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Darani Vachanavuttivong, Tilleke & Gibbins, Bangkok

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Having started out as an auditor, Tilleke & Gibbins' Darani Vachanavuttivong soon made the transition to law, becoming an expert in IP in the process

Name: Darani Vachanavuttivong

Position: Co-managing partner and managing director, intellectual property



Darani Vachanavuttivong

What was your first-ever job?

Before moving into law, my background was in accounting and auditing. I have both bachelor's and master's degrees in accounting. My first job was an assistant auditor, where I was being trained to become an auditor. As my career progressed, I decided not to pursue auditing as a profession. Instead, I moved to work with advertising company DDB Needham Worldwide as a financial controller. As my next step, I first joined Tilleke & Gibbins as an accounting manager within our intellectual property department, and then I eventually moved into a legal role.

Where did you study?

I completed a BBA in accounting (1982-86), a higher diploma in auditing (1987-88), and an MSc in accounting (1988-90), all at Thammasat University in Bangkok. I completed my LLB at Ramkhamhaeng University (1995-98), also in Bangkok.

Have you lived or worked outside your home jurisdiction? What did you learn from it?

I have never lived outside Thailand, although I did complete the Program of Instruction for Lawyers at Harvard University in 2002.

When did you become partner?

I became a partner in 2002, when Tilleke & Gibbins opened the partnership for the first time. Since 2006, I've been honoured to serve as one of the firm's co-managing partners.

What is the biggest challenge facing your market at the moment?

We are focused on strategic planning for the firm over the next five years, which includes planning for how best to deal with the changes we will face when Thailand becomes a member of the Madrid Protocol (expected by 2015). The Madrid Protocol will provide important advantages for our clients, so we are focused on how to overcome the challenges within our business. Also, as part of our strategic plan, we are devoting significant resources to building a successful IP practice that spans not only Thailand and Vietnam — where we currently have offices — but also Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Indonesia. Through a strong regional practice, we will be in an even better position to deliver high quality and efficient services to our international clients.

What has been the most significant development in your sector in recent years?

Within the IP space in Thailand we've seen the growth of complex IP litigation since the establishment in 1997 of Thailand's Central Intellectual Property and International Trade Court — the first dedicated IP court in South East Asia. I'm proud that our firm has developed a strong team of seven specialised IP litigators to handle complex patent, trademark, and copyright litigation.

If you hadn't been a lawyer, what would you have been?

Due to my background, I would have become an auditor.

Which country do you travel to most frequently and which country do you like the best?

Given that I've attended every International Trademark Association annual meeting since 1995, I would have to say that I travel most frequently to the United States. Of course, I always enjoy those conferences, but my personal favourite destinations would be Japan and the UK.

What is your favourite book?

I highly recommend My Sweet Orange Tree by Jose Mauro De Vasconcelos. I love Zeze, a five-year-old boy and his orange tree. This book has always stayed in my heart and provided happy memories.

What is your favourite restaurant?

For great Thai food, I really enjoy Nahm Restaurant at the Metropolitan Bangkok.