

**THE KEY FACTORS THAT DRIVE GROWTH IN A SMALL
LAW FIRM IN BANGKOK:
A CASE STUDY OF IAS ADVISORY CO., LTD.**



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**A THEMATIC PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
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Thematic paper
entitled
**THE KEY FACTORS THAT DRIVE GROWTH IN A SMALL LAW
FIRM IN BANGKOK:
A CASE STUDY OF IAS ADVISORY CO., LTD.**

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ABSTRACT

Law firms are often perceived by dealing with controversial issues for large companies. However, in this context, the small law firm provides legal-related points to small and medium enterprises. With that unique position and expertise, the company has grown significantly. This study aims to understand their strategic management in operating the firm in a notably outstanding and successful.

The qualitative method was conducted with 5 participants from IAS Advisory Co., Ltd. Having interviewed the employees and business owners of this law firm, the research can identify five key factors that contributed to its growth in the market. This comprises the quality culture in delivering service, the networking and relationship to acquire customers, flat and flexible organization for internal culture, their trusted teamwork and leadership for enhancing the performance, and cash flow for preventing business interruption.

The findings offer significant implications for entrepreneurs seeking a comprehensive management approach or managers striving to improve business competitiveness. They can leverage these valuable and practical values in their companies. However, further research can develop the study by exploring the key factors in different periods or conducting interviews with additional stakeholders to see unrealizing strategies.

KEY WORDS: law firm/ business success/ entrepreneurship

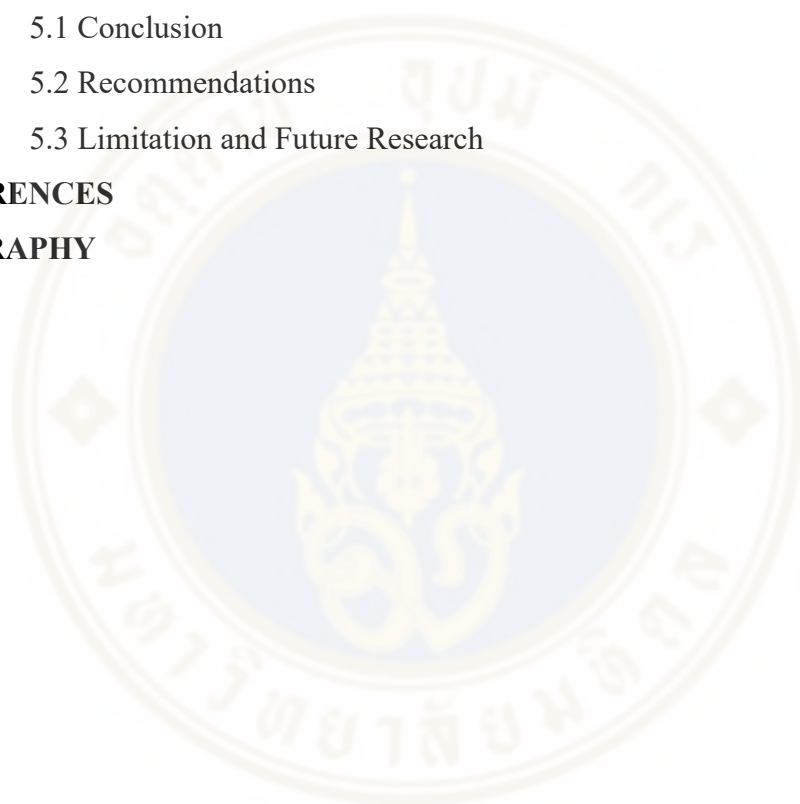
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The introduction describes the overview of small businesses in Thailand and their importance. This includes service business characteristics and touches upon the law firm's operation; how they are differentiated from other service companies. The chapter also includes the surface of the selected company in this paper.

1.1 Background

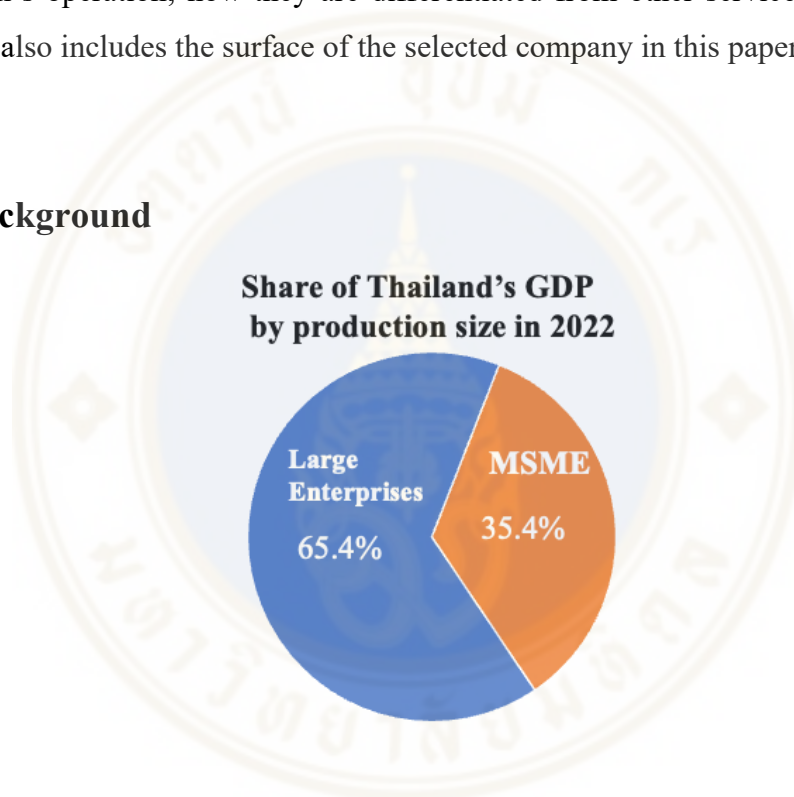


Figure 1.1 Share of Thailand's GDP by production size in 2022 (The Office of SME Promotions, n.d.)

