists Sridham - Vrindavan as his favourite holiday destination and the Bhagwat Gita as it is authored by H.D.G. A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami as his favourite book.

# MAUSHAMI DASUPTA

Senior Vice President - Law  
PVR Ltd.

## Maushmi's Personal Philosophy

Life is as you see it  
Positivity is the answer to all issues

"As a corporate in-house counsel it is very important to understand the business and the risks involved. For me, it is important to evaluate each transaction and inform the business team and the stakeholders about all possible risks and suggest viable solutions to mitigate them"

## Testimonial

"Maushami has been associated with PVR since the last 9 years. She closely works with all the departments like Business Development, Marketing, F&B etc. She has good legal acumen, analytical and drafting skills and an eye for detail. She is a hard worker and a core support for the legal team. Her ability lies in explaining complicated issues in bare necessary words and providing resolution in even lesser words. She has contributed positively in PVR's journey of achieving 600 screens. We wish her luck for all her endeavours and for all times to come."

**Nitin Sood, CFO, PVR Ltd.**



**M**aushami Dasgupta has an invaluable mix of practice experience that ranges from being a junior advocate in the Delhi High Court, a litigation inspector with the Office of the Development Commissioner, an Associate Advocate with Amitabha Sen & Co., and an intellectual property advisor and investigator with Anand & Anand's investigation firm, to being an in-house counsel in a variety of organizations, many of them in the Media and Entertainment industry.

She has over 22 years of experience handling matters involving contract law, commercial laws, FSSAI, legal metrology, intellectual property rights and legal audit. Contractual risk analysis, negotiation, drafting and vetting agreements, giving legal opinions, legal training, handling POSH complaints, advising management on strategic alliances, internal policies, applicable laws, changes in laws, legal and regulatory controls, are all par for the course for Maushami.

She started her career in 1992 as a lawyer at the Delhi High Court; moving two years later to work at the Office of the Development Commissioner where she streamlined its litigation cell and dealt with all its court cases, mainly in the areas of service law, labour law, environment and contract. Following a brief stint in Kolkata, she moved back to Delhi in 1997.

Thereafter she has worked with esteemed law firms and companies like Amitabha Sen & Co., investigation firm of Anand and Anand, Escorts Finance Ltd., Bennett Coleman and Co. Ltd. and Zee Turner Ltd. She has been working with PVR Ltd., as Senior Vice President Legal since 2008. Given her varied experience, Maushami's advice to those aspiring to head in-house teams, is priceless. 'Be a very good listener and be hands on. Have good and effective communication skills and be passionate about the work'.

Maushami relaxes by meditating or reading, especially short stories by Rabindranath Tagore. Her favourite thing to do on a Saturday night is to watch a movie or listen to music with her family.

## **MEDHANSHU MISHRA**

**General Counsel & Compliance Officer  
LeasePlan India Private Limited**

### **Medhanshu's Personal Philosophy**

**Never rely on heresay; never give up even  
if you have reached a seemingly deadend**

**Work hard, play harder and party  
hardest. Compromise on the last two  
but never on the first**

**“A corporate counsel is increasingly  
required to adopt a balancing approach:  
be a business enabler and at the same  
time not overtly so. “We have to be more  
of risk analysts: highlight the risks and  
leave the business decisions to those paid  
for it unless of course the cost of risk itself  
is far greater than the choice of a business  
decision”.**



Nothing gets Medhanshu Mishra's adrenaline flowing like a tough litigation or a complex negotiation. And nothing relaxes him more than a holiday in Pelling, Sikkim with a pile of "un-put-down-able thrillers". A lawyer with more than 13 years of experience, Medhanshu chose the profession after toying with the idea of becoming a pilot. Currently the General Counsel & Compliance Officer at LeasePlan India Private Limited, where he has been for almost seven years, he oversees a team of five members and is responsible for legal, compliance and risk management. He is part of several important organizational committees, including the risk committee and Internal Complaints Committee under the company's policy for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment. He is also the Single Point of Contact for matters related to ethics, compliance and privacy. Medhanshu has had short stints in a few small companies after practicing as an independent lawyer in Kanpur for six years, from 2004 onwards.

Hard work, determination and continuous learning form a crucial part of his ethos, but he also believes strongly in investing quality time with his twin daughters, hoping that one of them will become a pilot. He hopes that one day he will be able to travel the world in 80 days and include North Korea in his itinerary.

He advises those who want to head a team of in-house counsel to remember that every team member comes with his or her own set of idiosyncrasies, whims and fancies. "Adopt a delicate blend of cajoling, coercion, complementing and co-opting."

## **MINNI KATARIYA**

**Chief Legal Counsel & Head of Secretarial  
Hindustan Powerprojects Pvt. Ltd.**

### **Minni's Personal Philosophy**

**Don't push things that can be done  
today to tomorrow**

**Maintain a balance between work and life  
so that success does not come at a cost**

**Minni believes a corporate counsel  
cannot simply be a lawyer. She must get  
the big picture and "be the sounding  
board, enabling decision makers to take a  
pause."**



**M**inni Katariya serves as the Chief Legal Counsel and Head of Secretarial at Hindustan Power. With over two decades of experience in the field of Legal and Secretarial, she is a champion of Good Governance and best practices. Under her guidance, one of the core roles of her team is to provide support and corporate structure for fund raising in India or abroad through multiple sources and dealings with Investment Bankers, Counsels and other intermediaries along with conducting due diligence for overseas acquisitions, joint ventures and other investment options. Her expertise in legal compliance and process for land acquisition for power and other projects has enabled the Group to navigate quickly without getting caught in a logjam.

Minni's experience also covers documentation with banks, financial institutions and foreign development corporations. Preparation of briefs, opinions, interacting with senior counsels in India and abroad, formulating strategies for handling litigations, advising and arranging advice on legal matters both at the domestic level and abroad, have been part and parcel of her professional career. Her educational background in legal, secretarial and economics gives her the advantage of being able to deal with issues at a macro-economic level without losing sight of the highest standards of compliance. And it is for this reason that she admires senior counsels for their ability to grasp the big picture in a short period of time and argue at length before the court on behalf of their clients. She urges those who aspire to head in-house legal teams to be generalists in the law. "You shouldn't aim to be a specialist in all laws but have an understanding of the same." Minni values her personal time greatly. Infact, she looks upon it as a gift which she uses by simply relaxing at home, listening to music or watching her favourite Meryl Streep movie.

## **Testimonial**

**"Minni Katariya is a professional who provides sound counsel, marrying legal implications with business needs according to the organizational goals. She has always displayed a rare ability to pick up the pieces and construct the big picture, without losing time. Her passion towards timely completion of tasks along with the ability to break big hurdles into smaller challenges has ensured the desired results for the organization, time and again. I am yet to come across a legal professional who has a grasp of the commercial implication of business decisions, therefore allowing not just a meeting of compliances but also the adoption of the best governance policies."**

**Ratul Puri, Chairman, Hindustan Powerprojects Pvt. Ltd.**

# NAVITA CHAUBAL

General Counsel - South Asia  
Wipro GE Healthcare Pvt. Ltd.

## Navita's Personal Philosophy

Always be humble and compassionate  
There is no substitute to hard work, honesty  
and sincerity in whatever you do  
Be charitable and help the less fortunate

“A corporate counsel has a strategic and  
business partnership function that keeps  
business safe and compliant by ensuring the  
application of a strong legal framework while  
keeping the business in focus. It is a critical,  
responsible role that builds a safe  
environment to makes new business models  
and innovation possible.”

## Testimonial

“In addition to her legal acumen, Navita is a  
true business partner. She strives to see around  
corners, learn the context of the business,  
pushes herself and her team to deliver  
outcomes that matter and never shies away  
from hard work and tough calls. It was a  
pleasure to partner with her as my general  
counsel.”

**Munesh Makhija, CEO, GE India and GE China  
Technology Centers, Chief Technology Officer,  
GE South Asia and GE China, GE Global  
Research**



**N**avita Chaubal's 23-year professional career has seen her cover a gamut of industries - FMCGs, Healthcare, Telecommunications, Renewable Energy and Technology. Not surprising, given that she is a woman of the world with a deep interest in other markets and cultures. Currently the Head of Legal in Wipro GE Healthcare Pvt. Ltd. - South Asia, Navita has thrived in the exposure she has had with international clients and teams in Southeast Asia, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, USA, UK, China, Austria, Belgium, and Spain. She has mentored teams to align with business requirements, conducted audits, verified operational efficiency, and established, evaluated & improved internal control systems. Among other things, she has been charged with handling Merger & Acquisitions, Commercial negotiations, Legal Enforcement, Dispute Resolution, Regulatory Compliance, Risk Management, Legal & Administrative Strategy, Corporate Governance, Project Management and Contract Management.

Prior to Wipro GE Healthcare, Navita was General Counsel at the GE India Technology Centre. She has also held positions of responsibility at Marico, PepsiCo India Holdings, Bharti Cellular, Ranbaxy Laboratories, and Suzlon Energy.

Travelling the world with her family and immersing herself in other cultures is just one way in which Navita relaxes. She enjoys the weekend with her family and friends, regaling them with stories of people she's observed.

She advises lawyers who want to head legal departments to develop subject matter expertise. "Learn the business and spend time with the commercial teams as much as possible. Partner with business teams, co-own business outcomes and don't just sit on fringes to merely advise."

