



Building a smart dispute resolution venue

Philip Jeyaretnam, chairman of Maxwell Chambers, talks about the centre's modernisation plans and developments in dispute resolution in Singapore.

Asia-mena Counsel: What is Maxwell Chambers doing to stay competitive?

Philip Jeyaretnam: To begin with, Maxwell Chambers has a unique setup which differentiates us from our competitors. Maxwell Chambers is home to a range of legal services under one roof, housing both premium hearing facilities as well as top international law firms and dispute resolution institutions within the premises, for the convenience of visiting legal practitioners. The year ahead will be an exciting time for Maxwell Chambers as we will be upgrading our existing infrastructure in our bid to retain our position as the preferred dispute resolution venue in the region.

Firstly, our floor space will triple as we have expanded our premises to occupy the adjacent conserved building at 28 Maxwell Road, now known as Maxwell Chambers Suites. Maxwell Chambers Suites will house 50 new office spaces for international dispute resolution institutions, law firms and chambers. It is currently undergoing construction work and will officially open in 2019.

It was also announced earlier this year that Maxwell Chambers would embark on the new Smart

Maxwell initiative. The initiative comprises the development of a mobile application for visitors and the installation of smart functionality on the premises, making Maxwell Chambers the world's first smart hearing centre. Smart Maxwell will be rolled out by end 2018.

AMC: Can you tell us more about the app you're developing?

PJ: The single customised and multi-functional mobile app is the crux of the Smart Maxwell initiative. It will enable visitors to our premises to enjoy easy access and a seamless experience throughout their visit.

Visitors attending hearings and meetings at Maxwell Chambers will be issued a unique and encrypted electronic access card, allowing them fast and private access into the rooms with their mobile devices. The app will also enable users to control room settings such as lighting, blinds, and air-conditioning, as well as request for secretariat services such as photocopying.

The app will also act as a smart concierge, connecting users with food and beverage and amenities in the vicinity. Users will be able to order food from the participating restaurants and eateries in the area



Philip Jeyaretnam



Maxwell Chambers Suites

directly. Additionally, users will be able to track their expenditure through the application, allowing our staff to speed up administrative and finance related functions.

Furthermore, the new solutions will allow us to streamline back-end operations. The app will be integrated with a revamped Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, bringing various aspects of the services offered by Maxwell Chambers onto a singular, intelligent platform. With the adoption of smart technology at Maxwell Chambers, we aim to boost productivity and incur significant time and cost savings.

AMC: You also have a robot called Max?

PJ: Yes. We will be introducing a delivery system featuring Max the robot in late 2018. Max will be piloted to deliver documents and food to hearing and meeting rooms with minimal disturbance. The use of a robot for deliveries will result in time savings for staff, allowing them to focus on other administrative tasks. The team believes that Max will be a crowd pleaser when he is introduced to our premises later this year.

AMC: Do you have plans for any other “smart” features?

PJ: We have always been on a constant lookout for new technologies to adopt. Once we have rolled out all Smart Maxwell features by end 2018, we will continue to look into further improving our facilities and service offerings. This initiative is only the

beginning; you can definitely expect more from us in the future.

AMC: Beyond technology, how important are legislative developments such as third-party funding and the new Mediation Bill?

PJ: The legislative developments certainly promote arbitration in Singapore, and make sure that parties can have all the options available to them, whether it is third party funding, fully enforceable mediation agreements or other matters. Singapore’s legislature is quick and responsive in keeping Singapore current and relevant.

AMC: Are you seeing growth in the number of cases filed?

PJ: With our stellar reputation as a one-stop legal complex, we have definitely seen an increase in the number of arbitration cases held on our premises in recent years.

Recently, the Singapore International Arbitration Centre — a frequent user of Maxwell Chambers — announced that it set a new record of 452 new cases in 2017, a 32 percent increase from the 343 cases filed in 2016. We foresee that the number of dispute resolution cases in Singapore will continue to rise as we upgrade and improve our offerings.

There is no doubt that Singapore will continue to see continued growth in arbitration, and we at Maxwell Chambers will continue to play our part in making Singapore a preferred seat for arbitration.



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