

The Trademark

Issue 3 2021

GLOBAL REACH, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

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Lawyer

Cross-class protection of reputable trademarks



Mr. Zhenkun Fu, Senior Partner at Corner Stone and Partners, offers first-hand evidence of why a well-known trademark is crucial for protecting your brand against infringers.

2020 In-House Practitioners Benchmarking Report

Page 10



Trademark Modernization Act

Page 15



ECTA 39th Annual Conference

Page 26



Women in IP Leadership

Celebrating achievements and continuing
the empowerment of women



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We give special thanks to Anaqua 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 Anaqua, who, like *The Trademark Lawyer*, are passionate to continue the empowerment of women. Anaqua's sponsorship enables us to remove the boundaries and offer this opportunity to all women in the sector. We give special thanks to Anaqua 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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It is our privilege to support this issue's Women in IP segment for *The Trademark Lawyer Magazine*. We look forward to reading and learning more from other women in the industry and value their perspectives. At Anaqua, we expect and encourage different viewpoints and experiences to enable our team to see the world more clearly and embrace the opportunities around us. Diversity and inclusion foster an enriched, innovative, collaborative, and supportive work environment – a key component to a successful future.

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Nancy Hegarty, Vice President of Marketing, Anaqua

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.

I would not
go back to
any other
patent
management
software.

NINA HILL
CORPORATE IP ADMINISTRATOR
EMERSON ELECTRIC CO.



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Stacey Kalamaras: Founding Partner, Kalamaras Law Office

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

Stacey is the founding partner of Kalamaras Law Office, LLC, an intellectual property boutique providing full-service brand protection services to SMEs. Stacey spent most of her career in Big Law representing many well-known brands in more than 150 countries. Prior to law school, she worked as a marketing and advertising executive. Stacey is a devoted trainer of other lawyers, having educated more than 3,000 on a variety of trademark and intellectual property topics since 2018.

What inspired your career?

I'm the first lawyer in my family. Neither of my parents were highly educated, my father was an entrepreneur, and he put a high value on education. He used to always tell us that, "money could come and go but no one can take away your education." That always stuck with me.

I was a good student, I enjoyed school, and I loved to write even from an early age. When I was young, I liked to spend time with my father, especially on Saturdays or days off from school when I would go to his office. He employed a young corporate lawyer for his business, and it was that attorney who first planted the idea in my head that I could be a lawyer. During some of our lunches together, he would ask me, "Stacey, how's school? What do you like to do?" I would tell him how I liked to write, and he would encourage me by saying, "Oh, well we need really good writers in the legal field, and we need good women too." I was only seven- or eight-years-old at this time and his advice made an impact on me, but I wouldn't go to law school right after college.

I first started working in brand management for large multi-national corporations and there was an amazing corporate lawyer that I worked with who had a big impact on me, because I saw, as a young professional, what it meant to be a corporate lawyer. She was responsible for many things, including protecting our brands. In

“Our clients don't come to us with legal issues, they come to us with business questions that need to be solved with our legal knowledge and expertise.”

addition, we worked with a large law firm filled with lawyers who were brand protection lawyers, and it was then I realized that there was a speciality in the law devoted to brand protection. However, since I had just started my marketing career and I was having too much fun, I learned all I could and just continued to learn from all the wonderful lawyers I had the privilege to work with every day.

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

My path was a bit circuitous. I was a political science undergraduate major with a political theory minor, so my education was priming me to be a lawyer, and I applied and took my law school entrance exam at 22.

But the summer before law school (in 1990), I was working for a very small law firm and there were two female lawyers there and they were not treated well. I was the receptionist at the firm and greeted all the clients. The managing partner was a very nice man, very progressive, and I remember an exchange with a client who was in a difficult tax situation. The managing partner greeted him and said he was going to assign him to one of the two female partners, an expert in the client's situation. The client begged not to work with her. He asked the managing partner if he could come back later, tomorrow, next week, any time, so long as he could work with the managing partner. I couldn't believe my ears. I was mortified. The managing partner said, "no, you don't understand, if I had this issue, I would want her, she's the best." But the client was still begging him. I was due to start law school in four weeks. It was then I decided to not attend law school and begin working instead. At that time, I had no idea I would ever find my way back to the law, but I did – it just happened twelve years later.

