

The Patent Lawyer

GLOBAL REACH, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

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The specific effects of introducing manifest inventiveness examination into utility patent examination in China



Dr. Yongqiang Qi, Partner & Patent Attorney at Corner Stone & Partners, outlines the amended patent examination guidelines, criteria for inventiveness identification, and examination procedures to highlight the impact on the examination of utility patents in China.



Stunted plant innovation in Europe?

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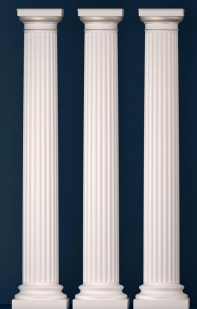
Federal Circuit removes attorneys' fees

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UKIPO: 3-year strategy 2024 -2027

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Women in IP Leadership

Celebrating achievements and continuing
the empowerment of women



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We give special thanks to Clarivate for their dedication and support in continuing
the empowerment of women in IP by facilitating this opportunity.

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.

This segment is sponsored by Clarivate, who, like *The Patent Lawyer*, are passionate to continue the empowerment of women. Clarivate's sponsorship enables us to remove the boundaries and offer this opportunity to all women in the sector. We give special thanks to Clarivate for supporting this project and creating the opportunity for women to share their experiences, allowing us to learn from each other, to take inspiration, and for continuing the liberation of women in IP.



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At Clarivate, we connect you to intelligence you can trust to ensure an IP-empowered tomorrow. We know that bringing people together from different cultures and backgrounds, with different life experiences and perspectives, is a key driver of innovation. This is an opportunity to celebrate all talented women around the world of IP and acknowledge their work which has changed the industry to date and look forward to what they and many more women in IP will do for tomorrow.



Gordon Samson, President, IP, Clarivate

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.

Stephanie Curcio: CEO and Co-Founder, NLPatent

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

Stephanie Curcio is the CEO and Co-Founder of NLPatent, a leading AI-based patent research platform. She holds leadership roles in IP organizations in Canada and the US, and is recognized globally as a leader in IP strategy (IAM Strategy 300) and as a "Powerful Woman in IP" (WIPF). Recently, she was honored as one of The DMZ's "Women of the Year" and The Peak's "Emerging Leaders" in the Legal category, highlighting her contributions to the innovation economy.

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What inspired your career?

The core inspiration for my career is that I've always loved the pursuit of discovery – understanding the "why" behind how things work, which led me to the sciences. As I began my university studies, nothing fascinated me more than the workings of the brain, so I majored in neuroscience. I found the pace of evolution of the field of neuroscience to be incredible; many sections in the neuroscience textbook I purchased in second year – meant to take me through three years of studies – became so obsolete that they were plain wrong by the time I was in fourth year!

I pursued neuroscience for two years following graduation, working in Parkinson's research under a powerhouse female scientist whom I admired greatly. When it came time for me to figure out next steps (graduate school? professional school?), I turned to her for advice. She patiently sat with me, discussing my passions and aspirations, and we ultimately agreed that lab life was probably not right for an extrovert like me! She encouraged me to apply to law school, and even wrote a letter supporting my application.

In law school, my science background naturally pushed me into IP and after serving as President of the school's IP club, I landed my dream job at a Band 1 IP firm in Toronto. I later moved to a top full-service firm, working under some of the brightest IP minds in Canada. I loved my job, but something was missing.

In 2017, I was introduced to language-based AI and was blown away by the possibilities. I recognized that with AI, some of the most mundane and tedious tasks patent attorneys perform can be automated and improved tremendously. I knew this was going to be massive and, without a second thought, I left my practice as a Big Law IP attorney to co-found a startup determined to bring modern AI techniques to the patent process. The rest is history!





What I am most proud of is making an impact on the profession by ushering in entirely new workflows supported by technology.