## **Testimonial**

**"Navita is an experienced legal counsel with the unique ability to balance strategic agility with operational excellence. A trusted business partner, Navita leverages her strong subject grasp and team leadership not only for effective risk management but also for building differentiation and turning compliance into organizational strength. Agile, customer focused, and always ready to help, Navita is an asset for our team. Add to that her humility, and it makes her an exceptional human and professional."**

**Mandeep Singh Kumar, Chief Commercial Officer, GE Healthcare - India & South Asia**

## **NISHI SAIGAL**

**Chief General Manager (Law)  
Indian Oil Corporation Limited**

### **Nishi's Personal Philosophy**

**TEAM - Together Everyone  
Achieves More**

**Two heads are always better than one**

**“The role of in-house corporate counsel is not what is commonly perceived as someone who liaises with advocates and attends hearings as a mute spectator. I strongly believe that an in-house counsel's role is of one who aids in formulating policies and making business decisions. The in-house counsel is no longer confined to the boundaries of dispute settlement but her role is also one of risk assessment and that of a successful negotiator of business deals, so as to avoid potential disputes. Ensuring compliances under various laws and executed contracts is an equally important role of an in-house counsel.”**



Fearless but soft-hearted, awe-inspiring but humble, Nishi Saigal handles a portfolio that would weigh a normal person down. A 37-year veteran of the legal profession, Nishi has been with the Indian Oil Corporation Limited, the country's largest commercial enterprise, for the last 33 years and is presently its Corporate Legal Head as well as the Chief General Manager (Law), Corporate Affairs Department. Nishi began her career at the chambers of a Senior Advocate in the Supreme Court of India, where she specialized in civil law. At Indian Oil, she provides leadership to all mergers & acquisitions, creation of joint ventures & subsidiaries carried out by the Corporation. She has handled numerous litigations, arbitrations - domestic and international - cases involving Competition Law, Intellectual Property Rights and commercial contracts, including LNG and Gas Sale Purchase Agreements, JV Agreements, Licence Technology Agreements and Exploration & Production Agreements. She is the Nodal Officer for monitoring and implementing the RTI Act in the Corporation.

Nishi is also the Chairperson of the Standing Legal Committee of the Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) and a member of the Steering Committee on RTI, SCOPE. Given her experience, she is widely sought after for her insights into the Arbitration Act, Contract Act and RTI. Leading a team of 90 lawyers, Nishi surely knows more than a thing or two about heading a legal department. "Anyone looking to head an in-house team, should not only imbibe the qualities of being a team worker but must understand how to also keep the team motivated. Be disciplined and a true guide." She advises them to be pro-active while handling issues and project themselves as "business enablers" rather than "business blockers". Nishi has immense admiration for Senior Advocate Indira Jaising. "Her active role as a fighter for human rights and women in particular is truly remarkable and inspiring".

Nishi doesn't scare easily. She is known to have fearlessly chased down a 'young lad' through a narrow congested lane to recover the mobile phone he had grabbed from her. Not only did she manage to catch him, she was ready to drag him away by the collar to the police station. But her soft heart took over and she let the boy go when he pleaded forgiveness. It is this large heart that makes her want to give back to society by working with an NGO or a legal aid cell, something she plans to do actively when she retires. For now, she relaxes on the weekends by spending time among her plants or dining out with her family.

# NITIN MITTAL

Head of Legal, Compliance and Company  
Secretary - Indian Subcontinent  
Philips Lighting India Limited

## Nitin's Personal Philosophy

Life is to be lived each day  
So, give it the best you can

Be fair, honest and just with people that you  
interact with in all spheres of life

“The role of a corporate counsel is to give strategic and corrective direction to the company to ensure that all legal and compliance risks are adequately addressed. The idea is not only to safeguard the company and its reputation, but also to ring-fence it from all possible litigation and non-compliance issues. A corporate counsel is the company's conscience-keeper”

## Testimonial

“Nitin has built an excellent legal team in India, put in place the Philips' Global legal policies and procedures, brought the team much closer to the business, making the legal function a key business partner, and connected his team to the greater legal function altogether. Nitin's leadership and ability to anticipate and manage shareholder issues is much appreciated by senior management. A proactive lawyer with an international mindset, Nitin is also always willing to reach out and help other lawyers across markets and jurisdictions.”

Israel Ismail Louis, Vice President and  
General Counsel, Growth Markets,  
Philips Lighting Global



**F**or Nitin Mittal, work as in-house counsel is an intrinsic part of his being and the practice of law a life-long passion. It is what defines him. No wonder then that he was listed among the top 500 GCs in India in the directory of the World IP form in 2017. A B.Com. (H) graduate from Delhi University, a Masters Degree from NLSIU, Bangalore and a professionally qualified advocate, company secretary and a fellow member of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India, Nitin currently heads the Legal and Compliance team for Philips Lighting India Limited in the Indian subcontinent. His responsibilities include Corporate Legal Advisory, Litigation, Corporate Governance and Compliance. Prior to Philips Lighting, Nitin had a ten-year stint at OSRAM India Pvt. Ltd., where he was Head of Legal, Compliance and Company Secretary. He also served as a Director in OSRAM Lighting Private Limited, and has worked for four years with Cosmo Ferrites Ltd.

A lawyer, 'by accident' rather than a civil servant, which he wanted to be, Nitin has over the last 15 years handled functions covering Legal, Compliance, Insurance and Real Estate, while leading teams on mergers/demergers/corporate restructuring, acquisitions and integration of acquired companies, civil and criminal litigations and high stake arbitrations. He has set up new plants, established contract management processes, implemented compliance programs and managed complex projects with regional and global implications.

Nitin balances off his long hours at work by watching a movie with his wife and two girls, Natasha and Tiara, or relaxing with a book from his prized collection. When he is able to, he and his family will drive up to the hills in Manali or relax by the beach in Goa. For those looking to head an in-house team, Nitin's believes they must have a deep understanding of business - its structure, revenue channels and profitability - as well as the legal, compliance and regulatory challenges that companies are likely to face.

## **Testimonial**

**"As a General Counsel and Company Secretary for Philips Lighting India Limited, Nitin has been a terrific business partner as well as a conscience keeper for the organisation, handling both dimensions of this role equally effectively. Often one finds a GC who is very conservative and compliance oriented, but with a reduced focus on the business partnering needed to navigate complex contracts and negotiations. That is not so with Nitin. In every negotiation, Nitin brings in a practical perspective and tries to secure a win win arrangement with the counter party."**

**Harshavardhan Chitale, Managing Director and Vice- Chairman, Philips Lighting India Limited**

## **POOJA SEHGAL MEHTANI**

**Head - Legal and Secretarial  
Sun Life India Service Centre Pvt. Ltd.**

### **Pooja's Personal Philosophy**

**Derive joy out of small things in life  
Good things will happen, bad things will  
happen. Just keep moving forward**

**“Corporate Counsels today are performing more business-centric roles, looking for ways to add greater strategic and commercial value to their organisations. Boards increasingly look to their Corporate Counsels to contribute at a strategic level; and whatever their professional remit or legal specialization, lawyers who really understand the more holistic dimensions of a business will be in a position to provide the best advice to their Boards. They also have the critical role of an ethical watchdog, tasked with ensuring corporate compliance in accordance with the law.”**



A connoisseur of fine art, food and fashion, a cleanliness fiend, a bibliophile, a collector of good pens and a hard-nosed lawyer - that is Pooja Mehtani for you. Currently Head - Legal and Secretarial, Sun Life India Service Centre Pvt. Ltd., Pooja has close to 15 years of experience working in the domain of Legal and Corporate Affairs. She was with the French infrastructure and environmental services group, Suez, for 11 years as its Legal Counsel, Company Secretary and Ethics & Compliance officer, where she spearheaded the legal & risk analysis and review process for complex tenders and handled extremely challenging situations, including JV partnership complexities and Board Management with varying stakeholder interests. She was also responsible for the group's legal and corporate affairs, compliances, contracts, contract management and ethics. Prior to Suez, she spent the first three years of her career with Sanspareils Greenlands Pvt. Ltd., a leading manufacturer of cricket gear, managing their corporate and secretarial affairs. A law graduate, Pooja has undergone various leadership programmes with her organizations and an Executive Management Programme at the Department of Management Studies, IIT Delhi.

She believes the greatest test of leadership is how well a team performs without its leader. And that is what she advises lawyers aspiring to head in-house teams to be aware of. Be ready for a continuous journey of unlearning and learning each day. Be adaptable to change and adopt a pro-active approach in supporting business functions. These words have always stood her in good stead and she believes will lay the foundation of a strong in-house team. She points to her mentor Dr. Akhil Prasad, Country Counsel India at Boeing as an example of a great leader. "His continuous passion and drive to evolve each day and his work across different industries in the global Legal arena is an inspiration."

## Testimonial

**"Pooja leads our Legal and Secretarial Function and is a core member of the India management team. She offers advice not just on law and related matters but helps shape discussion and debate on business issues. Her forte is to operate and support seamlessly across business teams. She collaborates with business on various legal and contractual fronts by adopting a holistic approach. She demonstrates a strong ability to lead and is adaptable to handle challenges and opportunities that come her way."**

**Chandan Barve, Vice President and Director on the Board of Sun Life India Service Centre Pvt. Ltd.**

## **PRARABDHA R. JAIPURIAR**

**General Counsel  
SUEZ India  
Indian Subcontinent**

### **Prarabha's Personal Philosophy**

**Do not ever overestimate yourself or  
underestimate others**

**Value human emotions and relationships**

**“A corporate counsel’s job is to help a business grow without it having to worry about legal risks. He should be able to anticipate and address challenges and offer pragmatic solutions. He must always be ready to be called upon to take charge in tough times. And above all, a corporate counsel has a vital role to play in ensuring that the business is conducted in an ethical manner. To that end, their role is also to be watchful.”**



An Indian Pilgrim by Subhash Chandra Bose sits on Prarabdha Jaipurkar's bookshelf as a reminder of the sacrifices people make for the greater good of the country. A coffee mug with a picture of his family rests on his desk, reinforcing the importance of balancing work with time at home. Both these are constant reminders that while work for him is worship, life has a greater purpose and human relationships transcend all else. Prarabdha started his career as a lawyer with Amitabha Sen & Co., working on general corporate matters, IPR and dispute resolution. He then moved to King Stubb & Kasiva to focus on corporate commercial laws, infrastructure, private equity and insurance law. He subsequently joined O. P. Khaitan & Co. as a Principal Associate to work on corporate commercial laws, joint ventures, M&A, banking and exchange control. All three stints prepared him for his current tenure at the erstwhile Suez Environnement - Degremont India (now, SUEZ India), where he joined in 2013 as Legal Counsel, before rapidly moving up the ranks to become Head Legal the following year. His guidance facilitated the acquisition of the company's majority stake in Driplex, sealing the relationship between two leading players in the market. Jaipurkar has represented SUEZ India in a series of meetings held by Ministry of Water Resources on the hybrid annuity model being developed to set up sewage treatment plants to clean the river Ganga. Prarabdha is inspired and overwhelmed by lawyers who work selflessly to protect our civil liberties - many of them without recognition or remuneration. He believes very strongly that if legal professionals decided to give back to society by supporting a cause or a charity or by spreading legal awareness, it could make a huge difference. To those aspiring to lead in-house legal teams, he suggests that they start by first understanding the business. "It may take you a while to get a grasp but keep trying". Never stop learning, he advises. "Keep yourself updated and keep working on your core skills." And lastly, he asks that they focus on the team. "Build a team. Train your team members well. They may outgrow you. Let them. Don't just manage, lead."

