



## Joydeep Hor

CAHRI

Managing partner  
Harmers Workplace  
Lawyers

### ▣ Education

I completed a combined Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws with Honours and then a Master of Laws, all at the University of Sydney.

### ▣ First job

Throughout my university studies, I did some part-time debating and public speaking teaching at a private girls' school in Sydney.

My first full-time role was as a summer clerk at Freehills. From there I spent some time as a solicitor at Freehills, in the workplace relations area. I moved to Harmers in 1998. I started as a solicitor and was made a partner about four years ago, when I was 28.

### ▣ Why HR

I got into HR because I'd pretty much ceased being seen as a lawyer and was starting to be seen as a business partner. The legal issues I was advising on

were so HR-focused, such as advising on how to address an employee's poor performance. There are legal underpinnings to all that but the solutions you provide have to be very HR savvy, commercial and practicable. So I realised that the law only takes you so far; you've really got to be familiar with best-practice HR.

I loved HR law from my first exposure to it (during my clerkship at Freehills), because there's that amalgamation between people and business. It never ceases to amaze me that every case I get involved in is different, because every person and business is different. Also, in this type of law it's very rare to be involved in a case that goes on for years. In the first two and a half months of this year, I've already been involved in up to 200 cases and I like the diversity of that.

I was lucky to be involved in a high-profile case during my summer clerkship, which also sparked my interest in this area of law. It was the Bankers Trust sexual harassment case. It made me realise that in HR law you're dealing primarily with sociological issues, rather than corporate deals, tax law or 300-page documents.

### ▣ Current duties

Most importantly, my role is client practice—advising my clients on workplace relations. I also have a management role—overseeing the aspects of the firm's management including IT, internal HR, finances, etc.

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### ▣ Challenges

Because I don't have the stereotypical lawyer's personality, in that I don't relish detail and legal technicalities, and since I manage a firm of lawyers, I have to recognise that different people need to be managed in a different way than perhaps I would manage myself.

On a personal level, my wife and I recently had our first child, which is just the most beautiful thing and it has completely reshaped my perspective on life. Everyone tells you that when they have a baby, but you don't really understand until you're in the situation yourself. So I'm really committed to spending as much time as I can with my family and not missing out on those valuable moments, but this can be difficult since I work in a demanding practice in which clients' needs require urgent and often immediate attention.

### ▣ Lessons

I think one of the key lessons I've learned is that, if you want to be efficient and effective, you need to identify what needs detailed attention and what can wait or be delegated. I firmly believe in surrounding yourself with good people and empowering and trusting them. I've

been able to progress quickly because I've had a lot of good people working with me and for me.

On an interpersonal level, it's important to respect others, no matter what the context. I always try to have an amicable and respectful relationship with lawyers on the other side of a case, and it has actually led to business referrals from other lawyers.

### ▣ Professional development

I've just co-authored a book and have another book coming out in a few months.

I do a monthly online television show on employment law which is watched by legal practitioners and HR professionals.

I'm also a member of AHRI and I'm on a few editorial boards for CCH publications.

### ▣ 10-year plan

In all likelihood, in 10 years' time I'll be in the people management industry, whether that's still on the legal services side or whether it evolves into a broader HR strategy consulting role, I'm not sure.

People say they see me in senior management roles in industry and I haven't ruled that out.

Personally, I'd like to have more children but at this stage, with a young baby, it's the furthest thing from our minds. I've worked hard up to this point but it's always been on the understanding that I've been doing these long hours so I wouldn't have to once I had a family.

Joydeep Hor spoke with Bridget Cull.