

Banking

Morgan Lewis partner: 'Exceptional legal skills alone are not enough'

By *Karry Lai* September 15 2025



Dubai-based lawyer Alexey Chertov delves into the challenges and excitement of navigating different mindsets, cultures and approaches when working with clients

Welcome to the latest instalment of IFLR's 'Five minutes with' series, where we learn more about lawyers on a personal as well as a professional level. This time we have Alexey Chertov, partner at [Morgan Lewis](#) in Dubai.

Someone asks you at a party what you do for a living. What do you say?

I help put together complex and fast-moving cross-border trade, finance and real estate deals. Whether it is a tower going up in Dubai or commodities moving out of Africa or Asia, I help ensure that capital and goods flow smoothly, backed by sound legal frameworks and deal execution.

Talk us through a typical working day.

Every morning I try to start the day with a run, gym or a sea swimming session. This is a routine I have kept for the past seven years. By 8 am, I review my priorities, then it's a mix of meetings, negotiations and calls. I usually end the day drafting or reviewing documents or clearing emails before coming back to family mode.

What are you working on at the moment?

I am currently working on a profit-sharing trade finance deal involving companies from the UAE and South Africa. The structure enables the parties to secure a long-term supply and trade finance arrangement while sharing both risk and upside. Trade and commodity finance in the region is booming, and this deal reflects the growing appetite for more flexible, partnership-based structures.

What is the most exciting aspect of your role and what is the most stressful?

Working with brilliant colleagues across more than 30 offices and clients from all over the world means I am constantly navigating different mindsets, cultures, and approaches. The challenge is making it all work and to keep perspective, but it's one of the things I love most about the job.

Tell us the key characteristics that make a successful finance lawyer.

You need to understand how business really works, especially in trade finance, where everything is "today" and tomorrow your goods or money might not be needed any more. Exceptional legal skills alone are not enough: you need commercial understanding and the trust that comes from years of getting it right.

What is the most common misconception about being a finance lawyer?

There is a misconception that negotiating a finance transaction is about winning every single point. That's not the case. What truly matters is protecting your client's interests, building a relationship based on trust, and getting the deal successfully done.

What or who inspires you?

I was inspired by my parents, who came from a working family and were not lawyers but managed to handle and ultimately win a complex legal case involving the unlawful expropriation of our family home when I was seven years old. For more than six years, they fought through the system on their own, without legal representation, and eventually made their way to and prevailed in the Supreme Court of my home country. Witnessing their determination and resilience and the injustice they faced inspired me to study law. I am also deeply inspired by my wife and son: they give meaning to everything I do.

If you weren't a finance lawyer, what would you be doing?

I'd probably be a business partner, the one who deals with the risk, keeps things moving, brings the team together and makes sure the deal gets done.

Any advice you would give your younger self?

Avoid distractions and focus on what you can control. Use whatever tools or circumstances you have and give it your best. Even when it feels like things are going wrong, they are part of your path, and if you face them head-on, they will make you stronger. Work hard, and stay disciplined, it is one of the most reliable keys to success.

Topics

[Banking](#)[Five minutes with](#)[Morgan Lewis & Bockius](#)

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Karry is managing editor of IFLR. She manages the team and is responsible for IFLR's content. She also sits on the editorial judging panels of IFLR's global awards and the Women in Business Law Awards. Before joining the legal media industry, she was project manager at a startup focused on sustainable lifestyle media and events.
