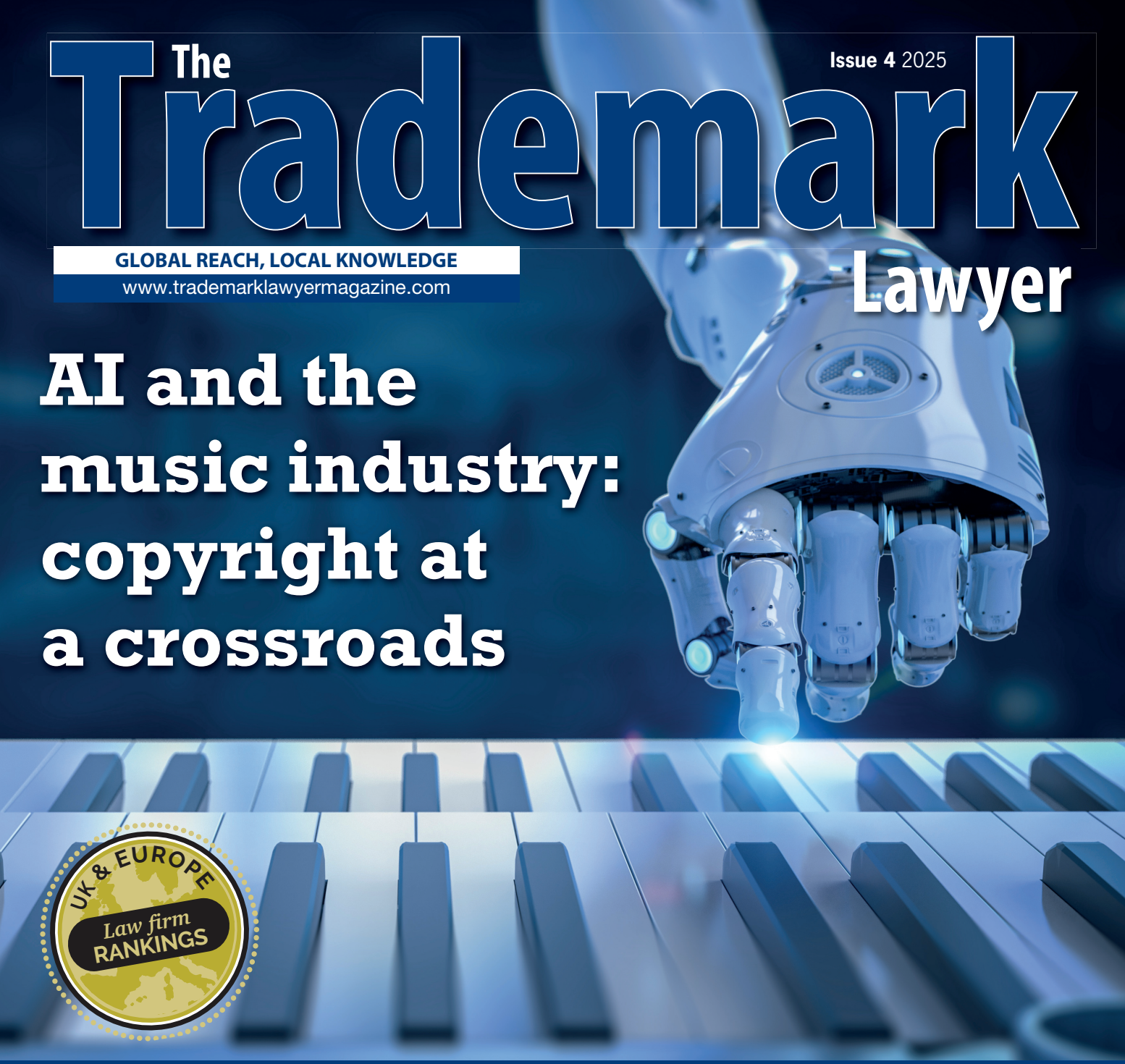
The Trademark Lawyer

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AI and the music industry: copyright at a crossroads



UK & EUROPE Law firm RANKINGS

Ivana Canucci, IP Counsel at Sporty Group, explores the impact of generative AI on the music industry in the UK and the US, highlighting key cases which have offered an early test of how courts will interpret copyright law in relation to AI-generated content.

Domain name management: a hidden driver in equity value creation
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CTC Legal Media

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.

