

Like many things in Hong Kong, the cost of legal fees are generally very high—and very hidden. It's not every day you meet a lawyer who is actively working to change that, though. Jonathan Tai is the managing partner at Tai & Co. Solicitors, a firm that is run by an established “group of young and enthusiastic solicitors who aim to serve clients with legal services of the highest quality.” People love a good ‘level the playing field’ kind of story, and that is exactly what this is. Their ambition is simple: “We want to make sure that clients who have a need for legal services have quick and easy access to lawyers.”

How exactly are they achieving that? Tai and his associates don't believe in hidden costs. “Our new concept is to make the pricing of legal services as transparent as possible. In the past, many people have wanted to seek legal advice but have been deterred due to the outrageously expensive and seemingly endless legal fees.” On the other hand, if the cost of legal services is too low, there is usually a reason for that. As the saying goes, you get what you pay for. “There are also law firms that offer extremely low fees. In order to keep prices lower than normal, it is well known that these firms are essentially run by legal executives and clerks, and the handful of lawyers actually present are there only to sign necessary documents but not to handle cases.” At Tai & Co. Solicitors, they're looking to strike the right balance, and to make sure hardworking, everyday citizens have the same access to legal services as higher-income families in the city—“to let the public have access to justice, legal advice and legal services, all under the care of quality lawyers, but at reasonable costs.”

Offering these services at lower-than-standard rates means having to manage daily operations differently than other firms. Thankfully, it doesn't detract from their business at all. Instead, it improves their quality of care for their clients, making the processes less disconnected and more personal. “As we aim to serve clients personally, I also take a lot of free legal advice calls directly. The biggest challenge is that most of such calls are clients without substantial legal issues. For example, a lady may call to ask for help finding her husband after he left for another woman. As lawyers charge based on billable hours, such calls cut directly into the hours we can bill. However, as we aim to provide down-to-earth services, I still insist on taking these calls myself, to establish a close connection with each and every client.” Once again demonstrating that he is using his hard-earned qualifications for the greater good of the people in this city.

Of course, there is a big-picture goal in mind for Tai. “I aim to establish a new culture in the legal field in Hong Kong, such that clients will not hesitate to seek legal services when necessary. I aim to provide a transparent fee structure and reasonably priced services so that people will know how much they should spend on each task or document, and where their hard-earned money has been spent.”

Jonathan Tai

Managing partner Tai & Co. Solicitors

