

40
40They've Got Next: **The 40 Under 40**

Christine Kim

Age: 39

Law Firm: Clifford Chance

Practice Area: Mergers & Acquisitions

Title: Counsel

Location: New York

Law School: Cornell Law School

Clifford Chance

Christine Kim of Clifford Chance

Lisa Helem, Executive Editor | Andrea Platten, Editor | August 05, 2026

Please describe two of your most substantial, recent wins in practice.

This year, I was the lead counsel on my firm's team that advised Legal & General, the London Stock Exchange-listed financial services group, on the sale of its US protection and pension risk transfer businesses for an equity value of approximately \$2.3 billion. The buyer, Meiji Yasuda Life Insurance Company, a Japanese mutual life insurance company, acquired an approximate 5% economic interest in Legal & General.

I worked closely with the in-house legal and corporate development teams, as well as the then-co-heads of my firm's US insurance practice and the broader cross-practice, cross-border deal team, to develop and implement transaction-related strategies for 12-plus months. I led the sell-side negotiation of the purchase agreement across from the two buy-side law firms. Successfully completing the transaction was a team effort.

Several years ago, I was one of two leads on my firm's team that advised Pfizer on its acquisition of a biologics manufacturing facility. The facility remained under construction when signing and later when closing the transaction—which made the transaction uniquely complex. Pfizer acquired the facility from a biopharmaceutical contract development and manufacturing organization/contract research organization backed by Welsh, Carson, Anderson & Stowe, and Biospring Partners. I led the buy-side negotiation of the purchase agreement and coordinated a full-range deal team, including global supply, legal, and engineering experts.

I have had the opportunity to support Pfizer on multiple other matters, including the formation of its consumer healthcare joint venture with GlaxoSmithKline.

What is the most important lesson you learned as a first-year attorney and how does it inform your practice today?

As a transactional lawyer, I almost always work as part of a team. During my first year of transactional practice, I observed how legal advice is produced and ultimately delivered at a team level (versus at an individual level), and I learned the importance of collecting, processing, and ultimately communicating with different team members in order to shape (and reshape) client advice.

In hindsight, I first learned this lesson during an externship for a judge on the US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. The opinions that I drafted for the judge were discussed and revised during "live" working sessions with the clerks and the judge.

In my practice today, I have led deal teams for M&A transactions that are as small as three colleagues and as large as 150 colleagues. The process of communicating and effectively advising clients as a team was put to the test during the Covid-19 pandemic. In December 2020, when nearly all colleagues at my firm were working from home, I created a metaverse for

the New York office using a communication platform created by a startup. In a virtual replica of the New York office that I designed, more than 100 lawyers and business professional colleagues interacted with each other via personal avatars for team meetings, officewide events, and one-on-one interactions.

How do you define success in your practice?

I define success in my practice based on a value "vector": delivering legal advice that has a positive impact on the direction of my client's business objectives, and doing so with integrity.

The "hard" technical aspect of this definition of success is more straightforward to measure. For M&A transactions, this can mean obtaining immediate economic value in the form of a purchase price paid upon closing or longer-term economic value in the form of synergies achieved in a successful merger or joint venture.

The "soft" aspect of this definition of success is less straightforward. I believe that mentoring and being mentored is an important form of showing (instead of telling) the ways that transactional lawyers can act with integrity through every stage of a client matter. At my firm, I have been a formal mentor for 2L students in the summer law clerk program for five years, a formal mentor to a first-year associate, and a formal "reverse" mentor to a partner.

The emergence of artificial intelligence is transforming the practice of law. How has AI impacted your strategic approach to your work?

I regularly explore how to supercharge my practice by using AI-powered legal tech. Tools with different levels of human oversight have come across my desk(top), and I have beta-tested them, integrated them into my regular work rhythms, or abandoned them for various reasons.

A large part of my focus is on a related but separate goal. I believe it is important for members of the bar to understand how the practice of law is changing in light of the legal tech of today. I believe it is also important for us to rethink how to teach and train the newest members of the bar for the practice of law in light of the legal tech of tomorrow. For this and other reasons, I am interested in distinguishing "artificial intelligence" from "artificial judgment" and pinpointing the limits (ethical, technical, financial, and others) of legal tech in practice.

Who is your greatest mentor in the law and what have they taught you?

My mentor, Meerie Joung, has shaped my understanding of what it means both to stand by myself as a practitioner and to stand with others as a member of the bar.

Meerie was the first Asian American woman to become a partner at her law firm in Boston. When I was promoted to counsel at my law firm in New York, I was the first Asian woman to be promoted within the US M&A group. Meerie's path is both motivating and instructive, reminding me of the importance of individual perseverance and leadership.

Before and after becoming a partner, Meerie devoted herself to serving the bar and the broader community, including through leadership roles in Asian bar associations at the state and national levels. Inspired in part by her example, I have served for 10 years as co-chair of Clifford Chance's AAPI DEI affinity group. Outside the firm, I previously served as the co-president of the Stanford Women's Network, which is a club of the Stanford Alumni Association, a 501(c)(3) organization. Currently, the Stanford Women's Network has more than 1,600 members, and its mission includes, among other objectives, engaging together

to proactively serve the greater good. My journey of service is still in progress, and I look forward to the opportunities that the future may bring.

What are you most proud of as a lawyer?

Service has always been an integral part of my life, and as a lawyer, I feel fortunate to be able to serve the local and global community in ways that I could not serve outside the practice of law. I have advised pro bono clients ranging from a nonprofit that sails hospital ships around the world (providing surgical care) to a nonprofit that supports Black and Latinx students from underserved New York communities (organizing academic enrichment programs) to the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (exploring resources to combat hate crimes and other racist incidents).

I am a pro bono volunteer with Open Hands Legal Services, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with the mission of providing free legal aid to low-income New Yorkers. Set up at tables at a street intersection in Harlem, the team provides legal advice to individual clients on a limited-representation basis on housing, employment, personal injury, and immigration matters. As an attorney volunteer, I supervise non-attorney volunteers, and we conduct client intakes together.

I am grateful for the opportunity to put fundamental legal skills to use to be able to advocate for my clients, whether they are pro bono clients of Open Hands Legal Services or they are clients of an international law firm. I continue to learn from both types of experiences.

Tell us more about your most impactful pro bono work. How did it make you a better lawyer?

I remember a particular Saturday in the winter when I volunteered with Open Hands Legal Services. I spoke to one client, who had a personal issue involving local New York housing law. Lacking substantive expertise in the applicable law, I had to rely on only the most basic legal skills to be able to assist my client. (And I promptly sought the advice of a staff attorney on site with the relevant knowledge.)

I am grateful for experiences like these, which are a reminder to continue honing the tools of our craft—from the fundamental to the advanced—so we can be ready to fulfill the oath to faithfully discharge our duties as an attorney to the best of our ability.

Tell us your two favorite songs on your summer music playlist.

The "KPop Demon Hunters" soundtrack. I can't stop listening to it. Also, Claude Debussy's "Nocturnes." Earlier this year, I saw a stunning performance of "Nuages (Clouds)" performed by the American Ballet Theatre and choreographed by Jiří Kylián.