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***A JOURNEY OF
EXPLORATION
AND GROWTH***



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From Small Town to Legal Counsel:

A JOURNEY OF EXPLORATION AND GROWTH

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Born and raised in the quaint town of Klang, Selangor, my journey into the world of law began without any prior exposure or familial influence in the legal field. Unlike many aspiring lawyers, I did not grow up amidst legal discussions or courtroom dramas at the dinner table. Instead, my early aspirations leaned towards a different spotlight: journalism.

From a young age, I was captivated by the allure of journalism, a world where storytelling meets public scrutiny, where charisma and communication skills reign supreme. Back then, the glitz and glamour of television personalities mesmerized me, prompting a desire to step into their shoes. Of course, this was before the era of social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram; television was the pinnacle of media influence, and I was drawn to its alluring appeal.



Fast forward, my journey has taken unexpected turns. While my youthful ambitions initially pointed towards journalism, life had other plans. It was my school counsellor named Cikgu Aishah who nudged me towards law, recognizing my prowess in debating. With her encouragement, I pursued my studies in law, a path that would eventually redefine my future. Stepping into Ahmad Ibrahim Law School at the International Islamic University of Malaysia, I felt intimidated by the brilliance around me. I found myself surrounded by peers who exuded intelligence and eloquence. Despite feeling like a mediocre student, I refused to let self-doubt extinguish my new ambition and instead I resolved to excel, understanding that good academic results would pave the way for doors of opportunity.

- Hafiq graduated from Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws, International Islamic University Malaysia in January 2010
- Was called to the Malaysian Bar as an Advocate and Solicitor of the High Court of Malaya on 7th January 2011
- In 2012, he served as a Legal Officer in PETRONAS until July 2017
- Worked at MMC Corporation Berhad for seven years before rejoining PETRONAS in October 2023



In 2009, having completed my law degree, I finally embarked on my legal career as a pupil-in-chamber at a mid-sized firm in the heart of Kuala Lumpur called Messrs. James Leong, Poon & Wong before I began my journey as a private practitioner at Messrs. Ghazi & Lim. The transition from student to practitioner was a little bit daunting at first, but early challenges, such as conducting my first trial/hearing, preparing my first written and oral submission independently, taught me invaluable lessons in perseverance and resilience. Well, there is always a first time for everything!



My journey as a litigator was brief yet quite impactful. Guided by notable mentors like the late Dato' Ghazi Ishak (renowned for his role in the landmark case Boonsoom Boonyanit), I navigated complex legal landscapes and celebrated victories that affirmed my chosen path. Despite being a junior lawyer, I was entrusted with conducting trials, hearings and submissions independently, demonstrating my capability under minimal supervision from senior colleague and partner.

While challenging, completing tasks autonomously is achievable. For instance, early in my career, I was tasked with preparing my very first written submission for a trial on my own. Despite facing a seemingly weak case as the plaintiff, I persisted upon the counsel of my mentor. He said this to me, *"Hafiq, you may have a weak case. But do not ever give up"*. Determined, I meticulously built my argument with over twenty (20) precedents, in contrast to my opponent's scant support. The anxiety was palpable as I awaited the court's decision, yet perseverance paid off—victory was ours! I won my first ever case! This triumph remains a cherished milestone in my journey as a junior litigator.

After dedicating a year to the rigors of litigation, I found myself at a crossroads, contemplating my next steps with earnest consideration. It was during this reflective period that I shared my intentions with the firm's managing partner. His response, as always, was laden with wisdom and encouragement. He expressed his desire for me to remain in litigation, emphasizing the scarcity of Malay litigators in the field. However, understanding my youthful ambition to explore diverse professional avenues, particularly as an in-house counsel, he respected my decision wholeheartedly.

At 25 years old, I embarked on a new chapter, driven by a curiosity to delve deeper into corporate world. The allure of contributing directly to a company's legal strategy and operations captivated me, promising a dynamic environment where legal expertise merges seamlessly with business acumen. Finally, I became an in-house counsel for a giant oil & gas company in the country.

Transitioning from litigation to corporate counsel presented a distinct set of challenges and opportunities that have shaped my journey in profound ways. Unlike the courtroom dynamics of a litigator, where adversaries spar over legal nuances, the realm of in-house counsel places you at the heart of organisational strategy and decision-making. Here, my clients are internal stakeholders i.e. departments ranging from operations, finance, corporate planning, production, procurement, human resources etc. who rely on timely legal insights and guidance. This direct accessibility underscores the pivotal role of an in-house counsel, where the ability to provide swift and accurate advice is paramount.

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Central to my responsibilities as legal counsel are the meticulous review, drafting and negotiation of contractual terms. Every word scrutinized carries potential implications, whether in safeguarding the company's reputation or mitigating any potential risks, be it financial or legal risks. The precision demanded in contract analysis underscores the critical intersection of legal expertise and business acumen, where decisions could have far-reaching consequences. My courtroom experience proved to be helpful and came in handy. It equipped me with a practical understanding of legal risk and consequence, honing my ability to draft robust contracts and provide strategic advice to my organization as and when required.