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

Junior IP attorneys are often tasked with the most mundane and tedious mandates – for example, patent searching – ostensibly to learn the trade and create a foundation for knowledge. Indeed, there is much useful information hidden in patent data; not only to evaluate key issues of patentability, freedom to operate, and validity, but also strategic business decisions and competitive intelligence. However, through their search efforts, attorneys get exposed to the inefficiencies and difficulty in working with raw patent data. There's so much of it, and patent language is incredibly complex. And, as it turns out, lawyers are not great at working with this data; their hourly rates are high, and their (expensive) intellectual skills are better suited for drafting claims and crafting arguments – “three-dimensional chess,” as my law firm mentor would say.

When introduced to AI in 2017, I had my first “holy crap” moment when I could see so clearly how the problems with accessing and analyzing patent data could be solved by technology. There was no doubt in my mind that modern AI techniques were the future of our profession and I had to, without question, be part of it. I saw the opportunity to be an early mover at the intersection between AI and patent law and went for it. After taking that leap of faith, I could never have predicted where my career would take me nor how happy I would be pursuing it.

Without hesitation, I would encourage young lawyers to have an open mind and follow whatever direction excites them or, if they're lucky, blows them away. Taking risks is inherently uncomfortable, but you'll never know where your career might take you if you don't take a chance.

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

Getting my business off the ground was incredibly difficult. Despite my conviction that we were on the right path, the industry was generally not ready to adopt AI. We had some success with early adopters, but the wins were slow, and the

work signing them on as clients was grueling. Lack of education on AI, and lack of trust in the output, were big factors.

In those early days, I became an evangelist for AI and I put myself out there to talk to as many people as possible to get the word out, expand my network, and establish myself as a thought leader in AI for IP. I had the tremendous good fortune of meeting an individual who was highly influential in the patent world and who heard me out, saw something in me, and gave me an opportunity to shine. Without knowing almost anything about me besides my work and interest in the space, he invited me to give a key presentation on AI in patent search. That presentation, and the opportunities that ensued, propelled my career forward in ways I couldn't imagine. Even to this day, this individual would modestly say he did nothing, but the truth is, having someone influential in the industry give you a chance is, bar none, the best way to open doors.

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

I started a business that not only I believe in wholeheartedly but, I am proud to say, our clients believe in as well. The road to get here hasn't been easy – there have been plenty of ups and downs. But looking back on what my team has achieved, and the great satisfaction and fulfillment that has given me, I am full of pride. Building a business has brought many great achievements, but what I am most proud of is making an impact on the profession by ushering in entirely new workflows supported by technology.

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

AI technologies have become ubiquitous, impacting nearly every profession in profound ways. Legal practice is no exception. Modern large-language model (“LLM”)-based tools have transformative potential across the patent profession, and we're already starting to see their proliferation. My goal is to take the core LLM my team has designed and apply it across the innovation lifecycle, to facilitate invention harvesting, assist with patent prosecution, identify competitors, facilitate licensing and patent valuation, and manage entire patent portfolios. The possibilities are endless. Achieving these goals will require strategic thinking and continuing to foster relationships within the industry to ensure we are building solutions that address real challenges with intuitive design.

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

Over the past few years, organizations have made

strides in prioritizing diversity and inclusion across all business units and functions. However, there is still much work to be done. The focus in the next five years should shift from identifying the issues to taking concrete actions. Given the pivotal role that mentorship has had in my own career, I believe that initiatives focused on expanding mentorship programs and creating clear pathways for career advancement for underrepresented groups will be crucial. This effort should extend beyond practitioners to include cross-discipline mentorship of diverse entrepreneurs and inventors who have historically faced barriers.

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

Unfortunately, transitioning from being a female patent practitioner to becoming a female tech entrepreneur didn't change much in terms of demographics, as both industries (IP and tech)

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are heavily male dominated. To continue empowering women in both sectors, it is essential to foster inclusive work environments and establish mentorship programs that provide guidance and support. Great organizations like the American Intellectual Property Law Association (“AIPLA”) have frameworks to ensure adequate mentoring and support systems are in place, providing women with access to more seats at the table. Young women entering the profession should endeavor to seek out such opportunities, and more organizations should emulate this structure to promote gender diversity in the profession.



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