

KCONNECT

NEWS FOR, AND, OF KHAITAN & CO ALUMNI





Once a part of the Khaitan & Co family, always a part of the Khaitan & Co family

This sentence rings truer than ever as we celebrate the seventh anniversary of KConnect. Over the past seven years, we've had the privilege of witnessing the remarkable journeys and accomplishments of our esteemed alumni. Deepening these relationships has been an incredibly enriching experience, and we are committed to nurturing these bonds for many years to come.

Today, we are thrilled to unveil the new and improved avatar of the KConnect newsletter. This refreshed edition is more than just an update; it's a testament to our ongoing dedication to strengthening our ties with our incredible alumni community. Consider it your exclusive window into the dynamic Khaitan & Co alumni network, a bridge that keeps you informed about firm highlights, insightful industry trends, and the extraordinary achievements of our alumni across the globe.

Through KConnect, we aim to celebrate your individual journeys, provide access to meaningful opportunities, and foster a thriving network where connections extend far beyond the firm's walls. We encourage you to share your stories with us—whether it's a significant professional milestone, a personal achievement, or an insightful perspective you'd like to share with your fellow alumni.

Stay connected, stay inspired, and join us as we embark on this exciting new chapter of KConnect. We look forward to engaging with you and celebrating your continued success.



What's New



New office in Ahmedabad

We are pleased to announce the opening of our new office in Ahmedabad, Gujarat as part of our commitment to bolster client relationships and expand our presence in vibrant economic centres. While this office begins with a focus on certain practice areas, as we grow, we will offer the full suite of our advisory and litigation services.



Expansion of Mumbai office

It is our commitment to continuous improvement that has enabled us to reach this milestone of further expanding our presence in Mumbai. The new floor is a state-of-the-art workspace integrated with the latest technology.

Learning – A Continuous Process

This year has been a remarkable journey for the Learning & Development team, marked by innovation, collaboration, and growth. From introducing new training programs across levels to enhancing skillsets, we have worked tirelessly to empower our workforce for success.



Transition Support Programmes

Featuring conversations and sessions with senior peers who shared invaluable insights into excelling in their new roles.



Leadership Launchpad

Focused on sharing the Firm's leadership expectations through workshops on executive presence, client centricity, and business development, supported by subject matter experts and a panel of premium clients.



LEAP (Lead, Excel, Adapt, Propel)

Curated for seasoned Principal Associates, this five-month long learning journey covered a range of leadership skills, including business planning, people management, conflict management, emotional intelligence, and financial analysis.



Campus batch

78 graduates joined us last year, and their three-day in-person orientation featured interactive sessions on responsible billing, importance of AI and Tech, navigating ethical dilemmas, effective communication, collaborative working, and other team - building activities.



Strengthening skills

Over 250 Continuing Legal Education (CLEs) sessions conducted this year.



A Culture of Belonging

It has been five years since we launched ARISE (Accept, Recognise, Inspire, Support, Empower) and it continues to be the cornerstone of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Here are some of our notable achievements from 2024:



Gender Inclusion

- Listening Circles - offering women members a safe space to share experiences and build connections. Eight such sessions hosted across offices on topics ranging from Networking Strategies to Navigating Gender Stereotypes in the Workplace.
- Roundtable in Singapore, moderated by Sukanya Hazarika, featuring both in-house GCs and private practitioners, and discussions on effective DEI strategies, addressing biases, mentorship, and data-driven change in DEI.
- International Women's Day 2024 - Virtual fireside chat between Claudia Salomon, first woman President of the ICC International Court of Arbitration, and Tanvi Kumar.
- Fireside chat with Hervé Ekué of A&O Shearman, Pallavi Gopinath Aney of A&O Shearman, Singapore, and Bijal Ajinkya on Fostering Inclusive Cultures.



Mental Health Advocacy

- Collaborative panel discussion on 'Balancing the Scales: Mental Wellbeing in Law' featuring five leading law firms and moderated by Aakash Choubey.
- Workshops on emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and suicide prevention conducted through Optum, our Employee Assistance Program. Confidential counseling services accessed by over 30 colleagues.
- Regular awareness campaigns like Be Well and Breaking the Stigma to raise awareness on ADHD, PTSD, and workplace inclusivity.