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) accounted for 35.4% or 6 trillion baht of Thailand's GDP in 2022, or about one-third of its total value. Thai MSMEs' expanded by 4.5% compared to last year's period. The resume of international inbound caused MSMEs to continue to grow and expect to contribute at 35.7% by the end of 2023. These contributions of MSMEs are essential in accelerating employment rate, private consumption, and economic upturn.

The largest MSMEs sector is in the service providers. Thailand relies on a significant proportion of the tourism industry that generates income for the country. The subset businesses are restaurants, hotels, and delivery services. Moreover, a broader term in the service business refers to skilled workers who provide specific tasks with trained professionals. Translators, interior designers, auditors, lawyers, masseuses, and housekeepers are also grouped as service providers. These service models are booming across suppliers' and buyers' sides because of personalized activities and exclusive needs from customers. Due to the pandemic aftermath, Businesses shifted to outsourcing professional services for cost benefits and company resilience. People can pay for a one-time service or on a contract basis, which is easier to switch costs and shorten commitments.

In terms of a law firm definition, it is an organization engaged by lawyers that offers legal advice or represents clients in court. The area of expertise comprises corporate commercial, intellectual property (IP), litigation, contract drafting, etc. Local law firms usually refer to Thai registered lawyers that established their own firms whereas, multinational law firms are firms that incorporated more than one country. In Thailand, typical local law firms mostly handle family law and dispute resolution, while multinational law firms serve legal expertise and consulting to large-size enterprises. Still, there is an identified gap for entrepreneurs who run MSMEs businesses because they are unsure where to seek legal advice for corporate issues. For instance, if they want to expand the company's size or negotiate conflicts between stakeholders, which type of law firm would match the demand. Thus, small and mid-sized law firms with expertise in the corporate commercial are increasing to correspond to the growth of MSMEs in Thailand.

The economic recovery with an optimistic political landscape has widened the opportunity for Thailand to reclaim a leading player in the ASEAN market. This can signify foreign direct investment to the domestic or Thai companies to outbound investment for other neighboring countries (Pithaloka & Miran, 2023). Given that prospects and localized regulations push loads of new business challenges. Hence, law firms' markets in Thailand are competing against one another more intensely. The full-range-service law firms will be able to take a considerable margin and recognition.

Furthermore, the law firm's characteristics are plausible regardless of economic conditions. On the one hand, when the economy is positive, law firms will benefit from investment, business expansion, and commercializing the company. On the other hand, if the business faces solvency or disputes, legal procedures are indispensable to get things right or to exit the market appropriately. It is evident that law firms with corporate agendas are behind every business matter.

Nevertheless, people do not perceive sufficient information on how law firms are managed since their service is unlike trading companies or manufacturers. Legal advice is a particular profession because of the asymmetric information between clients and lawyers. The buyers anticipate quality advice and are willing to rest assured of their trust in higher prices.

IAS Advisory is an international business law firm in Bangkok whose service focuses on commercial/M&A; foreign direct investment; real estate; litigation, dispute resolution, and arbitration; employment management; banking and finance; data privacy and personal data protection; and bankruptcy, restructuring, and business reorganization (IAS Advisory). Its position is to be a trusted business partner and bring the finest and bespoke legal solutions.

The company was founded at the beginning of 2023 with 3-experienced partners and 15 employees in total as of June 2023. Even though all three partners had worked and enjoyed competitive salaries and management positions in well-known law firms for decades, they decided to start their own businesses to counter the limitations of lingering problems that cannot be done under their supervision. They realized that working in large companies have overloaded and redundant paperwork. Also, there was a ceiling and complexity to managing human resources. Superficially, structured law firms will offer a clear direction in a promotion plan; however, stepping into the higher management level has limited quotas.

In addition, the tradition of the law firm system relies on partner engagement which means each partner will handle the same clients and hardly switch hands. The client with different issues may be unsuccessful because of limited expertise. Those issues could not have been resolved if those three partners were working under other people's companies. To build an accountable law firm with no prior constraints, they formed the company with the mission "*be partners for your success.*" This enhances the

ability to take care of clients with multiple perspectives; more than one partner can tailor solutions for each specific need.

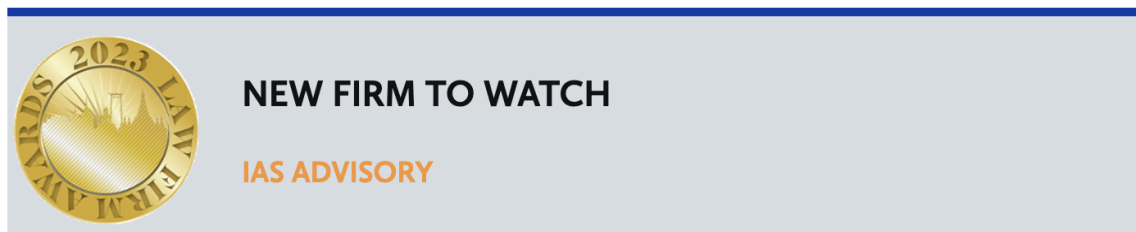


Figure 1.2 Thailand law firm awards in 2023, new firm to watch category. (Mohn, 2023)

Interestingly, Asia Business Law Journal accredited IAS Advisory as the new firm to watch in 2023, even though it was a few months in operation. Besides, this 6-month-old company has generated eight figures in year-to-date revenue, more than 40 clients, and hundreds of engagement cases. Foremost, the firm plans to double its size by this year-end.

Due to these significant numbers and its future project, this firm must have had a good story in management organization. This study will disclose key factors that expedite the company's prosperity in such a short period of time. The writer also wants to analyze the ability to sustain its business in the following decades.

1.2 Research Questions

The research question is, "What are the key factors that drive the growth of a newly established small law firm?"

1.3 Research Objective

To determine this research's direction, it will be established based on the following perspectives:

- 1) To identify the key components of growth in this law firm

2) To analyze the connection between management framework and the empirical study

3) To develop the assumptions of this company in maintaining the growth sustainably.