I spent a dozen years in brand management and advertising. During that time, I went back to school for my MBA in marketing to round out my education, which had some gaps in it for all the business activities and responsibilities I had at that time. I loved building brands. I helped manage brands ranging in size from \$50 to \$500 million. At the height of my career, I managed a team of five people, I worked internationally, I managed a business in Puerto Rico for one of my companies, and I also worked on the advertising agency side to get that perspective. It was a fantastic career. But there was always something missing.

I reached a point in my career, in my early 30s, where I just wasn't fulfilled. After a lot of soul searching, I decided that law school was the right choice, and I am so glad I decided to go back to law school. It was the right choice and timing for me. I loved law school. For me, it was a vacation from what had been a very demanding career. Of course, law school is really intellectually challenging, but to be able to focus on one thing was just amazing. There is some level of ageism in our industry so I knew I would have to finish law school before I was 40. I graduated law school and became a first-year associate at 37. Most first year attorneys in the U.S. are 26, but I had this wealth of business experience to catapult my career forward.

I gave up a lot to go to law school, and I was not willing to compromise on my legal dreams, so I finally found my home in Washington D.C. at a mid-sized firm, soon after acquired by a larger firm. I was hired into the IP group and worked for a trademark partner and an advertising partner. It was a wonderful experience. I worked in D.C. for about three and a half years for two large firms. I lost my job at the height of the recession in 2009, which was devastating because I was a young associate but yet, I was 41 years old with a wealth of business knowledge. That was the first incarnation of Kalamaras Law Office - when I lost my job, I had clients because I could relate to and understand them on a business level. For IP attorneys, our clients don't come to us with legal issues, they come to us with business questions that need to be solved with our legal knowledge and expertise.

When I first started Kalamaras Law Office in 2009 I didn't know what I was doing - I never set out to be a law firm owner, it was born of necessity. Later I worked in-house as trademark counsel and, during those early years of the 2010s, I did whatever I needed to do to survive. I eventually found my way back to Big Law in 2014, but in 2017 my mom got very ill, and I was away from my job a lot, which was difficult. That's when I decided, having been practicing for 12 years, that it was time to relaunch my firm to have

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more time to visit with and spend time with my family. In January 2018, I formed my firm again and it's been a wonderful ride. I haven't looked back. It's a tremendous amount of work but of a different kind when it's all for you. I can honestly say it's been incredibly rewarding and really fun.

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

Those first few months transitioning from corporate America into the business of law were a huge shock for me. I just didn't understand law firm life. Law firms were a very interesting business model for me, having worked in corporate America for as long as I had, so that was very difficult. I do think that it was complicated by the fact that I was an untraditional, older lawyer. I think people didn't always know what to do with me and I wasn't really sure what the rules of the road were. I had all this knowledge to give, but it wasn't necessarily legal knowledge. A lot of people were grateful for that knowledge, but I remember interviewing for jobs where people didn't recognize or value it.



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People want to work with people that they know, like, and trust, and so that's really why we have to do better in terms of diversity all across the legal industry.
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But instead of seeing it as a disadvantage I saw it as an advantage. I landed my first client just three months after being hired by my firm, and it wasn't because I was a great lawyer, but because I understood the client's business. I understood the way they spoke, their challenges, and their needs. I think that we collectively as lawyers need to remember our clients run businesses and that they do not understand the law. As a practitioner, whether at a firm or on my own, my ability to relate to clients, their businesses, and their marketing needs is my secret sauce, it's what differentiates me. I don't understand every business perfectly, but I know my way around a P&L, around financials, and I know what issues businesses face, especially in a marketing context. When I was an in-house trademark counsel, where there tends to be huge tension between marketing and legal, I could successfully defuse that tension by saying, "did you know I used to be a brand manager?" It didn't always work, but it was a great ice breaker to help relate to my internal clients and help put us on the same team instead of on opposing ones.