## Testimonial

**"We are an organisation working mainly with State and City governments in the water sector. This sector is politically and socially sensitive and hence we are always exposed to political and social opposition and litigation. This calls for a cutting edge legal set-up. Mr Jaipurkar heads the legal department and provides a high level of timely preventive and proactive legal advice. He anticipates risks and advises promptly on a mitigation strategy which is critical for business. He has a good understanding of business conditions and therefore, offers legal solutions which are also feasible from a commercial and operational perspective."**

**A. Mahendra, Assistant Vice President - Sales & Business Development, Water, Treatment solutions, Recycling and Waste Recovery - Indian subcontinent, SUEZ India**

# PRATEUSH SHARMA

General Counsel  
Mankind Pharma Limited

## Prateush's Personal Philosophy

Move on, without being the judge or jury

“The role of a corporate counsel is that of a strategist, risk mitigator, transactional professional and a litigator, with an obligation to maintain cost efficiency without compromising on effectiveness. A corporate counsel must communicate with business to understand their issues and provide viable and tangible solutions. Today as businesses are subject to increasing regulations and legal departments to increasing business pressures, it is important to educate the business about maintaining a balance.”

## Testimonial

“Prateush has a very refreshing approach and an open mind and ability to break down complex issues to provide solutions to business problems. Rather than approaching problems from a purely legal perspective, his ingenuity has helped us in taking qualified positions and has served the Company well.”

**Rajeev Kr Saxena, VP-Business Development  
& Planning, Mankind Pharma Limited**



Few can boast of the broad spectrum of experience that Prateush Sharma has. A 17-year stint with Indian Customs, almost four and a half years with Viraj Profiles and another five-years with law firms MV Kini and Co. and Kochhar and Co. have given Prateush a smorgasbord of invaluable experience that many would be envious of. At Indian Customs, where he began his career in 1991, Prateush was instrumental in setting up the first private port and CFSS. He examined all issues related to Classification, Valuation, FTP, Country of Origin and MRP, presented the department's case before the Settlement Commission, drafted charge sheets and orders, handled cases before the Appellate Authority and CAT and coordinated on behalf of the department with the Law Ministry.

At Viraj Profiles Limited, the world's leading manufacturer of stainless steel long products, Prateush's portfolio included legal and regulatory matters, taxation, strategy planning, liaising and coordination, statutory compliances, labour matters, contracts, agreements and acquisitions. He was responsible for health checks and internal and statutory audits. He acted as a bridge and point of contact between all supporting functions and businesses for resolving issues and risk mitigation. He liaised with government agencies and ministries at the state and Centre. His tenure with MV Kini and Co. and Kochhar and Co. saw him handling regulatory representation, litigation and advising on a plethora of provisions including antidumping matters, statutory compliances and the setting up and de-bonding of SEZ, STPI and EOU.

In his present position as General Counsel, Chief Risk and Compliance Officer at Mankind Pharma Limited, Prateush has been instrumental in the successful closure of all critical litigation. He has also been effective in handling litigation pertaining to a wide range of statutes relating to the pharmaceutical industry as well as Tax, Employment, Corporate and Anti-Trust laws.

His believes collective domain expertise in both legal and the specific industry is key to good corporate governance, compliance and effective risk management and is a necessary skill for all those aspiring to head in-house legal teams.

A guitar, a bonfire, a group of friends and a beach in Goa are all it takes for Prateush to unwind. It is how he spends his weekends too - jamming with his friends at home.

## **PRIYA MEHRA**

**General Counsel  
InterGlobe Aviation Limited (“IndiGo”)**

### **Priya’s Personal Philosophy**

**Be sincere in whatever you do, putting in all possible effort which ultimately yields positive results and a great sense of satisfaction.**

**“The role of a corporate counsel is to ensure that the operations of the Company run smoothly by providing practical solutions to the issues or circumstances within the parameter of complying with the law”.**



Priya is a post graduate in Law from the University of Delhi. She is dual qualified to practice in India and England & Wales, and has an extensive background working in the Indian markets. Her areas of practice include mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, private equity, privatization, capital markets and general corporate advice. Prior to joining IndiGo, Priya worked for five years with AZB & Partners before moving to Singapore to work at Jones Day, followed by Gibson Dunn. She heads a team of 16 lawyers at IndiGo.

Her advice to anyone leading an in-house team is to treat the Company like your client and the team as a law firm advising the client. She suggests that they treat matters or issues with a solution-oriented approach and not just provide the law on the subject.

She has the utmost respect for Jai Pathak, Ajay Bahl, Probal Bhaduri, Aditya Ghosh, and most importantly her family, who have all played a critical role in nurturing her career.

She believes nothing works as well as a good sense of humour to put people at ease and to establish strong relationships with peers, seniors and juniors alike.

## Testimonial

**“The role of the General Counsel in IndiGo is multi-faceted. On the one hand, it is to make sure that we are within the 'straight and narrow' as our Board attaches a huge amount of importance to corporate governance and on the other hand, it is the role of the business partner to our operating and commercial teams. Priya Mehra, our General Counsel understands this fully and plays that role to the fullest. Priya comes from an interesting background where she has had experience with working in both Indian law firms and foreign law firms. Priya understands the opportunities and demands of growing a business in India and also has the ability to bring with her global best in class standards. Ours is a fast-moving business which is also on a high growth trajectory. This brings with it the need for Priya and her team to quickly adapt to the changing needs of the business without compromising on quality and compliance. In a short span of time, the commercial teams of the business have come to greatly rely on Priya and her team to come up with sustainable solutions to complex challenges.”**

**Aditya Ghosh, President & Whole Time Director, IndiGo**

# **RAJEEV CHOPRA**

**Managing Director - Legal  
Accenture**

## **Rajeev's Personal Philosophy**

**Consistently display a strong work ethic  
and work smart**

**Maintain a healthy work-life balance**

**Do things that interest you, and don't wait  
to do them in the future**

**Be empathetic and respect all**

**Corporate counsel have to be seen as  
trusted advisors and partners, and not as  
bottlenecks.**

**Providing pragmatic solutions, and risk  
mitigation strategies is key to the success  
of in-house lawyers. Corporate counsel  
must foster a culture of respect, fairness  
and ethical conduct as it is critical to the  
business and its people. A general counsel  
has the added responsibility of creating  
future leaders, empowering and  
mentoring them and nurturing them in  
such a way that they become trusted  
business partners rather than just  
in-house counsel.**



**R**ajeev Chopra, in his career spanning over 23 years, has been a litigator, worked in law firms and led the legal function for Indian and multinational companies. He started with private practice in the Delhi High Court, then moved to law firms, before moving to industry, leading the legal teams in Airtel and Dell. He joined Accenture in 2007, where he heads the India Geographic Unit Legal team, including Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and supports the legal affairs for the company's Global Delivery Network. Rajeev leads a team of legal professionals, who are responsible for local and global compliances, operational matters, regulatory affairs, employment laws and ethics.

To those who want to head in-house legal teams, he says, "Build relationships, be empathetic, have a strong work ethic, stay in tune with the latest and forthcoming developments in law and technology and be seen as a business enabler".

Rajeev's interests range from travel to cars, films and books. Travelling around Europe on a cruise ship is just the kind of holiday he enjoys with his family. He lists *My Cousin Vinny* as one of best films he's seen and books by Khushwant Singh as his favourite reads.

## Testimonial

**"Rajeev Chopra has a Global role to support legal affairs for the Global Delivery Network and also heads the India Geographic Unit Legal team, including Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Rajeev leads a team of legal professionals, who are responsible for local and global compliances, operational matters, regulatory affairs, employment laws, and ethics. Rajeev has played a very pivotal role in synchronizing business needs and legal requirements and holds the reputation of a trusted advisor for Accenture's business in India. Rajeev creates value for the organization by building and encouraging trust-based relationships and mentoring and encouraging his team to be successful leaders for the future. The leadership at Accenture in India depends on Rajeev's legal guidance, be it from running daily businesses to demystifying complex regulatory and policy changes. He is a credible counsel and a trusted partner for all of us here at Accenture."**

**Ajay Vij, Managing Director - India Geographic Services Lead, Accenture India**

## **RAJEEV MERKHEDKAR**

**General Counsel & Global Head - COO  
Legal, Regulatory & Legal Operations  
Nokia Corporation**

### **Rajeev's Personal Philosophy**

**Life is a party. Plan well to be able to  
enjoy it.**

**“The role of a corporate counsel is that of  
a business partner and gatekeeper with  
professional expertise”**



**R**ajeev Merkhedkar is an international technology lawyer having done business across the world and lived in Helsinki, Dubai and New Delhi. He is currently the General Counsel for Nokia's COO organization which includes global manufacturing, operations, IT, data privacy, export control, regulations and legal operations. Rajeev and his team have been responsible for implementing several initiatives to drive operational efficiencies for the legal department, including setting up a captive offshore centre, a global law firm panel and now exploring possibilities to leverage AI. Rajeev has also been the lead lawyer supporting the integration of Alcatel Lucent into Nokia as part of the 16.6 billion USD acquisition. He was involved in structuring and deploying an innovative operating model that enabled Nokia and Alcatel to operate as one company ahead of schedule, thereby deriving value out of the transaction significantly ahead of the original plan.