1.4 Scope of Study

This research focuses on the small enterprise of a newly established law firm located in the city center of Bangkok. The case company is selected as a sample of legal services to see their critical factors in prosperity and its business's insights.

1.5 Contribution of The Study

The findings of this study will be used as a caveat for other entrepreneurs, not limited to law firms, who are interested in initiating their service companies, maintaining growth, or those who are seeking guidelines for developing their competitiveness.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature reviews will be discussed the specific topics in business management fields that have been synthetically composed and studied by other scholars. The reviews will be used as an analogical tool and implication to this study.

2.1 Definition

2.1.1 Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME)

Longenecker et al. (2014) inferred that small businesses are commonly defined by using the number of employees, sale volume, and value of assets. As a result, its size can depend on the definition given by each country to exempt small businesses from certain regulations.

According to the SME promotion act of Thailand in force in 2019, the definition and characteristics of MSMEs have been modified, using the criteria of employee number and annual revenue. This amendment targets economic revamp by encouraging and incentivizing Thai entrepreneurs in s small to medium sizes, as shown in the table below:

Sector	Item	Micro	Small	Medium
Manufacturing*	Employees	1-5	6-50	51-200
	Revenue	B1.8 million and less	More than B1.8 million and less than or equal to B100 million	More than B100 million and less than B500 million
Services and Trading	Employees	1-5	6-30	31-100
	Revenue	B1.8 million and less	More than B1.8 million and less than or equal to B50 million	More than B50 million and less than B300 million

*Manufacturing includes the agricultural sector.

Table 2.1 The definition of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in Thailand (Asian Development Bank, 2022)

Other than the tangible numbers, some criteria indicate the small business characteristics: 1) business functions are geographically localized. 2) the source of funds comes from a few individuals. 3) A capability to grow with or without the intention of the owners (Longenecker et al., 2014).

2.1.2 Competitive Advantage

To generate wealth from operating the business, the company must create its uniqueness over competitors to enable the final step of the market funnel and customer satisfaction. Nonetheless, two common terms are used to develop a firm's differentiation: one is strategic management, and the other one is a competitive advantage.

Referring to Anderson & Caldwell (2017), it can be determined that strategic management involves resource allocation, adding value, or reducing unnecessary procedures to differentiate from competitors, which is planned chiefly by management position. In comparison, competitive advantage is recognized when the firm is able to offer products or services that are not found in other competitors. The competitive advantages meet customers' needs because of the company's valuable and superior assets that are costly and difficult to duplicate.

In addition, another study suggested that competitive advantages are derived from the strategic management process. The resource allocation is developed by Resource-Based View (RBV) methodology. With the emergence of the internet, the competitive advantages were shifted to the Knowledge-Based View (KBV), which integrates tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge into action. Nowadays, dynamic capabilities are introduced by refiguring both internal and external factors to develop the capability and respond to abrupt changes in the digitization world (Grant et al., 2010).

2.2 Key Factor Frameworks

The prior study, "The Four Things a Service Business Must Get Right," outlined the tools and techniques of the service model to gain distinctive advantages, and it was used as a core teaching module at Harvard Business School.

Frei's article (2014) found four key features that support service businesses. First of all, it showed **the service design and offering**. The managers or business owners must analyze the excellent service to understand customer preference and decide to invest in attributes that add value to the company. The second success factor was the **funding mechanism**. The company is responsible for being creative on solutions to make customers feel less conscious about paying extra. The solutions mainly offer convenience, creating value-added and competitive advantages for the company. Next is **employee management**. The study inferred that the company must weigh and determine the quality and the others. Therefore, hiring talented candidates will be more likely to maintain growth and service excellence. Lastly is **client management**. It is essential to know who their customers are because customers are external factors that they are not able to control. With those findings, the writer will summarize the relevant framework as follows:

2.2.1 Product Quality

Typically, a firm strategy determines its strategic profile position. Business owners must define the scope of competition, whether it will be used in a broader or specific market and have to trade off choices between value and cost to close the gap between customers' needs. Hence, the differentiation and cost leadership are on opposite scales. (Rothaermel, 2021)

According to Rothaermel (2021), it is suggested that if the firm wants to add special features and improve value perception so that the customer will be confident to spend money, the firm must implement a differentiation strategy. The manager can select product features, customer service, or complements to differentiate from competitors.

1) Product features are obvious levers in increasing perceived value which usually correlates with R&D, developed by expanding the functionality or ease of use.

2) customer service or incremental service, for during or after services such as free shipping and trial service, will increase firm value and open the opportunity for building a good relationship with customers.

3) Complements are the other dimension of increased value and customer willingness. The prime example is bundling products that provide discounted rates and create a situation where customers can gain additional features (Rothaermel, 2021).

Service companies can adapt the above dimensions to increase superior and well-quality perception. Meanwhile, to achieve excellence as a strategic value or competitive advantage at the business level, Anderson & Caldwell (2017) define it as understanding and satisfying the client's purpose in the long term. It is evident that the firm needs to understand its resources and supplement the value. The firm must offer profits to customers so that they feel satisfied. These concepts bring organizational success. Furthermore, They categorize excellence into six models.

Excellence as a virtue: This implies governance and integrity in business activity.

Excellence as value creation: The ability to transform and create new markets or develop unique products.

Excellence as grit: It is a performance-driven firm committed and perseverant to improving its potential and accomplishing its goals.

Excellence as quality: This is subjective to the customer's needs. In other words, its quality needs to fulfill the requirements and expectations of customer purpose.

Excellence as vision: The firm that can portray a clear vision and stimulate others to take the desired action and go beyond the standard.

Excellence as execution: The ability of an organization that can construct plans and well-perform in delivering products or services with sufficient and effective resources.

2.2.2 Client Relationship Management

Russell-Jones (2002) explained that when the company offers products or services, it provides the value threshold for attracting customer decisions. This customer value proposition is a relation between price and benefits. Therefore, the companies must construct and apply customer relationship management to examine the effectiveness of the value proposition. It will also facilitate the firm to increase its benefits and encourage customers for larger transactions.