Laura West: CEO of Springbird

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

Laura is a Chartered Trade Mark and Design Attorney and CEO of Springbird. With over a decade of experience in the protection, enforcement, and exploitation of her client's IP rights, Laura is on a mission to modernize and transform the IP sector and is the creator of Springbird's unique subscription service. An expert in her field, Laura has been recognized by *The Legal 500* as an 'exceptionally efficient and responsive' trademark attorney, was acknowledged by the *WIPR Leaders Directory 2022* as a global IP leader, won "Made in Manchester's Business Owner/Entrepreneur of the Year 2024," and was recently shortlisted as a nominee for the "Innovative Leader Award" at the Influence & Power in Law UK Awards 2024.

What inspired your career?

I had a reasonably traditional route into IP in that I studied law at university, obtained my training contract, and qualified to become a Trade Mark Attorney. However, it did take me a while to find that path.

At first, I had no plans to attend university and left school with glee, filled with grand plans to take on the world of work and leave academia firmly behind me. However, after six months of cold calling, I changed my mind and decided university might not be so bad! At that point, I planned to study media/film production, and I was all set with an arts scholarship before I changed my mind and went through clearing to study law.

It's, therefore, unsurprising that as soon as I studied IP, I knew it was the area of law I wanted to qualify into; it felt like I could combine my love of creativity with the challenge of law, and I loved it straight away.

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

After many years of qualifying, building my own practice, and working with founders to protect their IP, I was in constant awe of my clients and never wanted to be 'the lawyer;' I wanted to be one of them. Combined with a lack of opportunity to let my creativity thrive within traditional IP practice, I started to feel a tug of war within myself. When partnership was offered at my previous firm, this feeling resurfaced, and after years of striving for that position, it left me feeling a little empty; the expected feelings of success and fulfillment were nowhere to be seen. That was when I realized I needed to start my route out of that world.

> **"Don't listen to the voices of people who don't have that desire, would never take the risk, and who make you feel like you must be missing something."**

During lockdown, I decided to make a change. Whilst I was tempted to start my own firm,



Seeing the team shout about our company's culture, approach, and leadership in hugely positive ways never fails to choke me up!

employment restrictions and the ongoing expense of fertility treatment meant I needed that extra element of stability. Therefore, I moved to a boutique law firm where I was given the opportunity to create a practice from scratch and really run with my ideas.

I managed to grow that practice quickly, and within two years, we had generated enough work to support a team of five. Off the back of this, I negotiated an amicable exit from the firm and set up Springbird in February 2023.

Having gone through this journey, the most significant pieces of advice I can give are:

1) Don't assume you aren't capable

2) Don't listen to the voices of people who don't have that desire, would never take the risk, and who make you feel like you must be missing something

3) Don't get trapped by the various restrictive measures firms put in place to make a move feel impossible and unattractive.

If I had done any of these things, I would never have the flexibility, fulfillment, or happiness I have now. The decision to leave the practice I had built was almost debilitating, and the restrictions made me delay it for years; all the while, I was becoming more and more stressed and unhappy. Once I had finally reached a place of no return in my head, along came those who thought I was crazy, stupid, or misguided and told me I would regret it. This played into my imposter syndrome and made me question myself. Luckily, I also love to prove people wrong, so this fueled me to work even harder to make the business a success. However, it could have been very different.

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

From fertility issues to subscription mispricing, mistakes in the hiring process, and delayed client payments, it hasn't been easy! Fertility issues played a big part in delaying my decision to leave traditional practice. Still, with a lot of planning, a stepping stone into boutique law, and lots of support at home, I was able to make this work. Once I took that first step, the speed with which the rest followed was entirely unexpected.

Our model wasn't perfect straight away; we've had to constantly review and adapt it to make it work for us and our clients. For example, we first created a 'start-up' subscription for new businesses needing IP protection. However, we soon realized that many of those businesses used the subscription to manage their costs in year one but rarely needed our assistance beyond that. Given the level of work involved in helping those clients, we realized we were taking on a much higher cost risk but rarely developing the ongoing subscription relationship, which we use to balance out that risk over time. Therefore, we removed this lower-level offering and developed various fixed fee packages, still providing certainty for clients but protecting our business a little more, too.

Equally, we (as many businesses do) charged too little when we first developed the subscription and found we were not making money on specific services, either because we hadn't anticipated the workload well, the client utilized us much more than they had initially suggested, or something happened during the term that meant a lot more work was involved. Over time and through experience, we have become much better at calculating subscription rates. We have developed bespoke subscriptions that work to a particular client's needs (as opposed to always operating a 'standard' model), and we have implemented an acceptable use policy; this combination means we are now much better at delivering value to the client whilst also protecting our own financial interests.

