

Women in IP Leadership

Celebrating achievements and continuing
the empowerment of women



This segment is dedicated to women working in the IP industry, providing a platform to share real accounts from rising women around the globe. In these interviews we will be discussing experiences, celebrating milestones and achievements, and putting forward ideas for advancing equality and diversity.

By providing a platform to share personal experiences we aim to continue the empowerment of women in the world of IP.



If you would like the opportunity to share your experiences with *Women in IP Leadership*, would like to nominate an individual to be involved, or would like to learn more about sponsorship, please contact our Editor.

Dominique Hussey: Vice Chair & Toronto Managing Partner, Bennett Jones LLP

An interview: inspirations, experiences, and ideas for equality.

Dominique is Vice Chair & Toronto Managing Partner at Bennett Jones in Canada. She advises and litigates on behalf of clients as leader of the firm's IP Litigation group and co-head of its Innovation, Technology & Branding group. She was named a 2023 Global Elite Thought Leader – Patent (Life Sciences) by WWL. She received the inaugural *Chambers Canada* Law Firm Leaders Award in 2021, and won the *Managing IP* Outstanding Canadian Practitioner in Patent Law award in 2020. For the last seven years, *Managing IP* has also named Dominique in the Top 250 Women in IP in the world.

What inspired your career?

My career was directly inspired by my upbringing, and conversations around our dinner table. I grew up in a medical and legal family, with parents who were opinionated and who liked a good, heated discussion on topics of science, the arts, politics, policy, and law. It was how we interacted with each other and with friends. For a long time, I could not decide whether I would ultimately pursue medicine or law. My undergraduate degree was a BSc in Biology with a minor in Classics. Midway through my degree, I decided not to choose: I would go to medical school and law school to become a biomedical ethicist – the best of both worlds.

I ended up applying to and attending law school first, frankly because it was easier and faster to prepare to take the LSAT than the MCAT. In Canada, after graduating from law school and before being admitted to the bar, we were required to work at a law



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firm for an “articling year” to gain practical experience. Physician-side medical malpractice interested me, and the law firm I chose for articling was top-notch in that area. I knew nothing about IP until my final semester of law school, when I took a survey course on Patents, Copyright and Trademark law. It changed everything. IP appealed to every facet of my intellectual curiosity. Copyright appealed to my interest in the arts. Patent law, particularly in the life sciences, spoke to my interest in medicine, and Trademarks are interesting to everyone. It was pure serendipity that the firm where I was articling also had an outstanding IP practice. I was eventually hired as an associate in the IP group with a focus on pharma litigation, and I never looked back. Med school was not to be.

Because I did not end up going to medical school, I felt like my academic career and life experience had been cut short. After the first couple of years of practice, I moved to New York to pursue an LLM at Columbia University Law School. I took courses focused on IP, personal injury, and healthcare, and wrote a paper comparing the US and Canadian regulatory systems that link patent litigation to the approval of prescription drugs.

The rest of my legal career has emphasized life sciences, regulation by health authorities, and patent litigation in particular.

How have you found the pathway to your current position? And can you offer advice from your experience?

I am an active IP advisor and patent litigator, with leadership responsibilities that include heading up the IP litigation group and co-chairing the Innovation, Technology and Branding Group at Bennett Jones LLP in Canada. I am also Vice Chair and Toronto Managing Partner at Bennett Jones, with some national responsibility, and management responsibility over an office of about 450 people. I have benefited immensely from supportive leaders, partners, and colleagues. With their support, the pathway to my current position has really been the result of successively saying yes to opportunities that I have been fortunate to have received, and then working to the best of my ability at each of them.

Based on my experience, I would advise others to seek and accept constructive criticism as part of a constant journey of knowledge acquisition and skills improvement, which is a necessary path to success in patent law. I would advise others to appreciate, respect and listen to all of the people who work around them in all capacities. It makes for a collaborative environment and expands learning opportunities exponentially. Lawyers should learn their clients’ businesses cold – the technical aspects of their

industries, how they make and lose money, their financial health, their risks and their challenges – and view everything they do for the client through the lens of making a positive business impact.

I would advise others to work as hard as they can in their particular circumstances. But I would advise against saying “yes” to every-thing. It worked for me for a time, and I have no regrets, but eventually everyone has to learn how to say no. Some so-called opportunities take precious time from more productive work, necessary rest, and family and friends. It can be difficult to follow through with the “no” but the right answer is usually easy to find. Ask yourself: Do I have to do this? If the answer is yes, do it. If the answer is no, ask yourself, will it advance my career? Will it raise my profile? Will it advance my knowledge? Will it help someone I want to help? Will it give me good experience? If the answer is yes to any of these questions, then ask, will it prevent me from doing any of the above in a better way? Will it mean giving up on something else that is important to me? Would I advise a friend in the same situation not to do it? Will I be saying yes only because I don’t want the discomfort of saying no? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, don’t do it.

What challenges have you faced? And how have you overcome them?