Service firms compete with one another in the form of an initial proposal and the bidding process. Many firms will take this opportunity to initiate and build relationships with clients by gathering information and identifying key decision-makers to understand the requirement and prepare strategic plans to ensure their attractive services. After agreeing on the desired level of engagement, they document the client information and develop the relationship with deliverables (Berkovi, 2015). After accomplishing the project, the firm will build the customer portfolio and database for the subsequent services. At the same time, the customers are aware of the firm's value and contribution. Berkovi (2015) stated that some firms have restructured multi-practice teams to manage client relationships, delivering many practices relevant to clients' interests. This exemplifies how professional firms approach clients and maintain their life cycle.

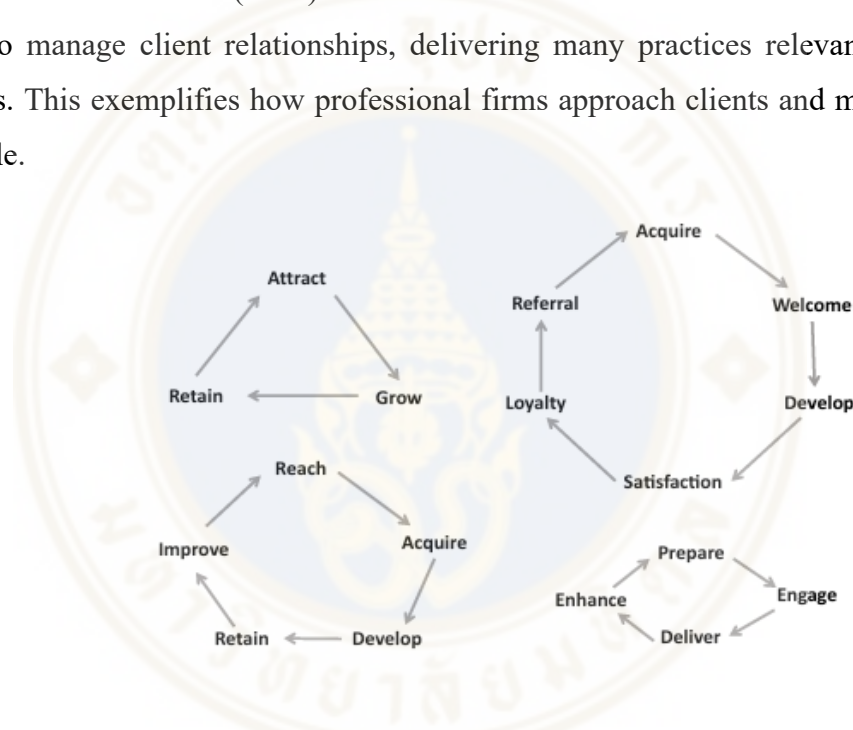


Figure 2.1 Examples of client service cycles (Berkovi, 2015)

The above cycles demonstrate the technique of Customer Relationship Management. And by showing this cycle, the managers must be able to distinguish acquisition and retention. The acquisition is the first step in initiating the interpersonal relationship. Nevertheless, retention is to show your worth in supplying them, which was reaffirmed in many studies that CRM benefits companies (Russell-Jones, 2002). This process leads to long-term customers relationship and a low cost of new customer acquisition as they can refer to others. Also, it has great potential for a bigger buying volume. (Longenecker et al., 2014).

2.2.3 Organizational Management

Organizational culture is a driver that influences individual outcomes and organizational performance. Its attributes are: 1) shared concept, 2) learned over time, 3) Influence behavior at work, and 4) Affect outcomes at multiple levels (Kinicki & Fugate, 2021).

The organization's culture is formed to meet four functional principles.

Establish organizational identity: Employees who believe in the organizational value will demonstrate and transfer the company's value to customers with high willingness.

Encourage collective commitment: Employees dedicate themselves to supporting the company's goal, whose actions are driven by a sense of belonging.

Ensure social stability: With high internal satisfaction, the company will be perceived as an exemplar of a good workplace.

Act as a sense-making device: The employees who embed with the company's culture will absorb the ability to make decision-based on company values. (Kinicki & Fugate, 2021).

The competing value framework was also designed to classify the different organizational types and their effectiveness. Their criteria are measured in four quadrants between *internal and external focus*, the *organizational preference of flexibility and discretion, or stability and control*. These analyses are detailed below (Kinicki & Fugate, 2021).

Competing Value Framework

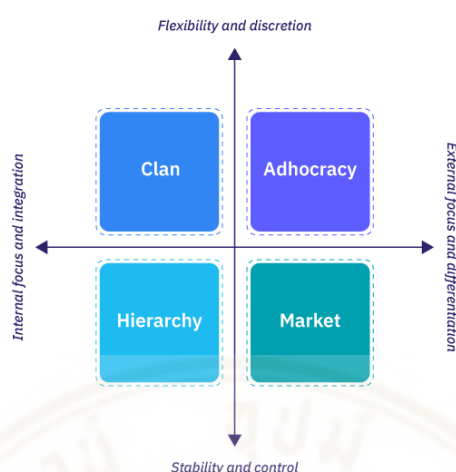


Figure 2.2 *Competing value framework describes four types of organizational culture (Gardner, 2021).*

Clan culture: It is employee-focused and emphasizes flexibility. The company invests in human resources to develop job satisfaction and commitment.

Adhocracy culture: They value customer-focused and prefer flexibility. These cultures advocate for employees to challenge and be creative so that they can come up with good strategies for customers.

Market culture: This culture type wants to satisfy customers as their main priority and their wants to take customer relationships over employee development.

Hierarchy culture: The culture has an internal focus and value stability. Their effectiveness relies on measurable factors such as timeline and delivery speed.

2.2.4 Financial management

A business is likely to balance cost and margin in order to increase the firm's revenue. However, the company can be profitable but has negative cash in hand. The profit and loss statement does not indicate the entrepreneurs realizing the firm's cash flow (Longenecker, 2014). In fact, there are three primary financial statements to be considered– the income statement, the balance sheet, and the statement of cash flows (Block et al., 2019).