Beyond contractual matters, my role extends to providing strategic advisory services and managing disputes that arise within the company. These responsibilities necessitate not only legal proficiency but also a deep understanding of the company's operations and industry landscape. Effective counsel hinges on this comprehensive grasp of business dynamics, enabling proactive risk management and informed decision-making. In-house counsel, therefore, serves as a linchpin between legal principles and corporate strategy. The ability to align legal frameworks with business objectives empowers me to contribute meaningfully to the company's growth and objectives.

Reflecting on my career trajectory over a decade in the legal field, I have come to appreciate that law school offers the foundational skills to navigate the complexities of legal frameworks. It teaches you where to find the law (source) and how to interpret it, but the true mastery comes from hands-on experience and continuous learning in the field. Every day as an in-house counsel presents fresh challenges and opportunities for growth, reinforcing the belief that learning is a lifelong pursuit.



Beyond personal achievements, my career path underscores the breadth of opportunities within the legal profession. The legal profession is vast and diverse, offering avenues beyond private practice and corporate counsel roles, including positions in government service e.g. Federal Counsel, Deputy Public Prosecutor, State Advisor, academia and judiciary. Exploring these diverse paths can provide invaluable insights into where one's passion and skills align most effectively. My advice to aspiring lawyers echoes my own journey: keep an open mind, seek guidance from industry peers and embrace every opportunity to learn and grow.

As you stand on the threshold of your legal career, the landscape before you may seem daunting. Fear not, for now is the time to fortify your foundation and hone the skills that will propel you towards success. So how do you equip yourself for the future before entering the job market? Here are my suggestions:

1 Mastering the art of communication

From courtroom arguments to client consultations, the ability to convey complex legal concepts with clarity and conviction is indispensable.



2

Cultivating Strong Reading Habits and Research Skills

Develop a voracious appetite for legal literature and stay abreast of current legal precedents. Sharpen your research prowess to navigate the labyrinth of case law and statutes effectively.



6

Attention to Detail

The devil resides in the details. Cultivate a meticulous eye for accuracy and thoroughness in all your endeavors, ensuring that every document, argument and strategy is impeccably crafted.



Advocacy Skills

Cultivate your persuasive abilities and refine your knack for constructing compelling arguments that resonate in both the courtroom and the boardroom.



Written Communication

Sharpen your skills in drafting cause papers, contracts, submissions etc. that are not only legally sound but also articulate your position persuasively.



As you embark on this journey, remember that your commitment to mastering these foundational skills will serve as the bedrock of your legal career. Seize every opportunity to refine your abilities, seek mentorship from your lecturer or any experienced lawyers and immerse yourself in the intricacies of the law.

4

Mastering Time Management

Learn to orchestrate your schedule with finesse, prioritizing tasks and deadlines without compromise.



Analytical and Research Skills

Develop the acumen to dissect intricate legal issues, discerning nuances that may sway the course of a case or negotiation.



Lastly, I extend my best wishes to all of you, the future legal eagle! I hope that the snippet of my career journey has offered you valuable insights and some understanding of the legal profession. While challenges may arise and daunting tasks may be assigned to you, always remember this: when faced with the option to swim or sink, always choose to swim. All the best on your journey ahead! May you navigate your own paths to success in the rewarding field of law.

DID YOU KNOW ABOUT HAFIQ?



Almost Took to the Skies!

In 2010, Hafiq applied for the role of cabin crew with Singapore Airlines, competing against over 700 candidates for all walks of life. He aced four rounds and made it to the final stage, but despite coming close, he wasn't one of the fewer than 20 selected. But hey, he did make it further than many aspiring flight attendants, including experienced ones!



Floral Extraordinaire!

Hafiq's not just a legal whiz - he's got a green thumb too! When he's not drafting legal opinions, he's crafting stunning bespoke bridal bouquets. His flower creations, under the handle @matbungacreations, have even been featured in local magazines! Who knew law and blooms could go so well together?

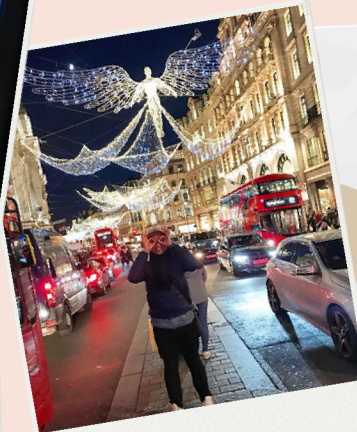


Globe-Trotter with a Love for Austria! Hafiq has traveled to over 24 countries, but his heart belongs to Austria. With its jaw-dropping landscapes, it's like Switzerland but a little friendlier on the wallet. The mountains are calling, and Hafiq always answers!



Memento Magnetism!

Hafiq doesn't just collect memories, he collects magnets - lots of them. His fridge is a mini world tour with each unique magnet handpicked from his travels, a little piece of every adventure right at home.



The King of Spontaneous Adventures!

Need a last-minute travel buddy? Hafiq once booked a flight to Istanbul just 20 hours before departure and packed for London two days before flying out. No itinerary, no problem - he loves to explore like a true wanderer!

Detail-oriented!

When it comes to being organized, Hafiq might just have a touch of OCD (just a bit). His attention to detail is so sharp, even his fridge is perfectly organized - think 7-eleven levels of neatness!