He is impressed with the work that multiple stakeholders are doing for opening-up the Indian legal market to foreign lawyers. "This will be one of the most impactful change in our profession in the last several decades, especially for the opportunities it will create for our younger colleagues," he says. To those looking to head in-house legal teams, he has three specific suggestions (i) have the ability to pre-empt and lead change. This is key to success in this furiously disruptive economy; (ii) be respectful to diversity and ideas, it's evermore important given the changing geo-political landscape; (iii) most innovation today is bottom up and a leader must create an environment of collaboration and enable ideation. Rajeev loves reading, travelling and adventure sports - having done the highest bungee jump in the world and travelled to over 50 countries. His all-time favourite thing to do on Saturday is to binge watch fantasy movies with his two daughters.

## Testimonial

**"Rajeev Merkhedkar has been the Global Lead Counsel for the acquisition and integration of Alcatel Lucent into Nokia. With his ability to lead with the most professional and outcome based approach he was instrumental to the success of this benchmark M&A process. Rajeev Merkhedkar did not only design a flawlessly executed regulatory and legal framework process for the integration of two very large companies, but also an industry first 'Master Service Agreement' which allowed a seamless and un-interrupted operational business execution between the two companies. This unique approach instituted a corporate governance process which led to fully operationalizing the new Target Organizations while finalizing the regulatory and stock market acceptance of the public offering phases. His ability to draw on extensive legal experience, innovative process creation and negotiation experience was fundamental to the success of the whole team."**

**Joerg Erlemeier, Chief Integration Officer & COO, Mobile Networks Nokia**

## **RASHMI KATHPALIA**

**Senior Vice President - Legal  
Technip India Ltd.**

### **Rashmi's Personal Philosophy**

#### **Keep the Balance**

**“A corporate counsel will keep the company safe, sound and in-business, by keeping the management aware of all the project/market risks and mitigations thereof; to keep it in strict statutory compliance so as not to attract scrutiny by the authorities. Striking a balance between risk-taking and risk-mitigation in each project is the business value addition that a corporate counsel must offer.”**



**R**ashmi Kathpalia began her career as a litigation lawyer, as an Associate to Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal. She developed her own private practice for over a decade. She is a British Chevening Scholar from the College Of Law, York (U.K), a scholarship funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, U.K and administered by the British Council. In 1998, she joined Bechtel Corp. as its sole in-house counsel in India. In this role, she advised Bechtel's global senior management on all India-related legal issues. Her remit covered EPC Contracts and Commercial transactions, Company Law, Infrastructure Construction Laws, Environmental Laws, Social Security laws for international workers, Employment Laws, Statutory and Regulatory Compliance, Data Protection, Intellectual Property, Arbitration, Joint Ventures, Transfer of Property and Risk Management. She drafted, reviewed and negotiated contracts, managed litigation, advised on corporate governance (including global corporate policy drafting), liaised with government and statutory authorities and managed all India-related litigation. Since 2015, she is the Senior Vice President-Legal at Technip India Limited (the Indian subsidiary of a French Oil & Gas construction company). She wears several hats at Technip. Other than legal, she is a key management participant in the Business, HR, and Finance divisions. Not only is she responsible for establishing and administering the legal strategy but also as a member of the senior management team, she contributes to the effective leadership of the company, focusing specifically on risk, governance and compliance. Given her vast portfolio, Rashmi makes sure her weekends are well spent, either relaxing over dinner with family and friends or writing and illustrating stories for children, which she hopes she will publish one day.

## **Testimonials**

**"In working with Rashmi as Bechtel India's in-house legal advisor, on some complex legal issues in India, she displayed not only a good substantive knowledge but a practical approach to work all angles of a problem. I would recommend her without reservation."**

**John Deshong, Principal Vice President & Head of Global Tax, Bechtel Group**

**"I worked with Rashmi for many years as an in-house legal colleague in the Bechtel group of companies, and I have a high professional and personal regard for her. I found her to be a smart lawyer who capably and conscientiously handled the projects she worked on. At Bechtel she was a well-rounded counselor, tuned in to business and political considerations as well as legal issues. She dealt with international transactions as well as a wide variety of legal matters arising in Bechtel's India office."**

**Jeff Godwin, Senior Counsel, Bechtel Corporation**

# **RAVI RAJAGOPAL**

**Executive Vice President, Global Head-Legal,  
Risk and Governance  
CG Power & Industrial Solutions Limited  
(Formerly Crompton Greaves Limited)**

## **Ravi's Personal Philosophy**

**Give your best without expecting results  
Lead a stress-free life**

**“The role of a corporate counsel is to aid and  
advise the business, keeping in mind the law  
and the risks involved.”**

## **Testimonial**

**“Ravi has impeccable credentials as the Global  
General Counsel of CG. His depth in  
international mergers & acquisitions, especially  
the ability to work with senior leaders from  
different cultures helped us make good  
breakthroughs in some entity level deals that  
CG pursued in the recent past in Europe and  
North America. His ability to work with people,  
penchant to get into details, subject matter  
expertise, good insights and responsiveness  
stood out in the critical projects he closely  
worked with me. Ravi brings to the table an  
ability to integrate business needs with a legal  
perspective, thereby creating a unique balance  
which is a true enabler for value creation.”**

**K N Neelkant, CEO & Managing Director, CG  
Power & Industrial Solutions Limited (formerly  
Crompton Greaves Limited)**



**R**avi Rajagopal is Executive Vice President, Global Head-Legal, Risk & Governance of CG Power & Industrial Solutions Limited (formerly Crompton Greaves Limited). He is on the Executive Committee of the Company. An Honours Commerce Graduate from St Xavier's College, Kolkata, he studied Law from Calcutta University and is a Fellow member of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India.

Ravi has been associated with diversified industries - Financial Services, Hotels, Advertising, Public Relations, Infrastructure, Construction, Metals, Mining, Power and Industrial Solutions. He started his career in 1987 with the Pressman group, a company with interests in financial services, hotels, advertising & public relations, and handled their legal, financial documentation, merchant banking, secretarial, fund sourcing and mergers & acquisitions. He worked briefly with Jaiprakash Industries Limited (presently Jaiprakash Associates Limited) between 2001 and 2002, before shifting in 2002 to Vedanta Limited, where, as its Senior Vice President (Legal), he led the legal and secretarial functions of their Aluminium and Power business. In 2013, he worked for a year with Essar Steel Limited as its General Counsel before joining CG Power & Industrial Solutions Limited.

Ravi has handled several high-stake, complex legal and strategic issues in domestic and overseas M&As, high value commercial contracts, mining, environment, taxation, domestic and international litigations and arbitrations. He has been involved in legal matters and M&As in the US, Latin America, Canada, Belgium, UK, Hungary, Spain, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. Ravi has considerable experience in Risk Management and the formulation of policies and procedures for organizations.

For those aspiring to be legal heads, he advises that they train themselves to be aligned to the objectives of the business and to understand the business in totality, which in turn would help them in assessing business risks and taking decisions in all aspects of the law, whether it is a contractual provision or litigation. Ravi relaxes by spending time at home, servicing his collection of writing pens or tuning up his 1961 Murphy 3 Band radio.

## **SANJAY NAMBIAR**

**Group President and General Counsel  
YES Bank Limited**

### **Sanjay's Personal Philosophy**

**Using “common sense” is not a crime**

**“The role of a General Counsel is to create balance in terms of the legal and regulatory compliance in all facets of business. The GC role is to ‘see around the corners’ and deliver what is in the best interest of business, keeping in mind the four corners of the law. Increasingly, the GC's role has become that of a legal and business advisor to the senior leadership team.”**



For Sanjay Nambiar, the law is all-consuming. It is his profession; it is also his hobby, for in his free time Sanjay either immerses himself in case law or legal and crime fiction. A lawyer with over 23 years of experience, Sanjay is the Group President & General Counsel - Legal Risk Management, YES Bank Ltd., a position he has held since 2010. With extensive experience in the field of banking and finance, especially on structured finance, corporate restructuring and insolvency laws, Sanjay currently heads the Legal Risk Management vertical of the Bank. He liaises with all the relevant regulatory bodies and provides guidance to the Bank's subsidiaries on various legal aspects of YES Securities Limited (mainly in the equity broking business); YES Foundation, the Corporate Social Responsibility arm of the Bank, and is actively involved in setting up its Asset Management arm and Custodial business, which are yet to be formally launched. As General Counsel of the Bank, he and his team of 40 lawyers work closely with the Risk Monitoring Committee, Reputation Risk Management Committee, Fraud Monitoring Committee, Audit Committee and the Crisis Management Team.

Sanjay started off in the Calicut District Courts and then, in the High Court of Kerala, where as an advocate for almost seven years, he handled civil, criminal, labour, service, insurance and consumer law matters. He even served as standing counsel for several government corporations such as the Plantation Corporation and Malabar Cement Ltd., which served him in good stead, as he took his first steps in the role of an in-house counsel with the Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation Limited as Assistant Manager - Legal. This was followed by stints at the Industrial Development Bank of India, as its Assistant General Manager - Legal, Stressed Assets Stabilization Fund, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, ICICI Bank Limited as Chief Manager (Legal) and subsequently with the Asset Reconstruction Company of India. In 2007, he went back to ICICI Bank, where as Deputy General Manager, he was in charge of several legal verticals, including Corporate Banking, Special Structuring, Special Assets, Global Infrastructure & Administration, Human Resources Management, Financial Crime Prevention and Reputation Management. Sanjay thinks it is imperative that those seeking to head in-house teams first understand the business of the organization, the applicable laws and regulations and interact with business colleagues to understand their requirements and compulsions. "Never say that legally it is not possible. Be a solution provider and not a legal hurdle, because without business, there is no real role for an in-house legal counsel. Weekends are strictly reserved for his family, though you may just find him absorbed in the latest crime thriller.