The income statement is used to measure the firm's profitability. This statement represents the revenue and deducts by operational expenses. The balance sheet shows the firm's assets, liabilities, and ownership proportion. However, this balance sheet indicates original cost or historical data but not a current market value. The statement of cash flow displays the company's working capital that can convert into cash within 90 days. The statement of cash flow interprets the income statement and balance sheet and concludes if the company can continue the business. (Block et al., 2019)

According to Block et al. (2019), the objectives of finance flow analysis and financial management are not only for maximizing the profit but also to report the financial issues and concerns for alternative decisions. Analyzing the financial performance will support the investor in considering the firm's value. Even though the firm gain profitability, it cannot directly address the wealth of shareholders and stockholders. Financial management will then be able to examine the generated wealth of ownership, which can motivate market value maximization. Finally, the financial analysis depicts ethical behavior and social responsibility. At least, it can ensure the investors and customers by showing the company's good governance.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter identifies the structured research components, namely the approach, the sequence of gathering data, and the sample information. This will supplement the readers to understand the interviewees' perspectives.

3.1 Research Design

This study applies qualitative methodology, which is the primary research approach, by conducting the online interview with the founders, known as partners of the selected law firm, including employees at different levels. Qualitative research is designed to have in-depth conversations and is able to dive deep into the follow-up questions. The open-end also generates awareness by sharing opinions and interactions between the respondents and the writer. This proper conversation will enhance the ability to analyze information and connect the relationship between each explanation that becomes the company's secret source.

3.2 Data Collection

In this case company, the writer organized the interview with five respondents involved in the company. The interview is set individually to match one's availability and freely express their ideas. Each interviewee has a different background in terms of demographic and working experiences. These will be useful to see various angles of working positions, values, and motivations towards the law firm. The interviewees' information will be described as follows:

Interviewee 1: Chanin (Male)**Position:** Junior associate**Interview date:** 7 Jun 2023**Duration:** 20 minutes

Personal information: Chanin, 23 years old, is a new graduate. He started working as a first jobber in this company after getting an invitation from Anuwat. He used to be an intern at a government agency and did not know much about what law firms are like.

Interviewee 2: Piniti (Male)**Position:** Associate**Interview date:** 7 Jun 2023**Duration:** 50 minutes

Personal information: Piniti is a 29-year-old with 7-year experience in legal expertise. Before joining this company, He had worked in a well-known consulting firm where he met and was supervised by Anuwat.

Interview 3: Siripen (Female)**Position:** Partner**Interview date:** 12 Jun 2023**Duration:** 40 minutes

Personal Information: Siripen is 40 years old, the only female partner in this firm, with 17 years of experience as a legal practitioner. Moreover, she used to work in multinational culture law firms before starting her business with two partners. She also leads the firm in managing finance and back-office operations.

Interview 4: Anuwat (Male)**Position:** Partner**Interview date:** 14 Jun 2023**Duration:** 50 minutes

Personal Information: Anuwat, a 42-year-old partner, decided to start his own company after gathering 20 years of experience as a legal advisor. His ambition is to

accompany the clients as a partner in their success. His main internal management area is client acquisition and people management.

Interview 5: Rujirat (Female)

Position: Associate

Interview date: 17 Jul 2023

Duration: 35 minutes

Personal Information: Rujirat is a 26-year-old associate with almost 4-year experience in law firms. Her previous employer was the same company as Siripan. She is practicing litigation and decided to follow Anuwat and Siripen because of the opportunities to cultivate expertise.

3.3 Interview Questions

The interview is categorized into two main groups: 1) partners, or co-founders, will be asked about their motivations in building their firms and how they plan for internal management. In comparison, the staff will be questioned about the reason for joining and expectations from the company.

Sample of partner's questions

1. Self-introduction and background
2. Why do you decide to start your own company?
3. What are the differences between your company and other law firms?
4. Who are your clients?
5. What are the strengths or selling points of the company?
6. Describe the organizational management in your company.
7. Describe the concerns and issues after you started the company.
8. Describe the process of recruiting staff and the qualifications you are looking for.

Sample of the Employee's questions

1. Self-introduction and background
2. Why do you decide to join the company?
3. What do you expect from the company?
4. What are the company's benefits?
5. Describe what you like about the company.
6. Describe the concerns and issues you have experienced.
7. Describe the environment in the workplace.



CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

After completing the interview, their stories can be summarized as lessons learned into five key factors. The sequence of each person may not illustrate in time order of date interview because the writer wants to narrate the story in regard to logical order and analytical paragraphs.

4.1 Quality Culture

When deciding to build the firm, a quality culture is the first thing that came into Anuwat's mind. He wanted quality to appear as the company's core value, and that can explicitly be perceived intrinsically and extrinsically. He described lawyers are often seen as nerdy or bookworms with memorizing all legal codes. That was not what Anuwat would like to be or wanted the company to be known for. He wanted his team to be represented as a good companion in business. His crews must be able to understand and talk business. Even though they all graduated from law school, they cannot only know laws; they must know people, context, and business overview. He has sent his members to learn outside legal practice or business curricula that are applicable to themselves and contribute to the team or company. Anuwat believes quality is not about delivering legal guidance or representing cases just for winning. Quality must be the skills that good lawyers truly understand concerns and develop issues by applying the law to the solution and delivering crafted workpieces to different needs.

In addition to understanding, a client focus is also included in the meaning of quality culture. The team is mentored to go one step ahead of a client's current issue. For example, suppose the client wants to prepare the company for mergers and acquisitions. IAS crews will assist in grooming the company by scrutinizing the business purposes and suggesting the client separate each business entity for management and control so that the M&A deal can be proceeded without going back and forth. The reason

was that the business partner perhaps wanted only partial of the counterpart's value proposition but not the whole company. These consulting terms assist the client in future orientation. Client focus requires experience in the industry and an aptitude for communicating and understanding. IAS law firm prioritizes clients to serve practical and decent advice for client necessities.

