

LEGAL FORUM



THE VALUE OF ASKING “HOW”

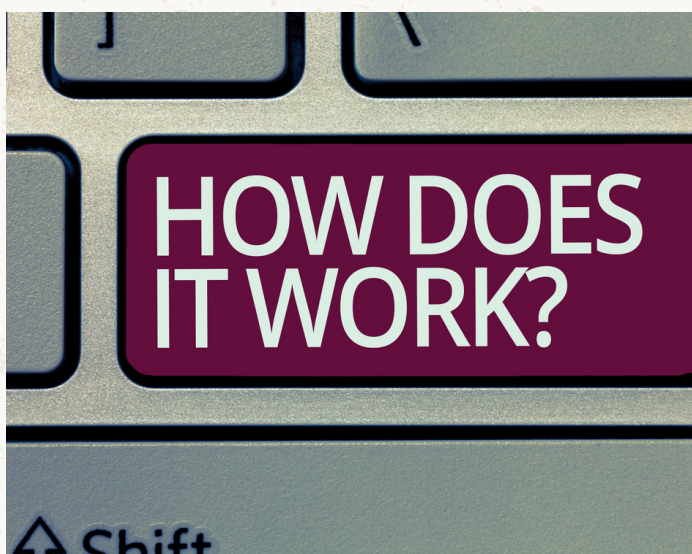
by Bui T. Giang Huong | Partner

Since joining the firm many years ago, I have heard my Managing Partner remind us many times to ask ourselves one simple question: “**How?**”.

Over the years, whenever we discussed our clients’ matters, he would not expect us to simply say “yes” or “no”, but, more importantly, to answer the question “How?”.

At the beginning of my legal career, I did not fully appreciate the importance of that question, and to be honest, I often forgot to ask it myself. However, after years in practice, I have come to realize that much of the value that we bring to our clients lies in how we answer that simple question.

Early in law school, we were taught the IRAC method: identify the Issue, determine the Rules, apply those rules to the facts, and reach a Conclusion. In many cases, the conclusion simply answers the legal question with “**yes**” or “**no**.”





In reality, when clients come to us, they are rarely looking for a “yes” or “no”. Our clients always have an objective that they want to achieve, together with many concerns and practical considerations. Therefore, as lawyers, our role is not simply to answer whether something can be done, but to answer the much more important question – **how**.

That is why our conversations and reasoning naturally evolve.

From **“Can we do this?”** to **“How can we do this?”**

From **“Can our client do this?”** to **“How can we help our client do this?”**

Over time, I realized that by continuing to ask “How?”, especially in difficult situations, we often discovered possibilities and solutions that we would not have considered. This would not have happened if we had simply stopped after answering “yes” or “no”, even



though in most cases, that would have allowed us to fulfil our professional responsibilities. It is then that we can help our clients achieve their objectives while managing legal and commercial risks, and to us, that is one of the most rewarding aspects of being a lawyer.

And where there is more than one lawful way to achieve an objective, I believe a lawyer can create more value by helping clients choose not only a lawful path but also the one that best fits their circumstances and addresses their various concerns, including their resources, priorities, timeline and other practical considerations.

In fact, doing so requires much more than legal knowledge. It requires us to take time to understand clients and their businesses, and what they truly

want to achieve. To me, that makes all the effort worthwhile.

Looking back, even for the simplest matters, my Managing Partner would still ask us:

“How can we make this faster?”
or
“How can we make this better for client?”

At first, I thought he was only talking about efficiency. Now, I realize that he was asking us to think beyond the legal answer and focus on finding the best solution for the client. That is the way we should think as lawyers.

Perhaps the true value of a lawyer lies not in answering “whether”, but in answering **“How”**.

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