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

Definitely opening my firm in January of 2018 and watching it scale up. We talked about the fact that I had opened my firm in 2009 out of necessity, but I wasn't really ready then for that responsibility. In 2018, I was. I intentionally decided to commit to doing all that is required to grow a business, and although it's very exciting, it can be terrifying as well! It has been an amazing ride. There are moments, especially in the first year, where you think, "what the heck did I do?" But those moments are quickly followed by those days of joy where you think "wow! this is really going to work!"

The best part of owning a firm is having control and autonomy over how to operate the firm and which client matters to accept. I've worked really hard to build my following. The young girl that loved to write still does, so I write often. I also love to teach, so I present often. People ask what the return on investment is from those activities and, while that can be difficult to measure, it's worth it when someone says, "hey, I saw you gave this presentation/do this/ wrote that, and I'm wondering if you could give a presentation/write for us?" It really does have a snowball effect and it takes time to build that up. You have to be patient, but it all pays off if you give it time.

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

For me the future is now. At the beginning of last

year, I started a passion project that I hope will be my small contribution to and legacy for the legal profession.

In the U.S., training for young lawyers, even those joining larger firms, unfortunately, is becoming a thing of the past. Plus, a lot of young lawyers today are very entrepreneurial, and they decide immediately after law school to open up their own firms. The issue is, how do those people get properly trained in our field to practice trademark law?

Unlike other countries like Canada, the EU, and Japan, which require some kind of competency test before their IPO to practice trademark law, we don't have that in the U.S., so any barred attorney can represent clients before the USPTO in trademark matters, regardless of their level of trademark knowledge or competency. I want all clients to get the best representation possible and for all attorneys who want to learn the wonderful world of trademark law to succeed. So, I launched a comprehensive trademark academy called Trademarkabilities to provide that training. It leverages my 25+ years of experience in building and protecting brands to help attorneys understand the U.S. rules of practice, and the practical tips and strategies that go into practicing before the USPTO. It's more than a review of the rules, it's about how to understand what it is that clients want and need from a trademark attorney and how best to represent them.

As a result, I'm managing two businesses now, which keeps me busy, but my goal is for Trademarkabilities to be the premiere practical training program for any U.S. lawyer who wants to learn trademark law. Our signature course is 10.5 hours long and aimed at U.S. attorneys, paralegals, and third-year law school students, to help them get off to a confident, successful start in their practice. We also just developed a 3-hour course for non-U.S. attorneys, to give them an overview of the U.S. trademark system so they can be more effective advisers to their clients when filing applications in the U.S., because our system is just so different.

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

I waited 12 years to go to law school because I saw how clients were negatively reacting to being assigned to female lawyers, and it's hard to admit, but I don't really think those issues have completely evaporated or that we've made much progress, unfortunately.

I think that we must do better and here's the point: people want to work with people that they know, like, and trust, and so that's really why we

have to do better in terms of representation all across the legal industry. The reason why I think it's so critically important is that everyone has a different experience. I was very fortunate as a young person that I traveled extensively in many parts of the world with my family, and I was exposed to many different cultures and types of people, and I think that informed my thinking and brings something unique to how I approach my own interactions. It's the same with business, you never know where a great idea is going to come from, and having those diverse perspectives at the table, whether it's in a corporation or in a law firm, is really critical. Large institutional clients are already demanding it, more clients of all sizes are going to continue to demand it because it reflects their consumer base. Law firms must do better at attracting and retaining this talent. Look at the changes we've seen in brands as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement. I think this is all very positive, but we need to do more.

The real issue is access. For all the people who want access to the legal profession, they have to have role models. I didn't even know an intellectual property attorney existed until I was 27! I didn't know that was within the realm of possibilities for me. It's the same for young girls who want to be patent attorneys, especially young girls of color. They need to see others doing the jobs they want. Then there's the issue of access, we have to make sure that law school is affordable and make sure that the law school entrance exam is fair - there's an issue here in the U.S. that even the entrance exam questions may be biased against people of color. We must do better.