## **SEEMA SINGH**

**Associate Director  
Abbott India Limited**

### **Seema's Personal Philosophy**

**Fundamentals should be crystal clear**

**“The role of a corporate counsel is that of  
driving business as an integral entity”**



**S**eema Singh is a somewhat rare breed in the Indian legal profession. Though a lawyer by profession, she has successfully led the patent function for pharmaceutical companies, a role often reserved for a technical expert. She started her career as a patent attorney with Mumbai-based intellectual property firm Gopakumar Nair Associates in 2005, and moved on to join Sandoz India for a brief period of one year and was soon inducted to their global litigation team. In 2006, she joined Macleods Pharmaceuticals to support Research & Development for a period of over 10 years, moving up the ranks from being Assistant Manager (IPM) to Vice President (Legal and IPM). She joined Abbott India in 2017 as Associate Director (Legal).

In her twelve years of experience, she has considerable experience working on numerous ANDAs including PIV litigations for blockbuster drugs. She has ably supervised the entire life cycle of many generic products from R&D to market launch in North American and European markets.

“Be credible and retain positivism at the height of despair” is her advice to those seeking to lead their in-house teams.

Seema likes to go on long drives to relax. Or you’ll find her with guitar in hand, holidaying at her favourite vacation spot, Goa.

## **SHARAD SHARMA**

**Regional General Counsel - Performance  
Materials and Technologies  
Honeywell International India**

### **Sharad's Personal Philosophy**

**The trick is in the doing**

**Be consistent, ethical and business  
focused with a “can do” approach**

**“Today’s role of a general counsel is of a true business partner who can provide creative, definite and result-oriented solutions. A GC needs to represent the Company before various external forums for effective and strategic advocacy. As a strategic partner, a GC comprehensively counsels business with his legal and commercial acumen while dealing with transactions, joint ventures, strategic alliances, M&A, integrations, government advocacy, protection of intellectual property, trade compliance, and dispute resolutions.”**



**S**harad Sharma is the Regional General Counsel for Honeywell Performance Materials and Technologies (PMT) Indian Sub-continent. In his current role, Sharad serves as a legal advisor to PMT in India, partnering with the business and functional teams to support growth, implement business plans, and facilitate key strategic projects. These include advising on issues related to transactions, licensing/protection of intellectual property, anti-trust, real estate, compliance, employment, supervising affairs of joint ventures, strategic alliances, government advocacy, M&A, integrations, trade compliance and dispute resolution. Sharad also leads a team of India-based attorneys and patent specialists that provide transactional and intellectual property support to PMT's strategic business unit. He also serves as the Business Conduct Leader for PMT Indian Sub-continent. Earlier, Sharad spent close to nine years in the PMT law department, supporting the regional and global transactional and general advisory role.

Sharad joined Honeywell in March 2009 from Brightpoint India, a U.S.-based multinational corporation, where he served as Legal and Commercial Head. Prior to that, Sharad served as Legal Counsel and Company Secretary for Samsung India Electronics. Sharad also previously served as Senior Associate in the transactional practice of Singhanian & Partners LLP, a law firm in New Delhi. Gurgaon is home for Sharad, his wife Anu, their daughter, Lavanya and his mother. Running 4-5kms every day keeps him energetic and de-stressed through the day. Having dinner with his family unwinds him. Apart from a bachelor's degree in commerce and bachelor's degree in law, Sharad is a fellow member of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India. He is Six Sigma Green belt certified. Sharad believes leading an in-house team needs perseverance and clear strategy to lay the foundation for the team that can effectively support the business and for the career growth of its members. Selection of the right skill sets and behaviours is the key.

## Testimonial

**"For a multinational company like Honeywell, operating in India is both a great opportunity and a great challenge. The dexterity needed to navigate 40 to 400-page government tenders while still continuing to be India's leading Technology Licensor in the Oil & Gas Industry is a great achievement. Sharad has provided this much-needed dexterity for Honeywell. Developing the legal organization from a nascent one-man army to a full-fledged team of dedicated professionals was no mean feat. From negotiating contractual terms to partnering in setting business strategies, his contributions have been fundamental to Honeywell's success. Amazing!"**

**Uday Prabhudesai - Director Technology Sales, Honeywell**

# **SHYAM KUMAR KUDARI**

**Legal Head  
Synchrony Financial**

## **Shyam's Personal Philosophy**

**Thank God for everything!**



**B**etter hold on tight to Shyam Kumar Kudari, because this senior attorney with 18 years' experience has plans of becoming a mainstream musician. A qualified Grade 8 guitarist from Trinity College, London and the co-founder of a music studio, Shyam has, for the time being, parked his zeal for music to pursue his other passion - the law, particularly in the field of technology. Currently the Legal Head of Synchrony Financial India (previously GE Capital Retail Finance), he has also worked with Microsoft, Dell, Xerox and iGATE, advising on legal issues in areas as diverse as financial services outsourcing, cloud business and apps, digital games and content hosting, sales strategies on tabs, mobile, hardware accessories and gaming consoles, to market strategies, start-up acceleration and academic outreach programmes. Shyam has led the charge for setting up the channel partner model, factory and retail sales operations for Dell India. He was at the forefront of designing Microsoft India's startup accelerator programme and negotiating the first cloud partnership with the Government of India for BSNL. He is the first counsel to head the legal function of Synchrony Financial India, which was GE Capital Retail Finance India, a spinoff from GE.

Shyam finds the time to offer free legal counsel to startups, charitable firms and NGOs. Weekends are meant strictly for his family and to teach music and jam. While he admires the philosophical and strategic thinking of Brad Smith, the former GC of Microsoft, who he observed closely when he was at the company, he says he has, over the years, learnt a lot from the wise counsel of all his bosses.

His most important learning was that legal heads should be looked upon as solution providers rather than 'road blockers', sharing that as advice to those looking to lead in-house legal teams.

## **Testimonial**

**"Shyam has wonderfully integrated with the team and laid a strong foundation for the legal department during our historical separation from GE Capital into an independent Synchrony Financial. He understands the balance between legality and solution orientation. His diversified working experience is an asset to our company and I found Shyam as a lawyer with humour and legal sense."**

**Faisal Uddin Mir, CEO, Synchrony Financial, India.**

## **SIDDHARTH ANAND**

**Country Counsel - India  
H-D Motor Company India Pvt. Ltd.**

### **Siddharth's Personal Philosophy**

**Keep learning**

**Achieve big**

**Stay humble**

**Do good to others whenever you can**

**“A corporate counsel is a business facilitator - finding ways business can achieve growth objectives and taking risks while staying within the boundaries of the law and unwritten social rules. His role is to participate in the operations of the organization, as a lighthouse - providing input, support and feedback on business and people as a co-leader.”**



**A**lstom, CMC Ltd., DuPont, Bacardi and Harley-Davidson - that is a brand parade if there ever was one and Siddharth Anand has led each one of them at different points of time. Launching his career as an in-house counsel in 2002 with CMC Ltd. (A TATA Enterprise), Siddharth very quickly garnered expertise in Software Supply & Customization Agreements, Hardware & Software Maintenance Agreements, Software Consultancy Agreements, Information Technology Tenders and country risk analysis for CMC businesses in new territories. Following a six-year stint, he joined Alstom as their legal counsel, subsequently moving to DuPont where as their Senior Legal Counsel he had independent charge of all their compliance-related matters and legal affairs, including litigation and arbitration. Four years later, in 2013 he was appointed the India Legal Head by Bacardi with the responsibility of handling all their legal affairs, including compliance, litigation and arbitration. He was the lead for their strategic legal issues, formulating policies and a framework for establishing legal processes. He developed a compliance programme (antitrust, anti-bribery/FCPA) that covered training, the evaluation of the risk of corruption in business practices and the implementation of remedial action to mitigate risk.

## **Testimonial**

**“Siddharth, as Head of Legal for Harley-Davidson Motor Company’s operations in India, is an instrumental member of the Harley-Davidson legal department as well as Harley-Davidson India’s Leadership Team. Siddharth’s guidance of Harley-Davidson India’s commercial operations help support the company’s goal of reaching new customers outside of the United States. And the support Siddharth provides to the company’s supply base and manufacturing organizations ensure the suppliers we utilize in the Indian market and the motorcycles we produce at our manufacturing facility in India are of the quality our worldwide customers have come to expect. Siddharth continually delivers in a manner that exceeds expectations.”**

**Tony Dent, Director, Legal Affairs - Asia Pacific, Harley-Davidson Motor Company**

## **SIVARAM NAIR**

**EVP, Company Secretary, General  
Counsel and Ethics Officer  
Mphasis Limited**

### **Sivaram's Personal Philosophy**

**Stay fit and update your skills to be a  
successful professional**

**If you put the Company first in your  
official decisions, you will not go wrong**

**“The role of Corporate Counsel has  
evolved tremendously in the last 10 to 15  
years. They are now part of the Executive  
Council and an integral part of decision  
making.”**



**S**ivaram Nair is the Executive Vice President, Company Secretary, General Counsel & Officer - Ethics at Mphasis Limited, a company he has been with since 2005, enabling its transformation into a truly digital organization by building legal frameworks to operate in new technologies. As the head of its legal, secretarial, risk, internal audit and ethics functions, he has established templates and checklists for key processes, formulated RSU and ESOP Schemes and implemented them, conducted Committee, Board and Shareholder meetings and created what he calls an “IP Guru” for the protection and establishment of Intellectual Property Rights through regular awareness programmes on IP Compliance of Corporate Laws. Sivaram is currently on the Executive Council of Mphasis, and has four acquisitions under his belt. He is a founder member of Technology Law forum and a member of the CII National Regulatory Committee. Sivaram previously worked with Blue Star Infotech as its Company Secretary, managing its secretarial and legal responsibilities, including compliance with the Companies Act, SEBI and listing agreements, protecting its IP and the administration of trusts and ESOP schemes. He was instrumental in preventing an IT company in New York from using the tradename ‘BlueStar’ by negotiating a settlement.

