



# HERBERT SMITH FREEHILLS HOSTS ITS INAUGURAL CLIENT ACADEMY IN MUMBAI

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Firm news

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Earlier this month, the firm hosted its first ever Client Academy event at the Taj Lands End in Mumbai, bringing together around 40 general counsels and senior legal advisers from companies such as Tata, Aditya Birla, IndiGo, Unilever, ICICI, Godrej and Netflix. They gathered in the Harvard room – an exact replica of Harvard Business School's MBA classrooms in Boston – for a full day programme focused on leadership and international best practice. On the agenda were two sessions focused on innovation, a session on dispute resolution, a panel discussion with high profile GCs and lastly a session on the importance of mental wellness in the work-place.



Chris Parsons, Chairman of the India Practice, opened with his session entitled *India's Future in a Globalised World*. He went through a brief history of India and how it has shaped its current position in the world. He looked at the impact that colonisation has had on India's development, the Jugaad mindset and the promoter culture. He also focused on India's great potential and the huge progress it has seen in recent years, highlighting its current ranking of 77th in the World Bank's ease of doing business, going up 53 spots in only two years.

He was followed by Nick Peacock, head of India Disputes who discussed the best practice in the initial assessment and management of disputes, including the processes and tools that Herbert Smith Freehills' Decision Analysis Team have developed to help evaluate uncertainty in dispute situations and make better dispute-related decisions. The software that was created helps harness legal analysis and an evaluation of probabilities to allow parties to better quantify the risks inherent in a complex dispute, and to then make informed, commercial decisions about its management and resolution.

The last morning session was led by Priya Lele, the Legal Process Design Lead who explained some of the innovative initiatives at Herbert Smith Freehills that are helping to transform legal service delivery to our clients and helping in-house legal teams transform their legal service delivery to their businesses, by becoming more efficient and adding more strategic value.

In the afternoon, Roddy Martin, head of India Corporate chaired an interactive discussion around "*What is Keeping GCs awake at night?*" – the panel of experienced GCs included Pramod Rao of ICICI Bank, Dev Bajpai of Hindustan Unilever and Priya Mehra of IndiGo. They were invited by Roddy to share their thoughts and recent experiences, both within India and internationally, on a range of topics, including regulatory change, corporate reputation, corporate culture and people and team-building.

The second innovation session of the day was led by external speaker Reena Sengupta, CEO of RSG Consulting who launched the Financial Times Innovative Lawyers programme in 2006. Since then, she has been studying how lawyers working in law firms and corporate law departments innovate. With over 13 years of research, it has given RSG a unique insight and Reena discussed how lawyers can become more innovative, the skills they need to cultivate and the tools they need to master, to become high-performing and self-fulfilled professionals.



The closing session was an important discussion around mental wellness, a topic which is still not discussed often enough in India. The conversation was led by Chris Parsons who has a personal interest in mental health issues not least through having suffered from depression periodically over a number of years. Chris shared some of his personal experience and the importance of raising awareness around mental health as well as some practical guidance on stress management. Chris' session was followed by a short introduction to [Mpower](#), a foundation working towards the '3rd Sustainable Development Goal' (good health and well-being) by the United Nations under the COP21 agreement and provide therapeutic interventions like counselling, psychiatric sessions, allied therapy, workshops, and support groups for corporate employees.

Feedback from clients following the Client Academy has been extremely positive, describing it an "absolutely wonderful session", "relevant and helpful", "insightful" and with "great content and interesting global insights".