LGBTQIA+ inclusion

- Pride 2024 featured activities such as the Pride Quiz, themed email signatures, and a Watch & Discuss session. The flagship event was a panel discussion 'On the Legal Crossroads: The Way Ahead for the LGBTQIA+ Community' moderated by Nandini Khaitan with speakers Sharif Rangnekar, Journalist, Author, and Director of Rainbow Lit Fest and Anish Gawande, Writer, Curator of Pink List India.



Disability Rights and Advocacy

- Released the second edition of our Handbook on Rights of Persons with Disabilities in collaboration with Godrej DEI Lab ("Handbook"), featuring updates on legal advancements and best practices.
- Panel discussion on 'Workplace Inclusion and Disability Rights' where speakers like Aradhana Lal (Lemon Tree), Ananya Sharma (JSW), Zoya (Godrej Properties), Madhavi (former paralympic champion), Arva Merchant (Partner and lead author of the Handbook) participated and Aakash Choubey moderated.



Recognition & Impact

- Top Employer for LGBT+ Inclusion - Bronze Award (India Workplace Equality Index 2024).
- Asian Diversity Initiative of the Year 2023 (Asia Legal Awards 2024).
- 2nd Runners-Up for Gender Equality Champion and LGBTQIA+ Inclusion at the Bombay Chambers DEI Awards 2024.

Transforming Legal Excellence Through Technology

The past year has marked a pivotal chapter in our Firm's digital transformation journey. Our Digital and Innovation Team has not only developed groundbreaking solutions but has also positioned our Firm at the forefront of legal technology innovation, earning industry-wide recognition.



AI Adoption: Enhanced KAI platform

- Unifies KAI.Query, Ask.KAI, into a seamless interface.
- Has driven over 7,500 AI interactions monthly.
- Microsoft named us an "AI First Leader in India & South Asia", placing us alongside giants like Aditya Birla Capital, TCS, Infosys, and HDFC Bank.



Streamlining Document Management and Collaboration

- Firmwide implementation of iManage has revolutionised our document management processes.
- "LiquidText" merges deep reading with interactive note-taking and is potentially saving professionals up to 4 hours weekly
- "PrvoVakil" has automated the process of tracking ongoing litigation, eliminating manual court diary entries.
- "Kollaborate" platform provides a unified system for participation and communication across Firmwide projects.



Industry Recognition and Innovation

- Showcased KAI.Query platform at the "Supreme Court Hackathon 2024".
- Finalist for the 26th Annual IFLR Asia-Pacific Awards 2025.
- Featured in the Economic Times' "GenAI, Legally" report.



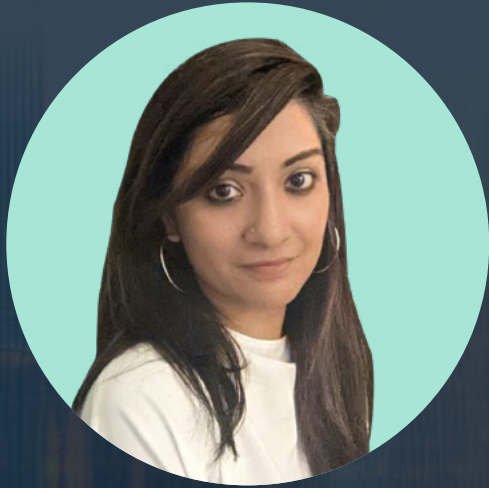
Automation Excellence

- Document Automation - Our Section 11 application document generator reduces a process that once took hours to just 5 minutes, creating comprehensive document sets.
- Upgraded Effort Estimator - Features automated data retrieval, real-time currency conversion, and a streamlined process that reduces estimation steps by 50%.
- Timesheet Suggestions - Integration with Microsoft calendar entries and Teams meetings has transformed timesheet management, enabling one-click submissions and saving substantial hours weekly.