Sivaram is a law graduate, fellow member of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India, a tennis player and a student of Hindu scriptures. He hopes to live by the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, even though, he says he is ‘far from the desired state’. He advises those looking to head legal departments, to engage with the team, empower them, give them challenging work and make them participate in discussions with the CEO and other function heads. “To be successful you need to have a good team. Collaborate with other functions and understand the business domain well. Regularly update your skills and have knowledge-sharing sessions between team members.”

## **Testimonial**

**“I have known Sivaram as a colleague for over eight years. I have worked closely with him on a variety of situations and issues apart from routine work. I’ve found him to be highly practical, business friendly and down to earth in his approach. Sivaram brings a practical, business oriented approach to discussions and negotiations rather than a purely legal perspective. He uses his knowledge to find solutions and work around complex problems or tricky negotiation points. His experience helps him to zero in on issues in contracts and business situations and offer a variety of solutions to handle them. Sivaram is diligent, strict and uncompromising on all issues, especially the ones related to ethics and compliance. He sets high standards which makes the rest of the management team comfortable knowing we are in safe hands.”**

**Gopinathan Padmanabhan, Chief Innovation Officer and President, Global Delivery,  
Mphasis Limited**

# SUDHANSHU RAI

Head - Legal and Compliances  
AkzoNobel India Limited

## Sudhanshu's Personal Philosophy

Keep it simple!

“Establishing an inspiring, healthy and happy team environment, setting processes to achieve efficiency and effectiveness; and bringing internationally acceptable quality and work ethics in to the work place make up the role of an in-house counsel.”

## Testimonial

“An in-house counsel is in a unique position to ensure that the company operates within the law at all times, offer counsel on legal issues, become an effective guardian of the organization and facilitate the development of business strategies. The local listed entity status in India means high expectations from all stakeholders, both internal and external. Sudhanshu has played a key role in ensuring that the organization remains updated on external developments with respect to the law and its implications for the business. This is critical for AkzoNobel, an MNC which sets high standards of compliance.”

**Pradip Menon, Director Finance,  
AkzoNobel India Limited**



IT's loss has been the legal profession's gain and we have Sudhanshu Rai's friend to thank for it. If he hadn't been tempted by the subterfuge of browsing the old Delhi book market to take the law entrance exam nearby, we might have lost Sudhanshu to the field of science and technology. Not only did this serious student of science clear the entrance exam, he went on to thrive as a qualified lawyer, particularly as an in-house counsel.

Now, more than a decade into the profession, Sudhanshu is Head - Legal and Compliance- India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand at AkzoNobel India Limited, a coatings and chemicals powerhouse. As a core member of the management, representing the company's legal function and as its Ethics Compliance and Investigation officer, he certainly has a full plate. Apart from the day to day legal affairs and support to the businesses in the region, Sudhanshu has the responsibility of leading and implementing the global ethics and compliance framework in India and South Asia. He convenes regional and country compliance committee meetings, leads investigations for ethics cases, ensures the implementation of the company's privacy and data protection policy and collaborates with the leadership team to de-risk the businesses. He is also responsible for legacy litigation management, including examining potential risks from legacy or ongoing cases. Among his other responsibilities is managing the defence of large size anti-dumping investigations in coordination with multi jurisdictional stake holders and local lawyers, consultants and government authorities.

Sudhanshu started his career in private practice, first with Saha & Ray Advocates, a leading real estate law firm in Kolkata, followed by a brief stint with Bajpai & Co., a leading telecommunication and technology law firm. He changed gear in 2005 after he was engaged by Bharti Airtel Limited as their Lead Lawyer - Legal and Regulatory, North India. Subsequently, he moved to Alcatel-Lucent India Ltd. as their Deputy General Manager-Legal and Compliances. He has been with AkzoNobel since 2016. Sudhanshu believes the success of a general counsel depends largely on his ability to balance his role as the lawyer and conscience keeper of the company with being a business enabler. Relaxing with his family and friends over a game of cricket helps Sudhanshu recharge. Photography and travel are hobbies that he pursues with great passion.

## **SUDIP GUPTA**

**Senior Vice President and Chief Legal  
Officer (Asia)  
ATC Telecom Tower Corporation  
Private Limited**

### **Sudip's Personal Philosophy**

**"The role of a corporate counsel is to provide timely and thoughtful advice on a broad range of legal issues. He must identify those legal issues and suggest a way forward to prevent or mitigate them. He is responsible for ensuring that the company is acting within the law."**



**S**udip Gupta is Senior Vice President and Chief Legal Officer (Asia) with ATC Telecom Tower Corporation Private Limited, a leading independent Passive Telecom Infrastructure Provider in India and a subsidiary of the American Tower Corporation. ATC has a total tower portfolio of over 58,000 towers across all 22 telecom circles. With a national presence and servicing all major telecom service providers in the country, Sudip has his hands full, heading the legal and secretarial team in Asia and its M&A practice from a legal perspective for the region.

Sudip joined ATC India in 2012 as Vice President Legal, Asia, before moving up the ranks to his present position. Prior to ATC India, Sudip worked with ESPN-Star Sports, British Telecom, Avaya and the erstwhile Amarchand & Mangaldas & Suresh A Shroff & Co. Sudip's current portfolio involves overseeing and identifying legal issues in all departments and their interrelation, as well as handling corporate governance and business policy. His three top priorities are ethics and compliance, regulatory or governmental changes and information privacy. He ensures that organizational assets are protected and that the business is compliant with laws and regulations. He recognizes that an effective compliance programme can reduce many of the company's greatest risks, reduce the severity of claims and penalties if a violation of the law occurs, while also enhancing the company's performance and profitability. He is actively involved in evaluating the numerous M&A opportunities that arise from time to time, and has successfully led the closure of many such transactions in the past.

He strongly believes that an effective lawyer does not merely respond when consulted. Rather, through close communication with stakeholders, he seeks to keep abreast of the organization's goals, and takes affirmative steps to help achieve those goals before legal issues become legal problems.

"The role of a corporate counsel is to provide timely and thoughtful advice on a broad range of legal issues. He must identify those legal issues and suggest a way forward to prevent or mitigate them. He is responsible for ensuring that the company is acting within the law."

# **SUNAYNA BHATIA**

**General Counsel  
RHC Holding Private Limited**

## **Sunayna's Personal Philosophy**

**“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us”- Ralph Waldo Emerson**

**“I believe that my role as corporate counsel has helped me evolve not just as legal counsel but also as a person with leadership skills. As corporate counsel, we are facilitators of business who help those with a vision achieve their goals in an ethical and compliant manner.”**



**S**unayna is the General Counsel for RHC Holding Private Limited, a Fortis and Religare Promoter Group Company. She has substantial experience as an in-house counsel and advises the company and certain of its subsidiaries on corporate, commercial, intellectual property and litigation matters. In the various roles and positions she has held with the group from time to time, Sunayna has advised the group on several domestic and cross-border mergers and acquisition transactions, joint ventures, private equity investments, issuances of securities and divestitures. She has also worked with the group on a range of corporate and litigation matters across various jurisdictions.

Sunayna previously served as the Chief Compliance Officer of a US based investment adviser registered with the US SEC. In this role, she was responsible for developing and enforcing the investment adviser's compliance policies and procedures in accordance with the US federal securities laws, rules and regulations. Sunayna has been recognized as the country's top 40 rising star lawyers under 40 and one of the Top 500 Powerful Women in Law. Sunayna holds a Master of Laws degree from the University of Virginia School of Law and a Bachelor of Laws degree from Campus Law Centre, Delhi University. She has a deep interest in social work and would like to contribute to achieving gender balance and removing gender bias. She admires the work of Indira Jaising and Karuna Nandy, both of whom have worked relentlessly for social causes, especially championing the rights of women.

Her advice to those looking to head in-house teams: Keep learning and expanding your horizons. Think on your feet. Most importantly, trust yourself. A cup of tea and a book is all it takes for Sunayna to relax. Saturdays are reserved for a movie or dinner with friends.

## **Testimonial**

**"I have worked with Sunayna for quite some time now. She is a confident and professional corporate lawyer who works with great speed and acumen when corporate exigencies so require. She steers the Company through complex circumstances with a lot of carefulness and clarity and has made a significant effort towards reducing legal costs for the Company. She has been very helpful to the Company with legal and strategic decisions and is a good advisor for corporate commercial matters. Sunayna is focused and perceptive towards her work and the people that she works with. It is a pleasure to work with her."**

**Hemant Dhingra, Director Finance, RHC Holding**

## **SWARNA SATHISH**

**Head - Legal  
ADP India Pvt. Ltd.**

### **Swarna's Personal Philosophy**

**Success comes with visible efforts and  
invisible sacrifices**

**Life is about being both right and happy**

**Living is a temporary opportunity**

**“A corporate counsel must leverage knowledge of the law to help business grow within a legal and compliance framework. This is a unique opportunity to collaborate and partner with several other functions in business - Finance, HR, Sales, Services, Marketing, R&D and so on. A corporate counsel is the guardian and conscience of the company.”**



Swarna Sathish's initial years of private practice, between 2004 to 2007, were with multiple law firms - NVS Associates, TK Law Associates and Indo Juris. During this time, she had an opportunity to practice real estate, labour, IPR and banking laws, where she advised and represented several corporate clients before various courts and tribunals.

She found her calling as a business lawyer when she joined TVS Logistics Services Limited in 2007 and worked her way up to the designation of Head-Legal. She advised the Management on key business initiatives and set up several warehousing and office facilities across India. Her interest in systems and automating contract management led her to design and roll out a successful Contract Management System for the business. A one-year stint during 2014-15 at One Life / Tattva Home Healthcare Pvt. Ltd. as Head - Legal saw her handle compliance, contracts, IPR, litigation and legal strategy for a start-up.

She is currently the Head - Legal for ADP's Best of Breed payroll business in India and SEA, where she is responsible for the legal and compliance functions. She has been recognized as one of the Most Valuable Professionals in APAC by Sales Organisation, based on her passion and commitment for sales support with contracts. She rests her success on her ability to deconstruct the law to simple, actionable items, understanding the business & system, and identifying & mitigating risks. She works closely with Corporate Legal on compliance, privacy, and real estate-related issues, amongst others.

