

Daily Journal

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TOP Women Lawyers 2024



Katherine H. Ku

Her expertise spans across various sectors, including technology, manufacturing, biotech, and automotive. She played a pivotal role in advising on significant transactions such as Careem’s \$3.1 billion acquisition by Uber, Sarcos Robotics’ \$1.2 billion de-SPAC merger with Rotor Acquisition Corp. and WuXi AppTec’s acquisition of gene-therapy pioneer OXGENE.

In the autonomous driving industry, Ku was the lead M&A partner for Lyft in the sale of its self-driving car division, Level 5, to Toyota’s Woven Planet Holdings, Inc., for up to \$550 million. This deal not only transformed Lyft’s profitability trajectory, but also facilitated Woven Planet’s development of automated driving technology using Lyft’s platform and fleet data.

Ku’s influence extends to the media landscape, where she led the legal representation for Patrick Soon-Shiong’s sale of The San Diego Union-Tribune to MediaNews Group in July 2023, reshaping media ownership on the West Coast.

Ku said situational awareness is a concept that applies to many aspects of life, and certainly to dealmaking.

“A competent lawyer leading a transaction must have the ability to perceive, understand and effectively respond to the constellation of factual and legal issues that come together in the course of shaping a deal that meets the parties’ aims,” she said. “A strong lawyer is also able to work effectively with her client to enhance their situational awareness and therefore their ability to execute a deal successfully.”

When asked about her observations within the legal world, Ku said specialization is an advantage until it isn’t.

“My perception, however, is that an ever-growing percentage of new lawyers may be learning to practice only within very narrow silos of trade knowledge, to the detriment of learning to think about their clients’ interests at the adjacency of different areas of law or on a more strategic level,” she said. “My hope is that the legal profession will find a way to continue to train lawyers in the exercise of general legal judgment.”

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From clerking for Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Katherine Ku has risen to become one of the nation’s leading deal lawyers. She has 19 years of experience in M&A, corporate and securities law.

“I was attracted to the field by the opportunity to advise boards, management and investors on transactions important to the success of their companies,” Ku said.