



Kobre & Kim's Team

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**Renata Ramalhosa**

São Paulo

renata.ramalhosa@kobrekim.com**Victor D. V. Clementino**

São Paulo

victor.clementino@kobrekim.com**Carolina Leung**

São Paulo

carolina.leung@kobrekim.com**Jason J. Kang**

Shanghai / Hong Kong

jason.kang@kobrekim.com**John Han**

Hong Kong

john.han@kobrekim.com**Polly Wilkins**

London

polly.wilkins@kobrekim.co.uk

Inside Michael Kim's Playbook for High-Stakes Global Disputes

Kobre & Kim Co-Founder Michael Kim joined host Renato Sapiro on the Brazilian podcast *Direito de Resposta* to discuss the firm's unconventional beginnings and share candid insights on cross-border strategy, accurately addressing client needs, and how lawyers can stay valuable in a rapidly evolving market.

Kobre & Kim Co-Founder Michael Kim joined host Renato Sapiro on the Brazilian podcast *Direito de Resposta* for a wide-ranging conversation on cross-border lawyering, the evolution of the legal profession, and the principles that have shaped Kobre & Kim's global model. Kim also reflected on the firm's entrepreneurial origins, sharing how he and co-founder Steve Kobre left the U.S. Attorney's Office to build a new kind of litigation firm, despite having no business experience and receiving strong advice not to take the risk. Their earliest days—working out of Steve's apartment, answering their own phone calls, and trying to secure clients while caring for a newborn—were marked by trial and error, skepticism from the profession, and a commitment to learn quickly from mistakes. That mindset of analyzing missteps, adapting fast, and challenging conventional wisdom continues to guide the firm today.

Several key insights emerged in the interview:

- **Cross-Border Similarities, Not Differences, Drive Effective Disputes Work.** Michael reflected on decades of work in the U.S., China, Latin America, Europe and beyond, noting that despite perceptions of cultural distance, individuals across jurisdictions share more similarities than differences. Misconceptions about "foreignness" can distort parties' expectations and decision-making in cross-border disputes. Recognizing common fundamentals, rather than stereotypes about local legal cultures, enables clearer strategy and more predictable results.
- **Mastery of Detail Remains Critical to Winning Cases.** Addressing the realities of elite legal practice, Kim emphasized that the ability to handle painstaking, detailed work is

indispensable. He explained that many young lawyers underestimate how much outcomes turn on "one little detail," and that the discipline to review and interrogate minutiae forms the backbone of effective litigation and enforcement strategy. Lawyers who abandon detail, regardless of seniority, risk diminishing their strategic value.

- **AI Is Redefining the Value Pyramid, and Lawyers Must Move Up It.** Although AI has disrupted the firm's specialized disputes practice less than its transactional practices, Michael noted that advances in information processing are changing how legal teams operate. Tasks such as document review, information mapping, and chronology building are increasingly handled by AI. As clients reassess what they value and what they are willing to pay for, lawyers must "climb the value pyramid" by focusing on high-level strategic judgment and solutions that clients cannot obtain elsewhere.
- **Client Needs, Not Legal Products, Should Drive Strategy.** Kim stressed that many legal problems require solutions that extend beyond legal doctrine. An effective strategy begins with understanding what outcome the client needs, not with shoehorning the client's issues into familiar legal services. In the interview, Kim recounted examples where unconventional, non-legal investigative approaches were decisive in resolving disputes, underscoring the importance of creative, client-centered thinking.

Listen to the complete interview on YouTube (<https://lnkd.in/eA5CPA9m>) or Spotify (<https://lnkd.in/efjAnMqj>).

About Kobre & Kim

Kobre & Kim is a global law firm specializing in complex, cross-border disputes and investigations, often involving fraud and other forms of misconduct.

- **Conflict Free:** As a pure litigation and investigation firm, we can litigate against financial institutions and Fortune 500 companies where other firms face transactional or industry-oriented conflicts.
- **Cross-Border:** Offers deep experience coordinating strategies across jurisdictions, providing offensive and defensive cross-border litigation and crisis management strategies in and out of court.
- **Aggressive:** Deploys aggressive strategies designed to get to "the heart of the matter". We start with the end in mind and avoid time-consuming pretrial jousting that is immaterial to a victory.