

HAIYAN TAO

Attorney

Contact Information

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Haiyan's practice focuses on business and corporate law, with an emphasis on startups, emerging growth companies, and mergers and acquisitions. She represents founders, private companies, and investment groups in corporate, financing, and transactional matters across a range of industries.

Her work includes venture and angel financings, equity incentive plans, debt transactions, commercial agreements, employment and labor compliance, and intellectual property protection. She also advises investors on the evaluation and structuring of early-stage investments.

Haiyan handles domestic and cross-border mergers and acquisitions, corporate governance, shareholders agreements, commercial transactions, and succession planning for closely held businesses. She works closely with the firm's tax team on coordinated planning for families and business owners.

In addition to her client work, Haiyan contributes to the professional and business community through presentations and written guidance on corporate and financing topics and participates in the startup community supporting small businesses.

Before joining Carney in 2018, Haiyan practiced corporate law in the Beijing office of a top-tier Chinese law firm, advising domestic and international companies on corporate and transactional matters.

FOCUS AREAS

- Business Counseling & General Corporate
- Startups, Founders & Emerging Companies
- Equity Financing (Angel, SAFE, Convertible Notes, Series Seed, Series A–C)
- Debt Financing & Commercial Lending
- Mergers & Acquisitions (Asset & Stock Deals)
- Stockholder Agreements & Stockholder Disputes
- Commercial Contracts & IP/Technology Transactions
- Equity Incentive & Equity Compensation (Stock Options, RSUs, Profits Interests, Phantom Stock)
- Corporate Tax Planning & Tax Advisory
- SaaS, AI, E-Commerce, Agriculture, Biotechnology & Life Sciences
- Wills, Trusts & Business Succession Planning

EDUCATION

- LL.M., Columbia Law School, New York, New York
 - Kent Scholar
- LL.B. and Bachelor of Economics, Peking University, Beijing, China

BAR & COURT ADMISSIONS

- State of Washington

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- Washington State Bar Association
- King County Bar Association
- Peking University Alumni Association of Washington State, Board member
- Seattle Chinese Bar Association

LANGUAGES

- English
- Chinese (Mandarin)

REPRESENTATIVE CLIENTS & TRANSACTIONS

- Advised an AgriTech / Green Technology company in its \$100M+ Series B financing.
- Lead Counsel: Leadr \$10M Series A financing.
- Represented a Life Sciences / Biotechnology startup in \$10M+ Series A financing.
- Advised a company in securing a \$20M+ venture debt financing from venture lenders.
- SparkToro LLC Unit Financing
- Represented multiple private equity and investment firms in term loans and revenue-based financing transactions ranging from \$2M to \$10M per deal.
- Advised companies across various industries on acquisitions and strategic transactions, including acquisitions involving technology, automation, agriculture and green technology businesses.
- Represented startups in e-commerce, AI and SaaS companies on entity formation, strategic structuring, contract negotiations, IP protection, data privacy, and regulatory compliance.
- Advised high-net-worth individuals and business owners on customized estate planning and business succession strategies.

BLOGS & ARTICLES

- Do Not Try to Self-Administer Your Stock Option Plan, the Startup Law Blog