I always find this particular question difficult, as I think the very definition of a legal career is navigating challenges. There can be particularly challenging periods over the course of the career, but I have concluded that the best way to overcome them is to go through them. You accept the challenge and throw yourself at it, like deciding to ski down a terrifyingly steep hill. When I started my litigation career, I was extremely nervous about public speaking, to the point of being sick. I just kept doing it, and working at it, and now it is second nature. I forget to be nervous. It was a challenge to jump into practicing US patent litigation having previously practiced in Canada. I felt I was at a knowledge disadvantage and had to close the gap quickly to be effective. Within a short period I studied and dissected Title 35 and the MPEP, and read essentially every patent opinion that had been issued in the previous decade. I had to do the Canadian version of the same thing when I returned to Canada to practice after four years in New York.

The greatest challenge I faced later in my career was my return to work after I had my second child, 12 years ago. Several months before my due date, I had landed a number of high-stakes patent litigation matters that were going to be handled by the senior partner in our

group in my absence. Just before I was due, that partner decided to join a different firm in a different city. I understood the decision, but the timing was very unfortunate and difficult. As a result, much of that ongoing work moved to other firms. When I returned, I was appointed head of the IP litigation practice. I found the responsibility daunting, but it was an opportunity. We had to rebuild significantly, which was a lot of effort, but ultimately a real success. We have a complex, diverse, vibrant, busy, and exciting practice with a very strong team that continues to grow.

What would you consider to be your greatest achievement in your career so far?

I was extremely honored to have been appointed managing partner of my office, but I know that the achievement is not in the title; it is in the performance, which is ongoing. I am happy that I have been able to commit to my career and have children who understand its demands, are good and decent humans, and know that their parents love them. This too is a work in progress, and to a certain extent the luck of the draw, so it can't yet be an achievement. I am very proud of the team of lawyers I have helped to build. I take pride in the fact that former associates whom I have trained for the greater part of their careers have become equity partners and excellent practitioners. But ultimately those are their achievements, and not mine. Maybe I will have a better answer to this question in 15 years.

What are your future career aspirations? And how will you work to achieve them?

I aspire to get better and better in each of my roles – as a leader, a manager, a mentor, a trusted advisor and a litigator – and to generate and implement new ideas continuously. I will do this through asking questions, listening, practicing, consulting, coaching, being coached, reading, and intentionally ideating and strategizing. I am trying, highly imperfectly, to approach each of these aspects as a discipline, and accepting that any improvement is good improvement.

What changes would you like to see in the IP industry regarding equality and diversity in the next five years?

I can proudly say that we have a great deal of diversity at our firm and particularly in our IP group at Bennett Jones. And it just so happens that most of the senior people are women. That is not what I see when I look at most other teams – particularly in patent litigation, which historically has been the most male-dominated area of IP law. The landscape has definitely changed, however, and I am hopeful that when

I walk into the courtroom and the board room over the next five years, I will see the profession and the judiciary increasingly reflecting the population.

How do you think the empowerment of women can be continued and expanded in the IP sector?

Women need to keep telling their stories, which can be very empowering. The world over, there are exceptional, leading IP practitioners and group heads who are women and whose very existence is inspiring. In my experience, in IP, women champion, boost, and mentor other women generously, which is extremely empowering. Many of us have large clients who enjoy working with a diverse range of advisors and amplify and recommend women to other clients, which makes a tremendous impact. Honestly, I think women in IP are on the very cusp of having their day in the sun.

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Natalia Vladymyrova: Managing Partner, Prima Veritas

An interview: inspirations, experiences, and ideas for equality.

Natalia is a Ukrainian Patent Attorney with 15 years of experience in intellectual property protection.

After starting her career at an IP law boutique as a patent attorney's assistant, she continued in one of the biggest Ukrainian Alcohol Companies Bayadera Group, and ended with the role of head of intellectual property department in 2012. Later in 2012, Natalia founded her own IP law firm.

Now there are more than 8,000 clients who have already received a trademark for their business with her help.

Natalia is the founder of the patent law firm PRIMA VERITAS in Ukraine, former CEO and co-founder of the legal innovation PatentBot (project was closed in 2022 because of the war). Since 2022, Natalia is a part of Deloitte Netherlands, obtaining the role of manager at Sustainability Tech Hub, which she combines with giving lectures on intellectual property and leading the biggest Instagram blog in Intellectual property.

What inspired your career?

It's a long story. It came from my youth, when I started my own business – I had a shop selling Ukrainian designer outfits and I called it 'Closet' because it was a tiny shop, like a boutique but only two square meters. I have an uncle, a businessman, he commented, 'What a nice name for your shop – have you trademarked it?'. At 18 I didn't know about trademarks. He spoke to his attorney and later presented me with the registration of that trademark.

Later, during my law degree, I was looking for an internship and I found a position at my uncle's attorney's office. Such a coincidence! A year in, I fell in love with intellectual property, I realized how interesting it is and what huge potential it has. I pointed all of my professional aims at the field and 15 years later I'm still here consulting in intellectual property.

How have you found the pathway to your current position? And can you offer advice from your experience?



After my internship I worked in a corporate position at a spirits company, there I started with an initial position as a junior consultant in intellectual property, later becoming the head of the intellectual property department.

