
C L Teo

Year 8

Island Time

Truth and Lies

C L Teo is a lawyer working in the hotel and accommodation industry.

The description below describes what she does and some of the problems that she faces.

You should base your questions on this information. It is always good to start with some questions about the person, and how they got into this profession.

The main part of your interview is about what decisions people have to make about claims of truth. How do they make these decisions? What sort of evidence counts? They may be able to give you a story of a particular case or incident. In this case it might be important to ask whether the aim is to ascertain truth, or to find evidence that will lessen any claim against the Hotel group. These might not be the same thing.

Are legal questions in this industry different from in other areas?

It might also be interesting to follow up with questions about job satisfaction and interest. There are two professions of interest here. One is that of being a lawyer, and the other relates to the hospitality industry in general.

My Role

I am the Group General Counsel of the Kerry and Shangri-La group of companies. My companies carry out a wide range of businesses, from hotel ownership and management and property development to media and various other investments.

My role is to oversee and supervise the legal and compliance functions of my group of companies to ensure that they carry out their various activities within the legal framework of the respective countries they operate in, and that they properly carry out their legal obligations as well as that my companies are properly protected in what they do.

In the event of claims against any of my companies, my role is to assess our position and to advise if they in fact acted wrongly, in which case we would be liable to pay a penalty to the party making the claim, or if we acted correctly, in which case I would assist to defend our position. This part of my role is probably more relevant to the topic of Truth and I will expand a little more on this.

In any situation where a third party claims that any of my companies, or its employees, has done something wrong, I would need to understand if this allegation is correct. The fact that an allegation is made does not mean it is true, nor does the fact that an employee denies the wrongdoing mean that the denial is true either. My role is to gather all the facts from both sides to assess them objectively, and to come to a conclusion on the facts before advising my company how to respond to the claim.

Fact versus Opinion

All relevant information generally falls into 2 categories: matters of fact (such as the cost of an item or the date of an action), and matters of opinion (such as whether an item sold was satisfactory/good enough or whether a staff was rude to a guest). Matters of fact are irrefutable and are therefore a stronger basis on which I can apply the law to advise my company. Matters of opinion are subjective, and more liable to challenge, so I am more cautious in advising when the evidence comprises mostly matters of opinion.

Full Knowledge

Aside from recognizing matters of opinion, knowledge of the full circumstances surrounding any dispute is also important in determining truth. Where a hotel guest makes a claim because he has slipped on our hotel floor when it was being mopped, it is also relevant to know that he had been drinking before that, as that may not make us as liable as it would first appear. I therefore always ask questions about surrounding circumstances, even if they are not offered up by the various parties.

Credibility of Information

Sometimes, if a party is in the wrong, he may try to lie his way out of it. If I am unable to directly prove the falsehood, I try to cast doubt on it by looking for inconsistencies in his evidence. Even if that does not directly prove the falsehood, it succeeds in casting doubt on the creditability of the person stating it so that in the face of conflicting evidence from 2 parties, that person's evidence is less likely to be believed.

Conclusion

Only after having ascertained the true facts of the situation, am I able to apply the law to the facts to advise my company how to deal with the situation. It is critical therefore that I get to the truth of the matter before I can properly advise my company.

Teo Ching Leun

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