Enhanced Business Operations

- Developed K-HUB - a centralised, user-friendly interface for accessing various tools and modules.
- Enhanced conflict check form - brings all necessary information into one place, increases accuracy, and generates faster search reports.
- One-Pager Billing Module - reduces invoice creation time by 50%, with IP teams now creating 90% of their invoices through this streamlined system.
- Conference Booking System - facilitates quicker reservations, multi-day bookings, and enhanced visibility.



**In conversation with
Madhuparna Dasgupta
Director - Legal at Altico Advisors**

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The best way to approach any legal issue – whether as an external counsel or in-house counsel – is to be solution-oriented

- Madhuparna Dasgupta on the one piece of professional advice that resonates with her.

Alumni in Focus

Please share your career progression following your tenure at Khaitan & Co. What motivated your transition to your current role as the Director - Legal at Altico Advisors?

I had recently been promoted to Partner at Khaitan & Co. when Altico approached me for a senior role in their legal team. At the same time, I had completed a decade in the law firm environment, dedicating myself to sustained vertical growth and establishing deep expertise in my practice area (Banking & Finance). Whilst I felt like I had achieved my personal goal of becoming a subject-matter expert, I saw this as the right opportunity to broaden my perspective and gain horizontal growth by diversifying my experience beyond a law firm setting. The transition to Altico allowed me to apply my law firm expertise in a new context while expanding my strategic and commercial acumen. Altico was also a client and I was familiar with their legal and investment teams and work ethic and this also helped with a smooth transition.

Based on your experience, how does working in a law firm environment differ from an in-house role?

The most apparent difference is that in a law firm you would be servicing multiple clients on specific assignments, typically requiring deep expertise in a particular field of law. Once you assume an in-house legal role, your focus moves to providing legal support to a single organisation and handling a wide range of issues, from contracts and compliance to risk management and business strategy. Given that your involvement would go beyond completion of a legal mandate, there is a greater sense of ownership and a deeper and more practical understanding of the commercial objectives of a deal.

In your perspective, how do you foresee the role of legal counsel evolving in the coming years?

Traditionally, in-house legal teams were viewed as a cost center—a necessary but non-revenue-generating function responsible for risk mitigation, compliance, and handling legal disputes. Legal teams often operating in silos, engaging with business functions only when required. Law firm associates would probably relate deeply to the frequent dilemma posed by ‘business team’

and ‘legal team’ comments appearing in drafts completely segregated and often at variance to each other!

However, this perception has changed dramatically in recent years and I believe, will continue to evolve significantly in the coming years. General counsels are now frequently seen as business enablers and corporates have over time understood the importance and cost-effectiveness of pre-emptive legal guidance at the inception or structuring stage of a deal rather than just legal risk vetting and damage control at an advanced stage.

With this change in role and perspective towards an in-house counsel, the role of external legal counsel has also evolved significantly. Corporates would now expect external lawyers (steered with the help of in-house legal teams) to align their legal advice with business objectives and provide a holistic solution to legal issues, rather than restricting themselves to academic or theoretical responses; this expectation is also heightened in view of the recent advancements in AI and automated legal tech platforms and the external counsels would also need to keep abreast of these developments and leverage them to their advantage.

Some key areas in my view where the role of external legal counsel is expected to evolve significantly are:

- **Knowledge hubs:** General counsels are increasingly relying on external legal advisors for providing real-time legal updates, thought leadership, and tailored regulatory insights. Firms that offer continuous knowledge management and legal foresight will stand out as indispensable partners in an evolving corporate landscape.
- **Crisis management and risk mitigation:** Corporate clients will increasingly turn to external counsel for crisis preparedness and response, particularly in areas like cybersecurity breaches, reputational risks, and regulatory investigations.
- **Cross border expertise:** As businesses expand into multiple jurisdictions, multinational corporations will demand lawyers who



can navigate international trade laws, tax structures, and geopolitical risks, making global legal networks more valuable than ever.

What strategies do you implement to remain at the forefront of such a dynamic and ever-changing industry?

Some key strategies would be to (1) communicate frequently with non-legal functions (investment, technical, HR, treasury) and participate actively in leadership discussions to gain an in-depth perspective of the commercials of a deal; (2) keep abreast of legal developments and regulatory trends through continuous personal knowledge building, internal training programmes and attending industry conferences and legal summits; (3) adopt AI-driven tools for monitoring legal developments to enhance efficiency and reduce manual workload.