She believes the head of an in-house legal team must have integrity, the ability to resolve conflicts and complex issues in a positive manner, have a deep knowledge of the law and most importantly, knowledge of the business one supports. Swarna relaxes by communing with nature, reading books or spending time at home with her family.

## Testimonial

**"Swarna heads our Legal for India and SEA and is a member of the leadership team. What distinguishes her is the ability to successfully negotiate client contracts through her persistence and ever polite approach. She has successfully dealt with several complex legal business scenarios. I wish her the very best to achieve greater heights in the corporate legal space."**

**Rahul Goyal, GM - India & SEA, ADP India Private Limited**

# TEJAL PATIL

General Counsel  
GE - South Asia

## Tejal's Personal Philosophy

Work and Life are not separate  
Enjoy Life!

“The role of a General Counsel is evolving rapidly, from being a key member advising the C-suite to handling new risks and a changing regulatory environment. In-house counsel are business enablers who work in partnership with our business clients to deliver growth, productivity, and efficiency in a compliant manner. Our success is determined by the success of our customers.”

## Testimonial

“Tejal is one of the finest professionals that I have ever worked with. Her clarity of thought, her ability to take clear positions and give firm advice has made the working of all her colleagues like myself, much easier. She never hesitates to state her opinion clearly and fearlessly. All these attributes make her an invaluable part of any team.”

**Banmali Agrawala, President & CEO,  
GE South Asia**



**T**ejal Patil is the General Counsel for GE in South Asia, leading a large team of legal and compliance professionals in the company. She joined GE in 2001 and over a 16-year period, worked with its Lighting business and supported the GE Aircraft Engines, CNBC and GE Consumer & Industrial businesses in the Asia Pacific region. Before taking over her current role, Tejal was General Counsel for GE Healthcare, Asia Pacific, located in Singapore. Reporting directly to both the CEO of GE South Asia and the general counsel of GE's Global Growth Organization, Tejal is a key member of the leadership team in the region. She assisted in GE's acquisition and integration of Alstom's power and grid businesses in India. She also supported the company when it secured its largest foreign direct investment contract by the Indian Railway Ministry in 2015, to set up a diesel locomotive project in Bihar. Internally, Patil has created an integrated "one-team" structure to function seamlessly and support the growth of the company in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

She assisted in establishing the GE India Legal Diversity Forum to strengthen ties between diverse legal professionals, enabling and encouraging their personal and professional development. In 2016, Tejal, on behalf of GE, launched the "Compliance Management Program" in collaboration with the Indian School of Business and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) as an executive education course aimed at positioning and enabling compliance professionals in India as strategic business partners. On a day-to-day basis, her team supports transactions across different business delivery models, including a number of big ticket deals with large Indian conglomerates, public sector undertakings and also business restructuring; the team is also proud to clock one of the lowest legal spends in the company.

Tejal is the co-leader for GE Women's Network, Asia Pacific. She has a law degree from the Government Law College, Mumbai and is a qualified solicitor in England & Wales and Bombay Incorporated Law Society. She is inspired by Ben Heineman Jr, who built GE's world class in-house legal and compliance team, and Brackett Denniston, his successor, who took the team global. Both were GE's Senior Vice President and General Counsel during different periods of time. She has some pragmatic words of advice for those looking to head in-house legal teams. "Keep yourself updated and your team learning and developing at all times. Have a nose for risk, as your role is more prevention than cure."

With a portfolio as full and packed as hers, Tejal values her personal time, spending it as often as she can with her husband and children.

# **TILAK RAJ**

**Director (Legal)  
Bureau of Indian Standards**

## **Tilak Raj's Personal Philosophy**

**Be pragmatic and consistent  
Hard work done with dedication and  
devotion always pays rich dividends**

**“The role of in-house counsel is more than a lawyer, who in addition to traditional legal responsibilities, is expected to be a problem solver who finds a solution to almost every problem the organization has. It is his duty to provide a solution within a legal framework.”**

## **Testimonial**

**“Shri Tilak Raj, Director (Legal) is an officer of outstanding merit. He has excellent professional knowledge and ability. His drafting skills are outstanding and he is very prompt in his work. During the period under me, he ensured timely filing of affidavits and documents in the courts and got the cases defended properly in the best interest of the organization. He rendered very sound advice, whenever required.”**

**Alka Panda (IAS), Director General,  
Bureau Of Indian Standards**



For Tilak Raj, the Constitution of India serves as a constant reminder of the principles he must uphold, regardless of the government organization he works for. The Oxford dictionary speaks to him about the importance of being linguistically precise when formulating legislation or drafting an agreement. Both these books find pride of place on his desk. Heading a team of 60 lawyers in the legal department of the Bureau of Industrial Standards, Tilak Raj was associated with the formulation of the new BIS Act 2016 which has been passed by the Parliament and will be enforced shortly by way of a government notification. In his capacity as Director (Legal), he oversees all the legal affairs of BIS pan-India, acting as an effective bridge between external counsel and the organization.

Launching his career in 1989, Tilak Raj has worked with various organizations of the Government of India, such as Air India, Andhra Bank, ITDC, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the National Highway Authority of India. As GM (Law) with NHAI, he handled complex arbitrations that involved disputes worth crores of rupees as well as land acquisition, service and rent control matters and issues relating to contract management. He has a postgraduate degree in law, an MBA and diplomas in Industrial Relations, Personnel Management and Labour Laws. In 2010, the American Biographical Institute awarded him the “MAN OF THE YEAR IN LAW” award for his achievements in the field of law.

To be a successful general counsel, Tilak Raj believes the person must always keep the best interest of the organization in mind, to act as a facilitator, problem solver and to ensure the organization's progress within the framework of the law. He has to be an expert in his field and be credible, reliable and trustworthy to the management of the organization. He must be a team player.

Nothing relaxes Tilak Raj more than listening to old Hindi film songs or making a quick getaway to Nainital, his favourite holiday spot. His personal time is strictly reserved for his family.

# UGEN TASHI BHUTIA

**Executive Vice President  
(General Counsel)  
SBI Cards and Payments Services  
Private Limited**

## Ugen's Personal Philosophy

**Knowledge and experience are always dynamic  
“The purpose of our life is to be happy” H.H. The  
Dalai Lama**

**“A corporate counsel is a gate keeper and protector of the company as well as a business enabler. Given the fact that the need of the hour is good corporate governance, a corporate counsel is duty bound to safeguard the company and its officials from any kind of risk - regulatory or financial. At the same time, as a business enabler, he is equally dutybound to recognise business opportunities, as the loss of such opportunities would mean financial loss for the business.”**

## Testimonial

**“Ugen is a great leader and an extremely dependable member of the Senior Management Team. He is an unconventional GC, having a highly business driven approach. He is solution-oriented, positive and manages to stay calm even during high pressure deals and negotiations. On the personal front he is always approachable, transparent and fun loving.”**

**Vijay Jasuja, CEO, SBI Card**



**U**gen Bhutia is the General Counsel and Executive Vice President of SBI Card (a Joint Venture between State Bank of India and GE Capital). Ugen spent a decade working with the law firms Fox Mandal and Lakshmikumaran & Sridharan before joining SBI Card in 2012, where he and his team of 28 lawyers provide transactional, advisory, litigation and collection support to the business. Through strategic changes and technological support his team has managed to reduce the total inflow of cases, thereby also reducing claims and costs in compensatory awards. As part of the senior management team and directly reporting to the CEO, Ugen and his legal team have helped the Company keep pace with the shift towards a digital economy from a regulatory as well as business perspective.

Ugen has tremendous admiration for lawyers, whether in litigation or corporate practice, who are able to resist temptation and stick to the straight and narrow. “A lawyer who has the courage to listen and communicate with his inner voice is admirable.” He has some wise words of counsel for those looking to head in-house teams. “A highly qualified or experienced lawyer with negligible business acumen will always be conceived as a roadblock. Similarly, a person with only business knowledge and lack of legal knowledge would not have the capability to identify risk for the business which would eventually make the business unsustainable.” In order to be successful as an in-house counsel, he believes, one must have both technical knowledge as well as business acumen.

## **Testimonials**

**“Ugen is a solution-oriented Legal Advisor with amazing turnaround time. He has great domain expertise and is a skillful negotiator. Time and again he has demonstrated his ability to handle complex transactions with lots of moving pieces, while dealing with multiple stakeholders. Some recent examples of this are during the GE stake sale process and while becoming independent of GE’s Technology infrastructure. Ugen also possesses good leadership skills and is very easy to get along with.”**

**Nalin Negi, CFO, SBI Card**

**“Ugen is one of the best supporters of business that I have had the benefit of working with during my career. Ugen is solution-oriented and is always able to find a mechanism which allows business to proceed while ensuring protection for the business at the same time. We always look forward to having a discussion with the legal team because they are extremely confident that a workable solution will be found. Ugen has inculcated this solutions-oriented approach in his team. To top all this, Ugen is one of the most fun loving and trustworthy professionals, who is always great company both inside and outside office.”**

**Girish Budhiraja, Chief Marketing Officer, SBI Card**

# M VASUDEV RAO

General Counsel  
National Stock Exchange of India Limited

## Vasu's Personal Philosophy

Be a visionary and a leader, leading the right way  
without the fear of consequences

Be unique, be expressive

“You cannot always oblige, but you can always  
speak obligingly”

“The role of a corporate counsel, in addition to  
demonstrating legal value across various forums  
in-house, managing legal risk, and providing  
value added legal advice, is also to act as a  
business enabler, understand the core business  
issues, produce viable and tangible results and to  
successfully navigate the dynamic legal  
landscape in the best interests of the company.”

## Testimonial

“Vasu is closely embedded with various business  
and operational functions of the group. His  
positive and candid interactions with team  
members across functions, understanding of  
business and operational needs, his solution  
based approach, and taking proactive and legal  
risk mitigating steps have been very beneficial to  
the group.”