Likewise, Siripen, another partner, agreed that quality is the firm identity. A proactive response is another complimentary that must not be neglected. She illustrated her statement by saying it is essential to keep clients informed and reach out if anything (positive or negative) happens when work gets kick-off. She continued that working in a small firm allows partners whose experts are in different scopes to crystallize ideas and submit the project sooner than the deadline—reaching out to clients before the timeframe, letting clients feel that their time and concern are being valued. It also reflects a good command of managing human capital and resources. Importantly, quality content is still arranged at the first layer.

Next is the answer from an Associate named Piniti. He has known Anuwat for all his working life, starting from his first company. He shared his experiences with joy. He described one day, he saw an exciting course called “Legal in Digital Economy,” and the course outline was related to Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA). He approached Anuwat if he should enroll for this course. Unexpectedly, Anuwat encouraged him to enroll in this course, and the company will sponsor him. He felt thankful and impressed. He added that working in other firms, they have straightforward courses you can take, or it might take time to get approved for sending you to learn what you really want to achieve. He added that quality is not the amount of work but it is cracking problems right to the point that needs for the situation. The supplementary can be optional for the subsequent progress if the clients look for further choices and pivot their direction.

Given the opportunities to learn, Rujirat informed that Anuwat also sent her to the seminar to upskill similar to other team members. In her experience, Anuwat approached and encouraged her to participate in the training program about patents, trademarks, and Geographical Indication (GI) products organized by the Department of Intellectual Property. Anuwat believes these practices are critical for businesses of all sizes, and the firm does not yet have specialists in these areas. If Rujirat understood the

principles of IP law, it supplemented her experience, and so did the company's credential. Anuwat knows that Rujirat is experimenting with various scopes of work; therefore, sending her to take classes is sensible. This is depicted as killing two birds with one stone. As mentioned above, training and upskills are tools for developing values. And these elements combined for quality culture.

4.2 Networking and Relationship

Providing good quality would only be enough to keep the business running if you have many customers willing to pay for the service. For 20 years in legal practices, all three partners have built a connection in their clan. Their client base is the primary target to use the company's services. IAS customer acquisition is separated by the network, business seminars, and former clients.

They define networking in two levels. The first is an individual relationship in the past. It could be someone's friends from high school or friends who know that IAS team members are practicing law. In this case, the team members can receive the commission fee based on the project's value for any customer acquisition. Secondly, it is the legal connection. Some lawyers may refer clients to IAS if the case is more appropriate with IAS expertise. Alternatively, it would be better to have IAS assistance for second opinions in legal advice. It is a small industry because everyone knows each other, and everyone can only be good at some things. Some people are more familiar with Intellectual Property (IP) law. Some may be proficient in criminal court cases. It depends on the situation. In other words, IAS can also refer their clients to other law firms if they think the case fits more with others. It is an ecosystem that circulates between lawyers.

Next are business seminars and lectures. Anuwat is keen on teaching and presenting in public sessions. He usually volunteered to give lectures on special events since the last companies. He also has participated in business talks and seminars to learn from other field entrepreneurs. He wanted to share his experience with a gimmick of legal expertise that could benefit others. Through this participation, it opened opportunities to exchange conversations, and most of the attendants were looking for advice on legal matters. He said one of his participations for being a judge in the

competition made him find a suitable gem for the team members, which is Chanin. This is not only a network for building a client portfolio, but it is also a chance to scout a qualified person in a team.

Moving on to the former client group. Since Anuwat and Siripen have been doing legal consulting for a long time, they have a handful of relationship clients. While clients also prefer continuing the service with the team, they know. They are familiar with coordination and working team. Then, sometimes, it is a demand for clients to follow and select Anuwat's team for legal services. It can be implied that IAS does not take much effort to start over with their self-introduction and engage new-faced clients every time.

He pointed out that when making the connection, he will not sell himself or offer the business in the conversation. He is mature to learn that relationship is about active listening and building trust in someone's mind. Sooner or later, they will open the gate for you. Law firms can be found elsewhere, but reliable and likable lawyers might not be everywhere. IAS networking and relationship push the firm forwards.

4.3 Flexible and Flat Organization

Anuwat saw barriers of hierarchical structure from his previous workplaces, and he was certain to develop his firm where opportunities are distributed equally, and people have the freedom to express themselves. Because of its size, the company does not have a solid structure and chain of command. Everyone knows the seniority and the authority of the partner; nonetheless, the working environment is flexible in the sense that every staff is allowed to talk to every partner on any occasion, whether to consult a client's case or to hang out after work. Anuwat wanted everyone to feel comfortable working here and had them realize that professionalism does not necessarily build in a conservative direction. He highlighted that if anyone raises suggestions or requests to have snacks, stationeries, or specific brands for electronic devices in the firm, they can do so. As long as its supports work effectiveness, it is worth the price.

Chanin, the youngest interviewee in this study, explained that he enjoyed going to the office. The facilities are well-equipped, and he loves the working style here. Since this is his first company ever after graduation, he needed more experience to

compare. However, he never feels unfit or an outsider to the team. He continued by explaining that he could go to any desk to ask if he had any questions. He is new to the job and still learning. Therefore, when this firm can provide space for him to learn and improve every day, he thinks it is a favorable place to work. Additionally, the younger generation, like Chanin, prefers to work in a less structured company as they are less worried about adjusting themselves and find it easier to blend in.

Besides the two respondents, Siripen backed up the flat and flexible idea by elaborating that partners want to be recognized as generous and good mentors. She wants to assist her teammates, and at the same time, she wants her team to speak up to share better ideas. She and the other partners are open to bottom-up ideas so that they can find opportunities to grow. However, this flexible organization still has a system to control quality. They are monitored by “the timesheet system.” Timesheet is a core Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) module in general law firms. It is designed to collect actual working hours and time contributions to each project. Siripen said the timesheet is a billing system that records individual time spent to see their responsibility and workload amount. Even though the flat and flexibility is formulated for a comfortable working experience, there is a tool to keep people on track with their inputs.

