

The Trademark

Issue 1, 2026

GLOBAL REACH, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

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Lawyer



Smell the dupe: perfume brands face the IP challenge

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Indonesia's 2026 trademark landscape

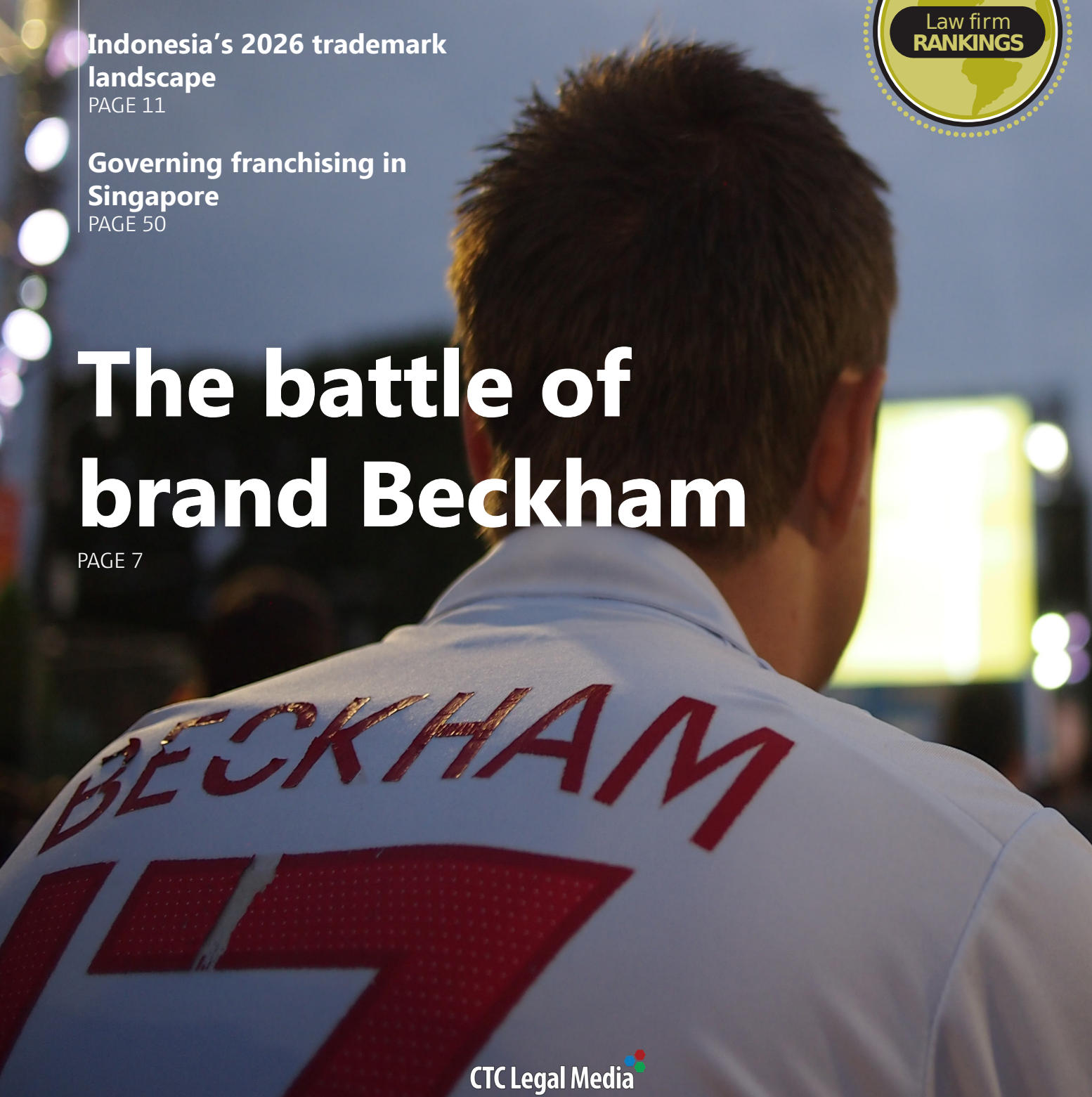
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Governing franchising in Singapore

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The battle of brand Beckham

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A close-up portrait of Deborah Hampton, a Black woman with short, curly dark hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a dark turtleneck and a pearl earring. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be an indoor setting with warm lighting.

Women in IP Leadership

In association with

AIPLA

American Intellectual Property Law Association

Deborah Hampton

President of INTA

With a career spanning four decades in intellectual property law, Deborah Hampton has been both a trailblazer and a source of inspiration across the global IP community. She currently serves as Trademark Team Leader at The Chemours Company, based in Wilmington, Delaware, where she is the Global Brand Enforcement and Trademark Team Leader, working to protect and enforce brands worldwide.