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

Training and mentoring is key for me. I've had some great managers who understood that my success was their success, and they were champions for my career. I wish the legal industry grasped this concept a bit more but, unfortunately, the billable model doesn't lend itself nicely to mentoring. I think that we need more of the business team mindset in law at every level. I don't think the billable model rewards that type of mindset, and it's a pity because people are the greatest resource in any business, but especially in a professional business where our intellect and knowledge are the services being sold. Don't get me wrong, I've had the pleasure of working with some amazing practitioners, but they weren't always the best business managers because that's not a skill taught in law school, and it's not a skill that is rewarded in most law firm compensation models. My contribution is

to train the next great generation of trademark lawyers through Trademarkabilities and be a good mentor to those that come up behind me.

I've had amazing mentors in both of my careers but they weren't found through formal mentoring programs. I think it's great that firms have a mechanism to encourage mentorship, but my advice to all attorneys is go out and find your mentors- they're out there! I've found that just reaching out to someone you admire, or who you think is doing really great things in your practice area, is a great way to initiate contact and start a dialogue. You never know where it might lead. One thing I know for sure, I would be nothing without the wonderful mentors, colleagues, and cheerleaders in my life who have supported and helped me throughout my careers, and I am indebted to them all for sage advice they have given and continue to give me.

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Barbara Leitao-Johnson: Intellectual Property Protection Strategy Lead, BSI @ Facebook

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

Barbara is a Brazilian IP Lawyer (on the way to be licensed in the US) with extensive experience in IP litigation matters, licensing, trade secrets, and regulatory issues in Brazil and LatAm. She holds an IP LLM degree from The George Washington University and, after years working at top-notch IP firms in Brazil, she shifted her way to the US. She worked as an IP fellow at the AIPLA and currently takes the IP Protection Strategy Lead role for BSI @ Facebook.

What inspired your career?

There are many inspirations in my career – for example, the amazing women in the IP field who know who they are! But first, my mom, Marcia. She was a working mom – with the good, the bad, and the ugly! – and constantly inspired me to reach out and be independent, have my freedom, and not fear “being smart” and stand out. We all know that we are in a world, a society, that is completely biased towards women, especially those who want to reach higher places in their careers.

Even though my mom started her career 30-40 years ago, we know it is still a struggle. As I saw her thriving to do her best as a wife, as a daughter, and with two professional jobs, she became my biggest inspiration for teaching me that there is a way despite the mishaps. Another tremendous personal example is my grandmother, Angela. She was a housewife, happy with her choices, the rock of the family; the one everybody would reach out for a piece of advice. I’ve always had those two worlds that showed me that it’s good to have your options and pursue happiness with whatever you choose.

Having an environment that supports you has just as much relevance. My dad always told me:

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I wanted to see how I could merge my interest in fashion and my interest in law - and I found out that IP could work that magic.
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“I’m not in a place to tell you where you want to be or who you want to be, but just be happy and be good to people.” He’s also a big inspiration to parents/partners out there!

I always wanted to be a lawyer, and I was lucky enough to find out about IP in my first year of law school. My university back in Brazil didn’t have IP in the curriculum yet, but I found it after some research because I wanted to see how I could merge my interest in fashion and my interest in law – and I found out that IP could work that magic.

In the beginning, I thought it was just about fashion and IP, but I figured out that it was way more than that. I could wake up assisting a fashion designer, have lunch learning from an engineer, and be at the front line to help the research of the COVID-19 vaccine for dinner! I could do it all. IP brought this dynamic role, where not only could I be a lawyer, go to court and fight for a client’s interests, but I could also keep expanding and go outside the box; I could mix different worlds. So, since the first year of law school, IP was my goal. 10 years later, I’m still here!

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

I worked for great law firms in Brazil, and I think what helped me a lot is that, even though it’s not easy to manage and climb the way up to become the outstanding lawyer that I dream of being one day, I always tried to show how passionate I am about what I am doing and be resilient. I was lucky enough to work with some brilliant people, but looking more into the past, I also worked with someone who told me to reconsider because “IP was not my thing.” I knew it was. And I kept moving.

