



2021 must-watch talent trends in the legal industry.

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It's important not to underestimate the knowledge and skill sets required to work in the legal industry. Employers are not just looking for talent with relevant background knowledge and transferable skills, but also candidates who proficient in both English and Mandarin languages to strengthen their capabilities across borders.

growing demand for data privacy lawyers

As we work and shop from the comfort of our homes across multiple devices, our digital footprints have only ever increased tremendously. Corporations are also investing more in technology such as data collection and management to power blockchain, machine learning and artificial intelligence. Hong Kong's data centre market is projected to be worth \$2.5 billion by 2025.

The growing volume of data being stored and managed in Hong Kong explains the constantly evolving requirements of data protection. PDPA laws are updated regularly to complement sector-specific legislative frameworks such as in technology or financial services. Every proposed change aims to further tighten the regime to safeguard data from misuse and to build trust between users and the companies that manage their data in reflection of today's highly-versatile digital environment.

Factored together, companies are now looking either to expand their legal teams or replace headcount to keep up with new and tighter data privacy legislation and regulatory frameworks.

corporate lawyers with background in technology most sought-after

We've observed a growing demand for technology and transactional lawyers in recent months. In particular, corporate lawyers who have experience working in the technology firms are highly sought-after for their knowledge, expertise and network.

However, it is not a prerequisite for legal professionals to have worked in technology firms for these new roles. Employers that are looking to fill in-house legal positions are also seeking experienced professionals who have serviced and represented technology clients while in a law firm.

Besides legal practitioners with technology background, there remains a steady demand for corporate and transaction lawyers to facilitate IPOs as well as mergers & acquisitions in Hong Kong.

We saw a heightened talent demand for legal professionals to manage insolvency and business restructuring in 2020. However, this hiring trend is slowing down. Many organisations have already completed their change management and cost-cutting projects in response to the pandemic last year, and are now more focussed on recovery and growth.

traditional banks are expanding their in-house legal teams

Financial institutions, even traditional firms, are investing heavily in data privacy. The search for experienced legal professionals has heated up in Hong Kong.

Virtual banks and financial technology firms, for example, need to have robust regulatory frameworks to build customer awareness of how their data will be managed, used and protected. Even though blockchain and decentralised financing create new opportunities for everyone, they also pose significant legal risks as all the data is being stored virtually.

The trend of hiring in-house legal professionals to prepare and protect the company from such risks is now considered a standard requirement. As financial institutions move towards digitising and automating more of their operations, we'll see a corresponding increase in demand for capable and experienced legal professionals.

Virtual banks and fintechs tend to establish and keep small in-house legal teams. On the other hand, we've observed that traditional banking firms are aggressively hiring legal professionals with 5 to 10 post-qualified experience (PQE) to build their in-house legal capabilities.



with better working conditions, fewer legal practitioners are switching employers.

Notorious for long hours and tight deadlines, the law industry has in recent years cleaned up and is paying more attention to their employees' welfare and well-being.

Many international law firms have improved the working conditions by hiring more headcount to spread the workload and revising their remuneration package to reflect their true work contributions and expertise.

When looking for new employment, legal professionals are typically drawn to highly-attractive salary and benefits.

Some of their other considerations include work flexibility and the company's response to COVID-19. There is also growing interest from legal professionals to join Chinese companies or law firms as these employers are fast-growing and able to offer very attractive bonuses.

upskill for better career growth opportunities.

Prior to the pandemic, companies hired legal professionals from the UK, US or Singapore as a fast talent solution to close the skills gap or to meet urgent business requirements. However, border control measures and increasing specifications for talent demand has led to a widening skills gap and a shortage of candidates to fulfill these job and business requirements.

Hong Kong is home to many lawyers with different types of qualifications. To stand out from their peers, legal professionals need to upskill themselves and keep pace with new updates and legislative requirements. Employers can also sponsor and assist their skills and career development through network mentorship or industry training programmes to expand their portfolio, and in particular, build their specialisation in technology.

Aligned with the boost in digitalisation, candidates who have expertise and knowledge about the digital landscape will have a competitive advantage when looking for jobs.

get to know our legal recruitment team.

Our specialised consultants partner with corporate companies in commercial, financial services and private practice to identify and recruit legal professionals. They cover roles such as head of legal, in-house legal counsels, corporate governance, lawyers, paralegals and more. Being the [world's largest HR services company](#) also gives us access to the best legal talent and specialists locally, regionally and globally.

Whether you are looking to replace a headcount or deepen your legal capabilities, our legal recruitment team is ready to assist your talent needs. Similarly, if you're a legal professional who is looking for a new and exciting employment opportunity, we're here for you too! Contact us for a consultation.



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With more than six years' recruitment experience, Kamil leads our legal division, recruiting legal professionals across all seniority levels for firms in commercial, financial services and private practice.



2021 2H legal industry salary snapshot.