On 1 January 2026, she assumed office as President of the International Trademark Association (INTA), a milestone that reflects not only professional excellence, but a long-standing commitment to service, mentorship, and inclusion within the IP profession.

What first inspired your career in intellectual property?

I was always interested in the law, and that really started with watching *Perry Mason* with my grandmother. I loved seeing how a case unfolded from beginning to end—and how there was always a surprise along the way.

I discovered intellectual property during my first job interview, for a position as an IP paralegal. At the time, I didn't even know what IP was, but I was hired—and I immediately fell in love with it. IP tapped into so many things I care about: creativity, fashion, music, reading. It felt like a natural fit, and I've never worked in any other area of law.

Looking back, what shaped your journey to where you are today?

It really begins with my first mentor, a second-year associate at the firm where I worked. This was the early 1980s, and the paralegal profession was still relatively young. She helped me see that there were far more possibilities in IP than I had imagined—and that it was a field unlike any other.

I knew early on that I didn't want to limit myself to purely procedural work. I wanted to be challenged and to be part of the substantive process. Over time, I saw that when trademark administrators and paralegals took on greater responsibility, they gained greater visibility and influence.

That idea truly took shape when I joined AT&T. The attorneys I worked with recognized my curiosity and willingness to learn, and they invested in me. I would ask questions like, "Can you teach me how to draft a cease-and-desist letter?" or "How do I prepare a substantive office action response?" They walked me through the process—and where instruction wasn't available, I taught myself.

One of those attorneys has remained my mentor since 1983, and I still turn to her for advice today.

Later, at Lucent Technologies, I was chosen to manage and implement trademark functions when they spun off their semi-conductor division. I was charged with establishing a department from the ground up, a transformative experience that ultimately led me to the

role I hold today.

What advice would you give to IP professionals at the start of their careers?

You have to take ownership of your own path. You must believe in yourself and advocate for yourself. Shirley Chisholm famously said, "*If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.*" No one will fight harder for your career than you will.

Opportunities don't always come to those who wait. You also have to be prepared for rejection; it's part of the journey. This belief in self-determination is something my mother instilled in me, and it has guided me throughout my career.

What challenges did you face, and how did you overcome them?

One of the biggest challenges for trademark administrators and paralegals is working with attorneys who may not fully understand our role. Law school doesn't always prepare attorneys to work with non-lawyers, and that can lead to assumptions that our work is purely administrative.

At times, that can feel limiting. You're asking for more responsibility, more engagement—but it isn't always recognized. Respect and understanding don't always come automatically.

That's where INTA became essential for me. INTA has never defined people by title. It values contribution, curiosity, and commitment. When I worked in environments that felt restrictive, INTA was where I continued to grow, learn, and feel challenged. In many ways, it sustained me until I found the right next step in my career.

“You must believe in yourself first—you are your strongest advocate, and no one else can define your limits.”

“INTA has never defined people by title. It values contribution, curiosity, and a willingness to lead.”

What do you consider your greatest professional achievement?

Becoming an INTA officer—and ultimately President. That journey began in 2021, and it represents the pinnacle of my career.

I am a non-attorney, and I am the first African American President of INTA. You don't set out thinking you will make history, but I am here because INTA looks beyond titles. It values people who understand its mission and are willing to work for it. Serving as President of this organization is, without question, my greatest achievement to date.

Looking ahead, what are your future aspirations?

My focus now is on the next generation of trademark administrators and paralegals. I want to be a strong advocate, a mentor, and—if possible—a role model.

I want to encourage people to ask, “Can I do this?” and “Can you teach me?” INTA provides a platform where that curiosity can lead to leadership: chairing committees, leading programs, serving on the Board, or even becoming President.

Beyond INTA, this means engaging with schools and young people and showing them that the legal profession offers many rewarding paths—not only becoming a lawyer but building a fulfilling career in IP through other roles. That work will continue to be central to my efforts in the years ahead.

What changes would you like to see in belonging and inclusion within IP?

Belonging and inclusion are about equity—about access to opportunity. It's not about advancing one group over another; it's about ensuring everyone has a seat at the table.

Diversity brings different perspectives, and that diversity of thought strengthens decision-making. When I look at my mother's and grandmother's experiences, and those of my ancestors, I am motivated to pursue excellence without limitation. I have faced discrimination, but I did not allow it to define or stop me.

We need to keep having honest conversations—about mindset, willingness to learn, and the courage to change. We also need to raise awareness of IP as a profession, particularly among underrepresented communities who may simply not know it exists.

Finally, how can the empowerment of women continue to grow in IP?

I always approach this question through the lens of intersectionality. I am a woman, and I am a Black woman, and both identities have shaped my experience. Experiences for Black women differ greatly. Techniques and recommendations often given to women, often don't work for us. Those actions often have the opposite effect and can be seen as being aggressive.