Could you recommend a book that has particularly inspired you recently?

I'm not a huge fan of motivational/self-help books but I read Stanley Tucci's 'Taste' recently and was deeply inspired by his ability to navigate through some really challenging life situations with the help of a healthy dose of dry humour and his unwavering passion for good food and simple joys of life, something I can deeply relate to!

What is one piece of advice you have received throughout your career that continues to resonate with you?

My key takeaway from working in two of the largest and best law firms in the country is that the best way to approach any legal issue – whether as an external counsel or in-house counsel – is to be solution-oriented. Whilst as lawyers our primary job is to educate our clients on what is legally permissible or not, what ultimately creates long-lasting value is the ability to structure a practically feasible solution which is legally sound yet achieves the commercial objectives. It is important to avoid being reined in too much by what is 'market standard' and to be open to exploring unprecedented options so long as

commercial position is not compromised and legal risks are avoided. I believe it is this ability which, in the long run, will set us apart from AI and keep the legal function relevant and critical in a rapidly changing world.

How do you manage to strike a balance between the demands of a high-pressure legal career and pursuing your personal passions like travel and social media?

By training the mind to (A) switch off from all work-relating thinking immediately once I step out of office; and (B) switch right back on if some urgent work assignment came up at odd times (which was frequently the case). It's easier said than done, of course!

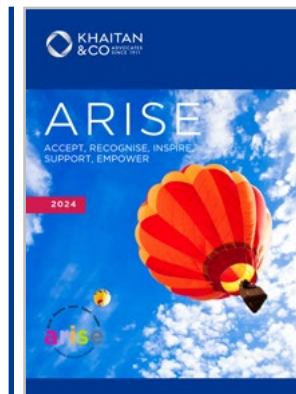
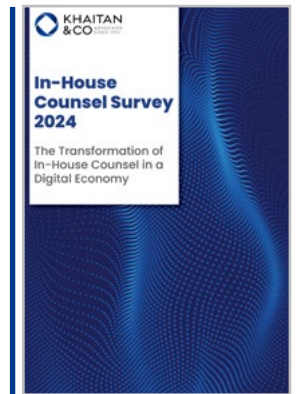
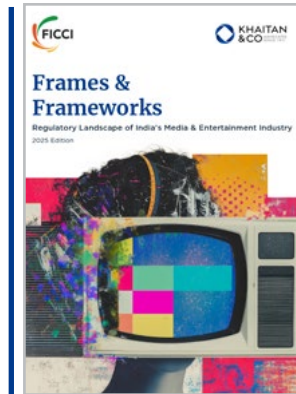
On a more serious note, I try to always clearly define priorities when it comes to work-life balance – the topmost one being physical health and mental wellbeing, as that ultimately and directly contributes to greater productivity and efficiency at work. It is so important to dedicate at least an hour a day entirely and without distractions to a focused exercise and meditation regime.

I also set personal goals based on my own capacity rather than comparing myself to others in the profession or being influenced by external expectations or judgement. This approach allows me to stay focused, fulfilled, and fully engaged in both my career and personal passions. It is important to treat recreational activities as contributing to personal growth and success as much as work/career related pursuits and not attach any sort of guilt or judgement to those.

To manage work stress, the best thing to do, in my opinion, is to break down and organise multiple work assignments, prioritise them according to client/employer expectations and then just deal with each of them one by one, working on steadily pushing each item off the plate. The attitude towards approaching a stressful work assignment is also crucial – an optimistic and solution-oriented approach to attacking a work assignment goes a long way.



Knowledge Vault



ABOUT KHAITAN & CO

Khaitan & Co is a top tier and full-service law firm with over 1200 legal professionals, including 300+ leaders and presence in India and Singapore. With more than a century of experience in practicing law, we offer end-to-end legal solutions in diverse practice areas to our clients across the world. We have a team of highly motivated and dynamic professionals delivering outstanding client service and expert legal advice across a wide gamut of sectors and industries.

To know more, visit www.khaitanco.com



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