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PRC / hong kong law firms

post-qualified experience	low	high
newly qualified	\$55,000	\$90,000
1 year	\$58,000	\$88,000
2 years	\$60,000	\$100,000
3 years	\$65,000	\$114,000
4 years	\$70,000	\$120,000
5 years	\$75,000	\$135,000
6 years	\$82,000	\$145,000
7 years	\$90,000	\$150,000
8 years	\$100,000	\$160,000
counsel	\$115,000	\$180,000
salariated partner	\$130,000	\$300,000

international / UK law firms (non-US firms)

post-qualified experience	low	high
newly qualified	\$73,000	\$85,000
1 year	\$74,000	\$88,000
2 years	\$77,000	\$100,000
3 years	\$79,000	\$114,000
4 years	\$85,000	\$123,000
5 years	\$92,000	\$136,000
6 years	\$100,000	\$150,000
7 years	\$110,000	\$150,000
8 years	\$125,000	\$160,000
counsel	\$150,000	\$250,000
salariated partner	\$180,000	\$300,000+

offshore law firms (non-US firms)

post-qualified experience	low	high
newly qualified	\$100,000	\$122,000
1 year	\$115,000	\$129,000
2 years	\$120,000	\$150,000
3 years	\$130,000	\$162,000
4 years	\$144,000	\$177,000
5 years	\$153,000	\$205,000
6 years	\$175,000	\$220,000
7 years	\$190,000	\$245,000
counsel		\$215,000+
salared partner		\$275,000+

US law firms

post-qualified experience	annual base (USD)
1st year	\$205,000
2nd year	\$215,000
3rd year	\$220,000
4th year	\$225,000
5th year	\$280,000
6th year	\$305,000
7th year	\$325,000
8th year	\$340,000
9th year+	\$350,000
counsel	\$340,000 - \$600,000
salared partner	\$350,000 - \$750,000

private practice, commerce & financial services (paralegals and other legal support)

post-qualified experience	low	high
head of professional support	\$115,000	\$200,000
professional support lawyer	\$90,000	\$150,000
legal project manager	\$60,000	\$75,000
legal consultant (3 – 5 years' exp)	\$50,000	\$60,000
legal consultant (1 – 2 years' exp)	\$40,000	\$50,000
legal manager	\$40,000	\$60,000
paralegal (3 – 5 years' exp)	\$28,000	\$50,000
paralegal (1 – 2 years' exp)	\$18,000	\$35,000

legal support	low	high
head of company secretary (20+ years' exp)	\$80,000	\$150,000
senior company secretarial manager (15 – 20 years' exp)	\$70,000	\$100,000
company secretarial manager (13 – 15 years' exp)	\$50,000	\$75,000
assistant company secretarial manager (9 – 12 years' exp)	\$38,000	\$55,000
senior company secretarial officer (6 – 8 years' exp)	\$34,000	\$40,000
company secretarial officer (4 – 5 years' exp)	\$24,000	\$32,000
company secretarial assistant (1 – 3 years' exp)	\$16,000	\$25,000

in-house legal financial services (per month in HKD)

	analyst/associate (newly qualified - 3 years PQE)		assistant vice president (4-7 years PQE)		vice president (8-12 years PQE)		head of legal (12+ years PQE)	
	low	high	low	high	low	high	low	high
international banks	\$58,000	\$100,000	\$90,000	\$125,000	\$120,000	\$155,000	\$150,000	\$190,000+
regional / local banks	\$55,000	\$90,000	\$85,000	\$120,000	\$100,000	\$160,000	\$150,000	\$180,000+
chinese banks/IBs	\$40,000	\$90,000	\$70,000	\$110,000	\$100,000	\$160,000	\$150,000	\$180,000+
fintech	\$58,000	\$90,000	\$85,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$155,000	\$150,000	\$166,000+
insurance	\$50,000	\$90,000	\$70,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$150,000	\$130,000	\$166,000+
buy-side: asset management, hedge funds, private equity	\$60,000	\$100,000	\$90,000	\$130,000	\$120,000	\$160,000	\$160,000	\$208,000+

in-house legal commerce & industry (per month in HKD)

	analyst/associate (newly qualified - 3 years PQE)		assistant vice president (4-7 years PQE)		vice president (8-12 years PQE)		head of legal (12+ years PQE)	
	low	high	low	high	low	high	low	high
technology & media	\$50,000	\$70,000	\$60,000	\$120,000	\$80,000	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$210,000+
retail	\$45,000	\$66,000	\$58,000	\$108,000	\$70,000	\$110,000	\$100,000	\$125,000+
property & hospitality	\$50,000	\$70,000	\$60,000	\$120,000	\$90,000	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$200,000+
conglomerate	\$50,000	\$70,000	\$60,000	\$120,000	\$90,000	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$200,000+
manufacturing	\$50,000	\$70,000	\$55,000	\$110,000	\$100,000	\$130,000	\$100,000	\$150,000+
others <i>professional services, healthcare, energy, telecom, travel, transportation, shipping / logistics</i>	\$45,000	\$70,000	\$58,000	\$110,000	\$65,000	\$116,000	\$100,000	\$130,000+