Empowerment comes from recognizing that everyone brings something valuable to the table. If we continue to mentor, advocate, and inspire the next generation, the profession will continue to evolve. Progress happens when opportunity, encouragement, and belief intersection, that is where lasting change begins.

“Belonging and inclusion are about equity—about ensuring everyone has a real opportunity to succeed.”

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Relani Belous

**Principal and Founder of Belous Law Corporation;
Founder of The Trademark Channel**

Relani Belous is a trademark professional specializing in global brand strategy, portfolio management, and enforcement. She advises clients across a range of industries on trademark clearance, prosecution, and protection, helping businesses secure and strengthen their brands in competitive international markets.

“Being underestimated can be a powerful advantage. I focused on building real work, showing up with integrity, and letting the work create its own proof.”

What inspired your career?

I have always been a fan of brands and how the public interacts with them. I also have a passion for art and tech – so working in the media space was an ideal combination that fostered my interest in these elements. My path was somewhat traditional, with a slice of the nascent, as I worked in environments where there were many “firsts” in the media space and in how people consumed content and brands. Now, I am inspired by working with so many entrepreneurs and smaller business owners (like me) and watching them grow and continue to strive in an ever-changing marketplace.

“My path hasn’t been linear. It’s been shaped by curiosity more than a fixed plan, and by paying close attention to people, culture, and how brands live in the real world.”

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

My path hasn’t been linear – it’s been shaped by curiosity more than a fixed plan and, as well, based on my professional and social network. As I’ve noted, I’ve always been drawn to media and brands because they sit at the intersection of culture, people, and storytelling. I learned early on that paying attention to the world and observing how people behave, what they value, and what they respond to was just as important as formal education or job titles. Every role, project, or collaboration taught me something new about human experience, and I’ve tried to carry those lessons forward rather than compartmentalize them.

A big part of finding my way was saying yes to opportunities that felt interesting, even if they didn’t perfectly “add up” on paper at the time. Over time,

those experiences started to connect... pattern-spotting, understanding audiences, translating emotion into ideas, and thinking about how brands and the consumption of content live in real people’s lives. That pathway only really made sense in hindsight and was a foundation for what I would use to further architect my career.

My advice would be to stay open and observant. Show up, listen, and be heard. Learn from everything – not just work, but culture, conversations, mistakes, and moments that move you. Don’t rush to define yourself too narrowly; perspective is often a person’s biggest asset. If you care deeply about something, let that curiosity lead you, build things you’re proud of, and trust that consistency in how you think will matter more than consistency in your job titles. Along the way, there will always be people who try to undermine you and “take you down”, but staying true to who you are and persevering with integrity is what ultimately carries you forward. The present is all we have.

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

One of the biggest challenges I’ve faced has been trying to be seen and trusted before being given the opportunity to prove myself. In environments where pedigree, background, or a very specific definition of “credibility” was treated as the standard, I was sometimes overlooked or prejudged before my work or thinking had a chance to speak or be part of the narrative. That can be quietly discouraging, especially when you know you have something valuable to contribute.

Over time, I learned that those moments weren’t really about my capability – they were often about other people projecting their own assumptions, insecurities, or narrow ideas of success. Recognizing that shifted everything. Instead of trying to contort myself to fit someone else’s expectations, I focused on sharpening my perspective, building real work, and showing up consistently with integrity.

I overcame those challenges by trusting and forging my own path, letting the work create its own proof, and remembering

that being underestimated can be a powerful advantage. Persistence, self-belief, and clarity about who I am allowed me to move forward without resentment – and ultimately to create opportunities rather than wait for permission. Again, kindness is free.

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

My greatest achievement has been building something of my own and carving a path that reflects me, my values, and perspective. Creating forward momentum without a predefined blueprint has taught me resilience, ownership, and trust in my instincts.

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

To keep forging ahead – that is the best direction, since looking back is not the direction I am going. Getting there is about how I can be better each day.

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

Things have progressed but I'd like to see broader pathways into the industry, with more emphasis on potential, lived experience, and distinct ways of thinking rather than narrow definitions of background or pedigree. Creating environments where different voices are genuinely valued and supported would lead to stronger ideas, fairer opportunities, and more representative outcomes overall.

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

Keeping the passion for what we do ... and supporting the brands that add value to the world!

Become a sponsor: Women in IP Leadership

The *Women in IP Leadership* segment runs in each issue that we publish. It is a segment 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 discuss experiences, celebrate milestones and achievements, and put forward ideas for advancing equity and diversity.

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

To make this opportunity accessible to all, we invite third-party sponsors to remove budget boundaries and make this opportunity available to all.

The segment can be sponsored for one issue or for many issues. This sponsorship facilitates the continuation of the segment and an invaluable platform for sharing experiences.

If you would like to sponsor the segment, please contact katie@ctclegalmedia.com

“Don't define yourself too narrowly. Perspective is often a person's biggest asset, and consistency in how you think matters more than job titles.”