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

By far, the culture and team we have created at Springbird. I am so proud we have created a place where people work closely together and support each other, where there is no toxicity, where flexibility and freedom are foundations in everything we do, and where everyone fully believes in our vision and works super hard to execute it. Seeing the team shout about our company's culture, approach, and leadership in hugely positive ways never fails to choke me up! One of our paralegals even asked to attend an event with her baby whilst on maternity leave!

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

I don't have plans to build the biggest firm or to

chase huge investments and watch Springbird become what I strived to leave. If we can create a stable, high-performing firm that maintains the culture and quality we have now, continuing to work closely with our clients (some of the most exciting businesses in the UK) and offering our team a positive place to work, then I will be more than happy!

Being the 'go-to' subscription-based IP firm in the UK would be the cherry on top!

My focus is mainly on the people; we are extremely picky with who we hire, demanding with the quality of output we expect, and protective of the team that takes the chance, joins us, and works in our chaos! By doing this, we ensure that our clients are looked after, will continue to achieve the added value they have come to expect, and will continue to stand out for our innovative model, approach to client care, and commitment to quality.

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

Our firm is almost all female; it wasn't designed this way, but I think our flexible working policies, female leadership, and remote working have meant that women who have struggled to balance work and family have found a safe haven in us. I have also had quite a few people join or interview with Springbird who are ready to leave the profession entirely because they cannot juggle it all and are made to feel they are constantly falling short of unrealistic expectations. I really hope this shifts and that women are better represented in leadership positions across the profession (not just in boutique firms) or that those struggling, find the faith within themselves to go out and create the place they need to make this profession work for them, rather than vice versa.

I also hope that more firms take measures to hire and develop those who are neurodivergent, working to their strengths and adapting to help with their differences. Those who are neuro-divergent don't always fit into boxes, and often, if you take the boxes away, they will be some of the most exceptional team members any firm could wish for. I would love it if the communication lines opened, neurodivergence was discussed, accepted, and celebrated, and flexibility/adaptability became the norm.

Finally, I really hope the elitism surrounding education ends. So many candidates are over-looked in this profession because they didn't attend Oxford or Cambridge. It hugely impacts diversity and means extremely talented individuals, who bring an entirely different background and perspective, are not represented. To my mind, this benefits no one and creates quite a one-dimensional profession.

"Our flexible working policies, female leadership, and remote working have meant that women who have struggled to balance work and family have found a safe haven in us."

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

It is difficult to answer this concisely! There are so many factors that could improve the empowerment of women in this space. Examples include:

1) Majority male partnerships encouraging and supporting women through their careers and not discounting them based on time spent on maternity leave or an inability to step away from young families in favor of 'BD' or 'always on' work.

2) Parental leave policies that make it a family choice as to who takes leave when, as opposed to a financial one.

3) Flexible and remote working policies that allow women (and men) to juggle both roles and not feel they are constantly being pulled in two entirely different directions.

4) Partners building up junior team members, as opposed to holding them back and being threatened by them.

5) Firms encouraging environments of teamwork and support via their entire remuneration and performance management processes, as opposed to encouraging and rewarding toxic working practices such as 17-hour days, inflated billing practices, work 'hogging,' and expectations to wear all hats, regardless of individual strengths and abilities.

Beata Wojtkowska: Partner at Kulikowska & Kulikowski

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

Beata is a partner at Kulikowska & Kulikowski. As an all-around specialist in IP, she is an advocate, trademark and patent attorney, and professional representative before EUIPO. Beata's key area of activity is managing disputes related to trademarks, trade names, geographical indications, and unfair competition. She represents clients in proceedings before the Polish Patent Office, Polish courts, the EUIPO, as well as the General Court (EU). Beata is a member of the Pharmaceutical Trade Marks Group and the International Trademark Association (INTA), where she works within INTA's Famous and Well-Known Marks Committee. Beata has also been consistently recognized in *Who's Who Legal, Legal 500,* and *WTR 1000* rankings as a recommended trademark lawyer. In addition, in 2023 and 2024, she was awarded the Lexology Client Choice Award in the trademark category for Poland.

What inspired your career?