Then I gave birth to my first child and I never went back. After the *Suits* series, I was so impressed by the managing partner *Jessica Pearson* – a woman leading a huge law firm with this beautiful office with her name on the door: *Jessica Pearson – Managing Partner*. I wanted to be as successful as her. I opened my own boutique law firm; it was only me, myself and I (laughing) and I became Managing Partner just as I had dreamed. I'm still Managing Partner at Prima Veritas, now we have 10 people in our team and we are one of the most successful firms in our niche in Ukraine.

I also used to be CEO of PatentBot, which is a legal tech start-up helping SMEs to protect their intellectual property. It became one of the best legal innovations but unfortunately, due to the war, I was forced to close it in March 2022. I had to move to Amsterdam, and I've joined Deloitte managing the climate and sustainability tech hub, so it's also connected to solutions, to digital, to technology but it's not connected to intellectual property. I am still running Prima Veritas remotely, with almost 7,000 current clients in Ukraine. I remain the most popular patent attorney for our clients and I apply the largest amount of trademark applications each year. We are doing well despite circumstances especially as registering a trademark is not the number one priority for businesses at this time because of the war. The system has changed and now Ukrainians are registering trademarks in wider jurisdictions, not only in Ukraine but also in Europe and the US to become international brands. I am very proud of it.

My advice would be to regret nothing. Everything that you are doing, you are doing well. I'm always passionate about how women can be so powerful, we are superheroes. In addition to running a law firm I have a 40 hour full-time job here in the Netherlands, I have three children

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**I'm listed
in Forbes as
one out of
25 women
in IT which
I achieved
in my role
as CEO of
PatentBot.**
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and I'm a micro-influencer as an Instagram blogger with almost 30K followers. I also run workshop lectures and a course for intellectual property. Passion is like a superpower. If a woman has some concerns about anything she should think about herself – how good is she! How clever is she! How strong she is!

What challenges have you faced? And how have you overcome them?

First, I think the lack of knowledge about myself and a lack of trust from clients' perspective. I was a young woman, 25, when I established my own law firm. It was a real challenge to get new clients. In the beginning, I provided services and took payment afterwards, so no money beforehand, which is not the usual system in Ukraine; people are used to paying for such services beforehand. But I offered this to gain their trust, knowing that I would do the job well and they would be happy to pay after. I knew that clients might not believe in me because I was young and unknown, but I knew I was really good and that I would be paid after the work. This was the most challenging part of starting my firm, but I have worked passed that model now as I have earned trust and reputation.

From a marketing perspective it is all about word of mouth. Ukraine is a big country but, at the same time, everyone knows everyone and knows that's how things work. I knew I had to start with my personal brand and I was good at it. I gained the most popularity with the PatentBot experience: for the last five years I have been the face of PatentBot and I was representing dozens of different pitches, seeing international start-up competitions and all of that. I was constantly making social posts and stories, like an influencer would, saying 'hello, I have this drink today', if I have a drink I will let you know about the brand, the history, how the trademark was registered – I find intellectual property even if it is hidden. This began catching peoples' attention which led to people identifying me as the person to go to for intellectual property. That came through personal branding.

What would you consider to be your greatest achievement in your career so far?

I'm listed in Forbes as one out of 25 women in IT which I achieved in my role as CEO of PatentBot. Also, maybe the most important one, is the love that we have with our clients because love is one of our values at Prima Veritas – we have three values which are love, care, and the best service. I create this atmosphere within a team and with clients so that we do everything with love and it comes back, always. And that's why I'm so popular. I literally spend zero budget on marketing so everything, each of the 7,000 clients,

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The future of IP is creative, having more women in legal technology would change how IP professionals practice law.
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came from my creativity with my personal brand and subsequent reputation.

What are your future career aspirations? And how will you work to achieve them?

My closest goal is to gain some new roles here in the Netherlands at Deloitte. I'm already a Managing Partner at my own law firm and I'm happy that I've organized that in such a way that it works without me. I am not an operational manager, I am just a business owner and I can consult my team in some cases or give them a pass to strategy but the main idea is to be the face of it and generate leads and clients just by being myself and I love that.

Here, at Deloitte I hope that I will create some new steps with new challenges.

What changes would you like to see in the IP industry regarding equality and diversity in the next five years?

From what I can see we still don't have a lot of women in C-suite level positions, in management positions, so I think that what the community can give to women in IP is some strong beliefs and support. I truly believe that this is going to change.

I don't have any data or numbers but it's just what I see; that big companies are always managed by men and maybe some partners are women, but managing partners are still a majority men.

It's not only about diversity of sex and nationality, it's also about mental diversity, it's so super that people think about it and I'm so encouraged to have it at Deloitte as well. It is so good that we have started to think about it and the next step is actions and I hope that women will achieve management positions as well, if they want to.

How do you think the empowerment of women can be continued and expanded in the IP sector?

I think it's good to have some communities. As far as I know they do have some Women in IP communities, I've heard about an international one. I have even attended one event organized by those in Ukraine. But I think maybe it could be more, not only in IP but a little bit broader, so women in legal. Having support from a community with similar values always helps you to go further and to move forward.