Rujirat told the writer that working here is mentally and physically comfortable because of the friendliness and respected culture. Even if she has to go to the office every day due to her working nature with tons of papers, she does not feel demotivated to work. On the contrary, she can talk and consult with the team members to improve her work better. She added Anuwat’s management is incredible by telling another impressive story. Rujirat once suggested that the firm should prioritize consulting jobs with the lawyers rather than having them follow up on tray-in and tray-out documents from clients. The administrative tasks delay the work hours and affect the timesheet. Anuwat agreed and appreciated her contribution to this recommendation. The firm later employed an office administrator to organize, fill, and manage office supplies. Thanks to his open-mindedness, it did increase the team’s efficiency.

Another example is Piniti. Due to his interest in technology gadgets, he was asked to purchase gadgets and IT supplies for the company. The partners trusted him to select the computers’ specifications and brands for all employees. Partners believe that those high-competency facilities will support employees’ performance and morale.

Suppose employees face a trivial issue because of lagging internet or slow processing time of computers; it does affect the working environment and work quality. These powerfully illustrate the partners' attitudes creating a flexible and sound environment for professional service.

4.4 Trusted Teamwork and Leadership

No matter how much partners want to begin their own corporate, they must find people to work for them. The partners shared initial recruiting process is to convince their old team members whom they trust first. Since Anuwat knows some good staff under his supervision, he asked them if they were interested in joining the company. The offers for the first group of staff are still the same as they received from the previous company. Plus, they would receive some company shares to represent the first-generation employees and make the deal look more attractive.

Piniti is a first-generation employee whose experiences are always in Anuwat's eyes. He said he was confident in Anuwat's intention and leadership skills. His supervision was adaptive and changeable, depending on the counselee's type. If he saws the person can do their jobs, he will let them do it independently and only give comments or feedback after completing tasks. In contrast, if another person is inexperienced in the job, he can direct and instruct the scope of work so that the person can learn through the assignment step by step. Moreover, Piniti felt that if the partners made up their minds, they must have planned it thoroughly to secure everyone on the boat. At first, he hesitated because the company was brand-new, and the future was unclear. However, he still enjoys working with the team. It might be challenging, but he concluded that if this place does not turn out well, his age is not at risk of jumping and relocating.

Chanin opened up about why he landed his first job in this company. He first met Anuwat at an arbitration competition where Anuwat was one of the judges. At that time, he almost won first place and thought he deserved the rank. He challenged the judges and wanted feedback on why his score was one point less than the winner. Anuwat clearly explained the criteria and highlighted what he had missed in the final round. Chanin was impressed by his coaching and professionalism. Once he was invited

to join the company, he thought he would learn so many things from him and understand how a law firm operates.

Similarly, Rujirat moved to IAS advisory because she trusted Anuwat's leadership style. She explained that Anuwat can see everyone right through them. He can direct and advise everyone. He told what Rujirat should develop and what she is already good at it. It matters to her because she can feel confident with her ability and ready to improve her deficient attributes. Additionally, she was assigned to be on a litigation team in her former job. She accumulated those experiences but found it hard to expand other practices because it was fixed to be in the same department. While working in this current company, she can learn new legal areas and explore which is the most compatible with her interest. Indeed, her primary role is still in litigation, but senior associates and partners leave the door open to her enthusiasm. She can participate in any engagement that she found helpful in her career.

Besides, for strong teamwork, Siripen believed in an intimate relationship between co-workers. In the first state of operating own business, it started from a small group of connections and expanded. The next generation of new staff came through mutual friends of the first batch crews. Letting internal people invite someone they know is a prescreening process, indicating they might have the same taste and standards.

Since the company will expand by the end of the year, it is undeniable that the firm must recruit new graduates. In that case, the company will arrange an interview by allowing a couple of team members to interview and see the qualification, compatibility, and possibility of growth in the company. The small-size company bears higher risk if the company has a high turnover rate. Hence, overall team chemistry is crucial. Siripen added another strong teamwork aspect by giving that if there are any decisions to make, all three partners must have a consensus so that it builds good harmony and no conflict later. The company's growth has resulted from trust and bond between employer and employees. It gives a sense of commitment to one another.

4.5 Cash Flow

Cash is almost everything for the business, as is this law firm. Anuwat explained when his decision was finalized to do the company. He had already projected the expected cash flow for the next three years. The company needs to run smoothly with generated revenue and cash reserve.

He and the other partners must cut their salaries by 70% from the original receivable in the first three years to control the budget and pay for the foreseen expenses, including the payroll of every recruited staff. He wanted to ensure his team could survive to make the company grow. His plan is to reduce partners' salaries and prepare a budget for a performance bonus. He said half of the team resigned from a stable firm with attractive offers. He did not want them to feel neglected or unable to maintain the same quality of living when working here. Salaries are basic needs and bonus increase motivation.

He continued that the office's location is relevant to cash flow. The current office is located in the newly renovated building on Sathorn Road. The lessor offered a renovation package in the agreement, which can be amortized for three years. Besides, Sathorn Road is occupied by many business companies as it was marked as a Central Business District (CBD). It is safe to say that it was a reasonable deal to accept and to have remaining cash for day-to-day business expenses.

Siripen and Anuwat both agreed the firm's rate card is in the market range. Everyone in the industry has a glimpse of the quotation price, and the firm did not lower the price to gain a margin. In return, IAS provides proactive, additional deliverables for clients to consider the firm as a value-added to its competitiveness.

According to the price, it can be divided into two categories: time-base or manhour-base. While time-base will be offered if the client's requirement is unusual cases, and it can take months or years. Manhour-base will be provided if the case is periodically executed and proficient in information already. This pricing strategy is a win-win situation because the client will be charged by the working time, and in the meantime, it protects the firm from having workforce do long research and analysis. In addition, the price system in law service can charge all expense occurrences such as printing, travel, and phone calls. Most company costs are human capital and how the firm treats clients. The better quality of the firm services, the more income the firm can

obtain. Law firms like IAS also provide a retention service. It is comparable to the prepaid revenue model, where people pay a certain amount to use the service. The service will be charged and deducted from the package based on phone calls and time spent from a lawyer's manhours. This system gives companies to get cash in hand. The price charge and billing period allow the firm to receive money quickly and have a secured fund.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the writer will apply the empirical study with theoretical frameworks to see the justification and provide recommendations to the IAS advisory company. The writer hopes that the recommended statement can be adopted in the company's future practice for escalating its outlook.