This may come as a surprise, but my career in intellectual property began by chance. During my university studies, I attended an excellent course on industrial property law taught by Professor Błeszyński, which left a strong impression on me. However, at the time, I was more focused on international law and even chose to write my master's thesis on the international aspects of German reunification. After graduation, while searching for a job, I came across a law firm specializing in trademarks, patents, and other areas of industrial property. I joined the firm and stayed with it for many years without ever regretting that decision. It turned out to be a path that suited me perfectly.

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

After joining the law firm, I quickly realized that I wanted to grow as much and as broadly as possible in the IP field. Unfortunately, I had to wait three more years to begin the trademark and patent attorney training program as it was not organized annually at that time. I used this period to further my education through post-graduate studies and courses.

> **"I am also grateful for the opportunity to work every day with a truly talented team with whom I can collaborate on strategies and scenarios for our clients."**

I recall my time as a trainee patent attorney with great fondness. It was a fantastic period of learning and personal development, enriched by great connections with my entire trainee group. We spent an unforgettable year attending industrial property law classes at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, which brought us closer together. Many of those friendships and professional relationships have lasted to this day, and they remain incredibly important in our professional world.

My advice would be to take every opportunity to learn and build meaningful relationships along the way. Education matters, but the network and the support of peers in this industry are truly invaluable.

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

When I think about the challenges I have faced as a trademark attorney and IP practitioner, the first that comes to mind is the constant need for learning and staying up to date. Our work requires us to provide daily advice to clients on matters that directly affect their businesses. This means we must continually deepen our knowledge and gain new experience to offer accurate, confident guidance, shape strategies, and help to make key decisions. As this profession carries significant responsibility and pressure, we need to stay current with legislation, court rulings, and industry developments – and maintain a calm, analytical mindset, especially when working in high-stakes environments such as courtrooms.

Another major challenge I have faced is

balancing professional life with motherhood. I became a mother shortly after becoming a trademark attorney, so for me, those two roles have always been intertwined. One of my top priorities has always been to find a balance between my professional responsibilities and being fully there for my son. It has required thoughtful planning, organizational skills, and keeping a clear focus on important goals in both these areas of my life.

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

Throughout my professional journey, I have obtained dual professional qualifications – first as a patent and trademark attorney, and later as an advocate. Holding a dual qualification not only broadens the scope of services I can offer to my clients, but it has also opened the door to more strategic and interdisciplinary work in complex IP matters, which I find especially rewarding.

Equally important to me, however, is the role in mentoring the next generation of IP professionals. I have had the privilege of guiding several trademark attorney trainees through their development, and I am proud to see them achieve their own qualifications and grow within this profession. I am also grateful for the opportunity to work every day with a truly talented team with whom I can collaborate on strategies and scenarios for our clients. Our shared achievements, as well as the challenges we tackle together, are incredibly rewarding and continually inspire us to learn and grow in what we do.

I am also glad that combining my professional work with years of commitment to our firm has led me to take the role of an equity partner. It is truly satisfying, especially since together with the other two partners, we share common goals and understand each other well, which gives me further opportunities to shape our firm's future direction.

What are your career aspirations and how do you plan to achieve them?

My aspirations include continuing my own professional development while also focusing on the growth of our firm. I want us to be consistently recognized for the highest quality of professional service and creative, tailored solutions delivered to our clients. To achieve this, I believe in investing in ongoing education, encouraging team collaboration, and fostering an environment where trust, a friendly atmosphere, and open communication are part of everyday office life.

What changes would you like to see in the IP industry, particularly in terms of equality and diversity?

Ideally, I hope that one day we will reach a point where there is no longer a need to actively discuss or work toward equality and diversity, because they will be naturally embedded in our industry. However, until we get there, we must remain mindful of the importance of ensuring that more and more women find opportunities and fulfillment in the IP field. Representation matters, and it is essential that we create space for women to thrive at all levels of the profession.

How do you think we can continue to support women in the IP sector?

In the IP field, we are already fortunate to see many talented and accomplished women building their careers. However, what we still need to focus on is ensuring that women are increasingly represented in senior positions – that they hold influential roles within their organizations and that their voices are heard and carry real weight.

To make that happen, support must start early, right from the beginning of the career path. We should encourage and empower female IP trainees, helping them build confidence, peer networks, and leadership skills that will serve them throughout their professional journey. Ongoing mentorship, visibility, and strong community support is essential for long-term progress.

“We should encourage and empower female IP trainees, helping them build confidence, peer networks, and leadership skills that will serve them throughout their professional journey.”

