

Women IN LAW

In this year's edition of Women in Law, ALB profiles seven female lawyers working in Asia's biggest markets who are not just moving and shaking the industry, but are also blazing new trails for others to follow. We speak to these inspiring women about their career beginnings and evolution as well as the distinctive challenges and advantages of being a female legal professional.

BY RAJ GUNASHEKAR



APRIL RAIMUNDO *Chief Legal Officer, EuroFin Asia (EFA) Group*

As the chief legal officer of EFA Group, Raimundo oversees all legal matters related to the company's business activities and operations, including contracts, business plans and investment structuring as well as corporate and fund establishment. She shares that emotional intelligence, empathy and a deep understanding of the commercial goals and risk appetite of the company are critical to succeed as an in-house counsel.

Tell us about the roles you've held over the years.

I began as a corporate and commercial law associate in Quisumbing Torres, the Manila office of Baker & McKenzie. I worked as an intern during law school and started immediately after graduation while waiting for the bar exam results.

I've always been interested in business and went in-house as soon as I felt I was sufficiently trained. I was the first legal counsel of EFA Group in Singapore and set up its legal and compliance.

What are the pros and cons of your area of work?

We deal in high volumes, with facilities from \$3 million to 20 million in our private debt funds instead

of bigger tickets like in banks. This has enabled me to become highly specialised in trade finance and fund management through experience, which is one of the best ways to learn.

On the other hand, moving in-house requires a whole new skill set other than technical and legal. One needs to be skilled in project management, interpersonal relationships, talent management and training, as well as in some administrative necessities like handling budgets and making presentations.

What's your advice for women in your profession?

Nothing can replace having a deep understanding about the business, so develop a healthy curiosity and ask the right questions at the right place and time. Spotting issues is a key skill that legal training and private practice develops, so this is a good foundation.

Have a can-do attitude and be an enabler of business plans. Never stop looking for avenues to learn and grow. Finally, do not be afraid of starting a family. Becoming a mother has heightened my senses and skills such as empathy, efficiency and strategic planning that were invaluable in the workplace.