5.1 Conclusion

Five interviewees from IAS Advisory provide their insights into the scope of work, working environment, morale, relationships, and company expectations. Some apparent alignments conclude the firm-specific advantage and strategic management practices, which are: 1) quality culture, 2) network and relationship, 3) flat and flexible organization, 4) trusted teamwork and leadership, and 5) cashflow.

Quality culture is built because of the owners' vision. He is determined to construct a company that can be placed as a *partner for business success*, not a legal book walker. This attribute refers to the competitive advantage in differentiation. Understanding customer needs, building accountability, and trying to stand out from peers bring an excellent image and create a high-level profession to targeted customers. The company gains competitiveness as excellence in quality by leveraging employees' skills and communication manners. This leads to matching price-insensitive customers who prefer convenience and confidence of value when hiring a legal service. Moreover, the company can be displayed as excellence in execution because it can deliver advice within a timeframe and well-organized resources.

Networking and relationship are another structure of client management. Their previous relationship with former clients was a primary source of income that built and shaped the IAS company today. Since the firm's size is small, each working member must be versatile to handle a wide range of client proposals. This strategy is useful to

get repeated clients even large companies try to adjust themselves. IAS company also connects with other peers with referral methods so their client base would expand to different locations and segments. Attending seminars and public events increase the recognition and possibility of acquiring new target clients. The firm sees a necessity to obtain new clients and maintain the previous circle, enabling lower operational costs and unnecessary to start a new bidding process for every engagement. In other words, current clients can introduce their acquaintances and become new engagements. Hence, networking strategies affect the long-term value and the company's income.

The flat structure is obvious because of the small number of employees. And the company's culture gives a sense of autonomy and employee focus. The partners are open-minded to listen and seek feedback from their staff. They are portraying themselves as mentors rather than bosses. They also grant individual decisions to create a pleasant place to work. They also listened to their internal for improving the company facilities. These cultures were developed and identified with the company's identity and commitment. IAS advisory is then classified into clan and adhocracy culture of the organizational management. When the company invests in human capital, employees satisfy and are willing to represent the company. Besides, the company prefers resilience and wants their employees to emphasize quality which means they are balancing the customer focus and employee focus to root into their firm core values.

Undoubtedly, the company's culture leads to trusted teamwork. Primarily, partners recruited staff whose traits and working styles shared the same principles. Subsequently, the partners' leadership caused the team to advocate the work. Their management can switch between coaching or directing approaches for different employee levels. The employees feel assured to follow his lead. Some employees decide to work under the name of IAS company, disregarding the stable law firm because of the trust. This is witnessed because partners are determined to groom their staff by giving feedback and empowering them to improve in career development. Therefore, everyone feels integrated and continues their support in delivering good work.

Cash and the company's financial management are significant contributors to its growth. IAS tries to manage the receivables over payable items. For instance, the firm has projected the three years cash flows with all incurred expenses and the expected income before activating the company's operation. It rents an office to allocate

renovation expenses into the contract payment period. Apart from cash outflow management, the company charged clients with the actual spending cost, adopted by timesheet software, which will not damage the company's variable cost. Time charge also reflects the efficiency of resource distribution directly. In addition, the retention service allows the company to have an advanced income before the service that has yet to happen. As mentioned in the literature review, every company shall consider all three financial statements, not only just P&L statements, because cash flow and balance sheet make the stakeholders understand the firm values and strengths.



Figure 5.1 The framework that brings this law firm company into growth.

In the above figure, the writer summarized and developed frameworks related to the success factors of this company into a visualization. Each component is derived from research findings and gathered main points into a relationship of the competitive advantage features. The competitive pillars that consist of quality culture, network, trusted teamwork and leadership, flat organization, and financial stability directly led to the company's growth. This growth also affirmed the business management's attributes mentioned in the prior studies.

5.2 Recommendations

Having examined IAS advisory's character about why they can grow outstandingly and be awarded as the new firm to watch, the writer has to admit that they deserve all the praise. The company checks all the boxes in management dimensions, either internal or external stakeholders. They are well-organized and see through the issues to take into account. They plan for employee growth and the company's growth as the critical alignment. Suppose the company can sustain its values and managerial assets. The company will thrive and break through the large size enterprise in a short period of time.

Nonetheless, there are a few recommendations to the company that would be beneficial for their development. First is the scheme for the back office team and their career path. At this stage, the company is driven by employee cooperation and the thought-out plan by the partners. The expansion for the next phase must consider the business support team. The support team will assist in terms of scheduling the meeting, billing customers, and filling internal documents. Those workloads seem small, yet meaningful. The growing company should refrain from letting lawyers and core services handle the administrative tasks. The strong support team is the backline that smooths and increases quality service.

Additionally, the firm must design career development for the support function. If their contribution and their duties were overlooked by the management, the company may face unmotivated staff and may result in a high-turnover rate. Foremost, this can affect the firm image and professionalism.

Above all is the recruitment process. Along with the bigger size, the company shall start planning the staff selection because they can only choose the referral (Friends of Friends) program for a while. The management team should consider setting a standard qualification, application period, knowledge test, and interview procedures. The hiring process must be noticed as it is the fundamental step in enlarging internal management. It can become an issue or risk for IAS Advisory as the current high-level concern.

5.3 Limitation and Future Research

This research found a couple of limitation issues that can be developed in future studies. Firstly, it is the company's establishment period. Knowing that the owners have been in the profession for years, they can nurture and manage the organization for growth. Yet, the emergence of this new company can be questioned for sustainable growth. The other issue is the participants in the interview. Because of the timeframe, the main focus is only on internal employees. Hence, future research can examine the service company or law firm, discussing more with other stakeholders such as clients and their law firm counterparts. Moreover, the following research can compare and contrast the growth in different years.



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