



Photographer: Michael Kistler

Careers in Governance

Edith Shih FCG(CS, CGP) FCS(CS, CGP)(PE)

What is your role as a governance professional?

'As a governance professional, I see my role as a builder, an implementer, an enforcer and an upgrader. As a builder, I spearhead the establishment of governance policies, procedures and practices (governance instruments) within my group companies. In so doing, I procure the assistance of relevant departments, such as finance, treasury, human resources and public relations, to set up governance instruments for deployment, with head office taking the lead and business units to adapt and apply as appropriate.

I am also involved in providing instruction, explanation and guidance to business units, enlisting the assistance of colleagues in other departments as necessary. As an enforcer, together with relevant executives, I review and assess compliance with established governance parameters. In addition, the governance instruments need to be updated periodically against application to ensure that they are pertinent, updated and compliant with new laws, requirements and rules.'

What was your career path to your current role?

'I intended to go into teaching and, while pursuing a doctoral degree in applied linguistics, I decided to change course and became a lawyer. I trained with Cameron McKenna in London and returned to Hong Kong to join Johnson Stokes and Masters (now Mayer Brown) as an associate. After five years, I was head hunted to join the investment bank of the Cheung Kong Group at the time – CEF Capital. In 1991, I was transferred to Hutchison Whampoa at which I set up the Legal Department in 1993 and was its first Head Group General Counsel. I took on the position of Company Secretary as well in 1997, and in 2017 I was appointed Executive Director of CK Hutchison. I oversee the Group's legal, corporate secretarial, corporate finance and compliance functions.'

What value does governance bring to organisations and to wider society?

'Governance is not just about adopting best practices; it also entails a moral and ethical mindset. An organisation might excel in governance due to good compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, but the value of governance doesn't stop there. With a moral and conscionable mindset, people practising good governance are likely to bring such mindset to their family, social and professional circles, as well as the community in which they

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Edith Shih FCG(CS, CGP) FCS(CS, CGP)(PE), Executive Director and Company Secretary of CK Hutchison Holdings Ltd, current International President, The Chartered Governance Institute, and former Institute President





live, thereby instilling moral and ethical behaviour in society and hopefully contributing to a better world.'

What qualities do you think are needed to be a successful governance professional?

'Governance is both a science and an art. Governance professionals should have a moral and ethical mindset and be equipped with the requisite knowledge and skill set in implementing good governance relevant to the organisations they are in. They have to be adaptive to the specific requirements of their organisations and be able to think outside the box without being pedantic or obstinate. However, where there are absolute standards to be adhered to, one should never compromise for inferior yardsticks.'

How do you think governance will evolve in the future?

'With the world becoming more complex in the face of severe damage to the world economy in the near term as a result of the pandemic, I believe governments will likely impose heightened governance measures to ensure a fair and orderly market. Governance professionals would accordingly be involved in this process. We need to be even more vigilant in guarding the good record we have achieved and be very watchful of possible irregularities or breaches that might be committed to enhance

or misrepresent performance or achievements. I also foresee governance parameters being applied more widely – to new businesses and industries emerging from the digital economy for example, but also to charitable organisations, the healthcare sector and NGO operations, to name a few.'

What inspires you in your life and work?

'When I was a junior executive, I used to question why so many tasks always ended up on my desk. Now I believe that welcoming an expanded role is the way for one to grow and learn. The inspiration at work comes from getting involved and bringing value to the organisation. After over 30 years with the same Group, I am thankful that I still look forward to going to work every day. In life, I hope to have made a difference – be it at my workplace, performing public service, mentoring young people and watching them grow, or being there for my family and friends especially in times of need.'

How do you fill your time outside work?

'While there is not much time left outside work, I attend choir rehearsals every week, which is most relaxing, and I also sing as a soloist from time to time. I love playing the piano, cooking, scuba diving and skiing. Finally, I love to see the world – with the aim of visiting at least one new place every year.'