**Ravi Varanasi, Chief Business Development  
Officer, National Stock Exchange of India Ltd.**



Everything that Vasudev Rao does is imbued with a social conscience, a desire for a far more egalitarian society, the need to help the poor and the disadvantaged. It therefore follows that Corporate Social Responsibility is top priority for Vasu; as the District President, Thane of the Sri Sathya Sai Organization, he spearheads it in the Thane District. Primary and value based education, medical camps and malnutrition, and water projects have been his core areas of focus in the various CSR programmes run in rural Thane in Maharashtra. And at all times, Vasu has been at the forefront of it. Not surprisingly, he lists 'social service' as his hobby.

With 23 years of professional experience, including seven years as Assistant Vice President, Group Corporate Legal at Bennett, Coleman and Co. Ltd., Vasu brings to the table a heterogeneous mix of experience that include Strategic Litigation Management, Intellectual Property Management & Enforcement, Commercial & Contract Management, Regulatory & Compliance Management, Policies & Processes, and Mergers & Acquisitions. He has spearheaded a variety of cross border deals involving large transaction values and has led representations to government bodies regarding legal and regulatory issues.

Vasu holds graduate degrees in Commerce and Law and is a Fellow Member of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India. He was on the faculty of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India and the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture.

Vasu takes inspiration from M R Prasanna, former Group General Counsel of the Aditya Birla Group, who, he says, "paved the way towards the globalization of general counsels and provided a new dimension in the manner in which they play a major role in the strategy and decision making of a company". He describes Prasanna as a "role model". His advice to those looking to lead in-house teams is that they develop an in-depth knowledge of the company and its business and the legal and regulatory environment surrounding it. "Set and meet expectations with internal stakeholders," he further adds. "Build a good team, motivate and support them at all times, develop legal systems and processes and implement the same effectively. Use effective communication strategies and always be adaptable and resourceful."

# **VIJAY KAMATH**

**Company Secretary and  
Head of Legal & GRC  
Volkswagen Group Sales India  
Private Limited**

## **Vijay's Personal Philosophy**

**Be a very good listener and take  
suggestions even from the lowest  
levels of hierarchy**

**Before you give feedback, learn to  
take feedback**

**“An in-house counsel is no longer  
restricted to the role of merely being an  
advisor to the board or a link between the  
management and external authorities.**

**The role has evolved into a senior  
management position, with the counsel's  
expertise used by businesses to counter  
and mitigate risks, provide strategic  
business solutions and be a part of policy  
making. The in-house counsel does not  
just provide compliant solutions but also  
steers the business team towards  
beneficial decisions that are sustainable  
in the long run. A corporate counsel in  
today's world has to learn to finely  
balance the triad of regulatory  
parameters, ever-growing business needs  
and ethical behaviour.”**



Vijay Kamath is the Head of Legal and Company Secretary for Volkswagen Group Sales India Private Limited. He heads the company's Governance, Risks and Compliance (GRC) function and is also responsible for the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. With a team of five legal professionals, Vijay manages Volkswagen's legal strategy as well as the Litigation Management System and the Contract Lifecycle Management system. His expertise covers litigation strategy, audit issues, competition law, consumer laws, corporate laws, criminal laws, data protection, motor vehicle laws, personnel-related issues and property laws. As Head of GRC, he has to ensure that the regulatory compliance systems are in place and fully functional. He is also responsible for implementing and ensuring continuous awareness of various Compliance policies like the Group Code of Conduct, anti-corruption policies, business partner checks, and the whistleblowing system as per the advice of the Volkswagen Group. He is also part of the company's Vigil Mechanism.

Vijay is actively involved in the CSR activities of the company, right from setting up policies to identifying CSR agencies and ensuring that funds are rightly spent on the approved activities by these agencies. To those looking to lead an in-house team, he suggests that they develop an understanding of the nuances of the law and regulations, learn and spend time with the business and then use their expertise in law to provide tailor-made solutions to the business. He emphasises the importance of team-building. "You can succeed only if your team succeeds." Vijay attributes his achievements to Suhas Tuljapurkar, a senior legal practitioner with whom he worked at a multinational corporation in the beginning of 2003. Suhas entrusted him with high profile litigations and critical assignments and provided continuous support and guidance till he saw those matters through successfully. Suhas taught him leadership and management skills, how to be a people's person, a team player as well as a business strategist. Vijay enjoys cooking as a way to relax. Saturdays, usually, are reserved for an Italian dinner and a late-night movie.

## Testimonial

**"I find Vijay a technically sound person with a business oriented approach. With his grit, perseverance and true passion towards his work, Vijay has time and again proved to us that results are achievable under our legal system. As a Board Member of this organization, I get a comfort when Vijay leads critical assignments as I am positive that the best possible results would be obtained by him. He is a team person and always puts his team first before him. Vijay has great leadership skills and not only has he well trained and mentored his team but has also created a conducive work environment; this is the reason he has almost no attrition in his team. I wish him all the very best and great success in future."**

**Mr. Thierry Lespiaucq, Board Member, Volkswagen Group Sales India Private Limited**

## **VINAY D. DWARKADAS**

**General Counsel Legal & Compliance  
Sula Vineyards Private Limited**

### **Vinay's Personal Philosophy**

**Be passionate but diligent and ethical in  
all that you do**

**“The role of a corporate counsel is  
challenging as the role requires a perfect  
mix of an external lawyer ensuring that  
the corporate's specific objectives are  
attained without any legal impediments  
economically.”**



**V**inay D. Dwarkadas is an Advocate, Trade Mark and Registered (GOI) Patent Attorney with over 20 years' work experience. In the course of his career, Vinay has worked with some of India's finest full-service law firms on corporate, commercial and litigation matters and with I.P.

boutique firms on intellectual property matters, both contentious and non-contentious. Vinay was one of the three founding members of Khaitan & Co.'s Intellectual Property Practice, and thereafter a Partner at Fox Mandal Little's Intellectual Property Practice. He has been the General Counsel at Sula Vineyards Private Limited (Sula) since 2015, where apart from heading the overall legal function, he is also a member of its Executive Committee/Senior Leadership team and a member of its Internal Complaints Committee ("ICC") constituted under The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The Board of Directors of Sula has also appointed Vinay as its vigil officer, to uphold the highest ethical standards and foster a work environment free of harassment and discrimination.

Vinay is passionate about everything he does. To him, every single assignment undertaken is a challenge to be successfully completed. Vinay's philosophy is "be passionate but diligent and ethical in all that you do and the desired results are sure to follow". Vinay's role at Sula is extremely challenging as it involves and requires the perfect mix of an external lawyer but at the same time ensuring that its specific objectives are attained without any legal impediments. Vinay loves being with Sula - "in my entire over-20 year career span I have never been and felt so attached and committed to any other organization as I am with Sula. This is where I belong for I love it here". Vinay devotes his spare time to his daughter Uloopi, enjoys playing tennis, going on long runs, swimming, and cooking.

### **Testimonial**

**"As the General Counsel of our organization, I have found Vinay to be an extremely diligent, conscientious and a highly committed colleague. With over two decades of law firm practice experience at some of India's finest full-service law firms and IP boutique firms, Vinay has virtually transformed the functioning of our organization's legal team. Vinay has and continues to advise Sula Vineyards Private Limited ("SVPL") including its subsidiary with utmost sincerity and loyalty with the ultimate aim and objective of safeguarding each of their best interests at all times. Vinay's devotion and commitment to SVPL is immensely valuable and which I am confident will only result in our further growth and prosperity. Vinay works closely with all departments at SVPL and has undeniably elevated the level of diligence and in-depth research within his team to resolve issues at the first instance as far as possible, which has resulted in significant savings, monetary and/or otherwise to SVPL and has often found practical/innovative solutions to difficulties that would have otherwise taken years to adjudicate before the Courts in India inevitably resulting in monetary losses to SVPL."**

**Deepak Bhatnagar, President – Sales & Marketing, Sula Vineyards Private Limited**

## **VISHAL GARG**

**Group Legal Counsel  
Ericsson India Pvt Limited  
South East Asia & Oceania, Nepal,  
Bhutan and India**

### **Vishal's Personal Philosophy**

**Add "Value" to whatever you touch  
Collaborate rather than compete  
Be an entrepreneur rather than a mere  
employee**

**"The role of a Corporate Counsel is that of  
a lead business enabler. He is a shield and  
a catalyst to the entire evaluation, deal  
making, and execution exercise of the  
company. Creating a win-win for all is a  
must rather than We Won It All, to  
succeed on an ongoing basis."**



For a technophile like Vishal Garg, this is perhaps his dream job. Having read widely on new technology, even dabbled and invested in it, what Vishal brings to the table when working on emerging technology customer contracts for Ericsson India Pvt. Ltd., where he is Group Legal Counsel, is that of a true business enabler.

He has negotiated a US\$ 1bn Managed Services contract with Reliance Group, a First Fibre network layout deal for the region, an Active Network sharing deal between Aircel and Reliance, a First Smart Meter deal of the region, a First Smart City bid for the Company with Bharti Infratel, key customer deals across the region with Vodafone, Uninor and NCell, first LTE deal with Augere, a deal with Ozone for Wifi as a Service, and a US\$ 500 m single radio access network deal with Vodafone. The list could go on. None of this has taken him away from his day to day responsibilities that include real estate transactions, data protection compliance and corporate matters.

In a career spanning more than 22 years, Vishal has worked as a company secretary and an advocate before taking on the role of an in-house counsel, first with Indiabulls Group and then with Bharti Group. While at Indiabulls, his portfolio covered stocks and commodities broking, real estate, corporate, housing and consumer financing. His remit at Bharti group included legal, compliance and strategic support to the management in matters relating to mCommerce, Hubs, mEntertainment and VAS, key litigations and negotiations.

Vishal is a lawyer and company secretary by training, but is also an entrepreneur, artist, photographer, the family fashion designer and a computer software professional. He is a true renaissance man.

He advises those looking to head in-house teams to lead by example. “Get your hands dirty and stand behind the ones you lead.”

