

MAXWELL CHAMBERS



■ Katherine Yap
Chief Executive

'OUR STRONG BELIEF IS IN BRINGING VALUE TO OUR CLIENTS'

Maxwell Chambers opened its doors in January 2010. What are some of your memories of the early days?

Maxwell Chambers was established as an arbitration center in July 2009. As the first of its kind in Asia, I must say one of the biggest challenges that we face as an international business hub, is the immense pressure to make Maxwell Chambers a great success.

Our pioneer team started with only 11 staff and that number has almost doubled since then. I remembered having to deal with issues like getting manpower and improving work processes to ensure that operations ran smoothly. Although the pioneers were from different backgrounds, our camaraderie and cohesiveness has worked well together to overcome the obstacles in our path.

What have been some of the key developments at the venue since then?

Maxwell Chambers has registered steady growth in the number of arbitration cases held on its premises over the years, and it is largely due to Singapore becoming an increasingly popular destination for international corporate arbitration in Asia.

Driven by this demand for a world-class dispute resolution complex, we will be expanding our premises to another building in the vicinity. The expected date of completion for the new project is early 2019.

Another key development is that we now provide authentication and certification of arbitration awards seated in Maxwell Chambers. The move is in line with our strong belief in bringing value to our clients.

What have been some of the important ways in which you believe Maxwell Chambers has helped to shape the ADR scene both in Singapore as well as regionally?

Singapore is already recognised as a preferred venue for ADR in Asia because of our neutrality, and impartial judicial system. With our stellar reputation as a one-stop establishment that provides world-class facilities and houses top global ADR institutes under one roof, Maxwell Chambers is attracting even more organisations to settle their disputes in Singapore.

Moreover, Maxwell Chambers provides a conducive environment with a full suite of services to complement the requirements of arbitration

hearings. We are also fully equipped with hearing rooms and preparation rooms that can be customised to suit clients' needs.

Lastly, Maxwell Chambers offers what we refer to as the "Singapore Advantage". Non-resident arbitrators who are appointed for arbitration work in Singapore are eligible for tax exemption.

I believe these factors play an important role in attracting international companies to conduct arbitration hearings in Singapore.

What have been some of the trends Maxwell Chambers has seen in the past year or so? What priorities are you currently focusing on?

Maxwell Chambers has always placed great emphasis on providing world-class facilities and services. Our global standing and branding in the industry today are testament of our constant strive for excellence. In the past year, we have seen an increase in demand for office space with Maxwell Chambers, which is an affirmation of our hard work all these years.

At this juncture, our priority is to create an international arbitration hub that will be implemented together with our expansion plan. With the new premises, we are focusing on increasing the number of legal institutions and practitioners under one roof.

How do you feel your client needs have changed in the past few years, and how are you looking to address them?

Our clients' needs have indeed changed over the years. They are more price-sensitive now, and prefer to compare prices across various hotels and business centers before making a decision. And as most of our clients are international lawyers and arbitrators, their expectations and standards are naturally much higher.

In terms of the complete customer experience, we are definitely more value for money as compared to other venues. Besides providing exceptional customer service, we are committed to the security and privacy of our clients as each room in Maxwell Chambers is securely locked and separated by acoustically-treated walls.

We are constantly reviewing our operations to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our work processes. The IT infrastructure at Maxwell Chambers is also upgraded regularly to provide state-of-the-art facilities and services to our clients.



What are some of the ways in which Maxwell Chambers is looking to set itself apart from competitor venues, both in Asia as well as globally?

The standard of service quality and the setup of the arbitration center differentiates us from our competitors. We provide world-class hearing facilities and outstanding customer service at Maxwell Chambers. Our diligence in keeping up with technology and corporate knowledge also gives us an edge in this industry.

What does the next year look like for both Singapore's ADR market, and as well as Maxwell Chambers?

With the establishment of Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) in January 2015, the legal community is generally optimistic about its potential, especially with the praise that they received regarding the first written judgement issued earlier this year. So I would say that the complementary relationship between SICC and Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) would help to drive more international corporate work into Singapore next year.



The Swiss Arbitration Association's recent move to set up its first Southeast Asian branch in Singapore would also help provide a platform for legal practitioners to interact and improve ties between the two countries.

In addition, the number of foreign law firms and practitioners has significantly grown in Singapore over the years. I think with the increase in competition and diversity in the international legal community, firms have to find more ways to differentiate themselves among their peers. This indicates the growing sophistication of the ADR market in Singapore, and it's a positive sign that nobody is resting on one's laurels amid the globalization of markets.

On our end, we are really excited about the developments Maxwell Chambers has in the pipeline for the next 3 years. It's definitely going to be an uphill battle for us, but we are going to emerge much stronger and become a force to be reckoned with.

We are proud of what we have accomplished after 7 years in the business, and we look forward to many more 7 years to come.



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