Another thing is that I'm not a person who likes to be in my comfort zone. So, although things were good from a professional standpoint, I decided to pursue the opportunity to apply for a scholarship for an LLM here in the US. I knew that GW Law would be the place because of its superb faculty, staff, and student selection criteria (I hope my friends are reading that!).

I knew that it would be something that would contribute to expanding my knowledge and an opportunity to meet more people, even if I ended up going back to Brazil afterward. After graduating, handling the nerve-wracking pressures of the market during a pandemic, and growing a terrifying list of "No's," I started to work with my current team. It was a fantastic feeling when I heard a teammate saying that I was hired not just because of my accomplishments but also because of who I am and my character.

And here comes my last piece of advice: I learned that even though I'm in a different country, with a foreign language and culture, I should always try to stick to my roots and not be afraid of showing who I am, where I came from (in that case Niteroi, Rio de Janeiro!). I love being here and am forever grateful for the opportunities – I also know that my roots and background can contribute a lot! As immigrants, we are taught that we should be "squeezing" to fit inside the box. But the truth is: the box needs to be big enough to fit all of us. Diversity – in all its extension – is what makes teams better.

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

I think the biggest challenge came when the Pandemic hit. I haven't seen my parents for a year and a half now. And I will take this opportunity to call some attention to the struggle that has been for my country (and other nations as India!) to overcome the losses brought by COVID-19. Things need to be done, and awareness should be raised. Let's do our parts as a community!

Another challenge for sure was that I moved to a new country when I was in a good position in my career. So, I renounced a lot to be here and still need to learn every day how to be patient. Being away from where I came from and stand up to the challenge of starting from scratch is not easy. So, another thing that I would really advise is don't focus only on studying and working and/or having a career path; you need to concentrate on taking care of your well-being, which is just as relevant – if not more.

One of the most significant accomplishments I have had here is the people I've met, alongside the friends that I have made. When COVID-19 hit and everywhere shut down, we were still altogether; ensuring that you have good folks that you can count

I learned that even though I'm in a different country, with a foreign language and culture, I should always try to stick to my roots and not be afraid of showing who I am, where I came from.

on is so important. I don't believe I would be anywhere without them; it takes a village. If you want to reach higher places, you need to make difficult decisions. I have incredible support from them; my friends, my family in Brazil, and my husband and his family, who always have my back (and excellent thanksgiving food).

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

Helping the growth of one of the biggest companies in the world is a pretty good achievement! Also, I am lucky enough to be in a fantastic team; it's a diverse, brilliant, straightforward team – and there's never a dull day. I love the idea of working on bringing people together.

But I think my favorite thing is to know that I can be an inspiration to other people – and I try to work to be the best I can every day because of that. So, my biggest achievement is knowing that I'm a good influence; it makes me realize that I'm on the right path. When I see people, who helped me from day one, proud of me and happy to see me go places, whenever I see someone who asks my advice (!) or asks me to be a mentor – this reassures me I'm doing a good job.



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

I was always that girl that wanted to work with patents, and it was (still is) super hard to see women in this role, for example - this is just the tip of the iceberg. It has been an extraordinary moment for diversity and inclusion in an overall aspect, and it is great to see initiatives improving everywhere, minorities with a louder voice and bigger platforms. It is good to be in the spotlight. But, of course, it is not enough.

I want to see that companies, law firms, etc., are keeping up to the challenge and changing entire structures. Not being just about posts and published articles, but real changes and measures to prove a real and long-term commitment with the initiatives.

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

One thing is to keep addressing issues like payment equity, matters related to embracing the differences in being a woman in workplaces. For instance, places giving more extended maternity leaves – and paternity too! Since it helps both! More HR support to moms currently working from home and homeschooling, initiatives to help women who take gaps to focus on the family and then decide to get back to the market (the so-called “alumni” programs). Recently, I saw some news on a regulation in New Zealand related to granting leaves to women who suffer gestational losses. That is the kind of change I want to see.

Honestly, there are many other issues that also need to be addressed: we don't see many women as partners, or at the c-suite level is one of them. Also, more visibility and help for transgender people who identify themselves as women... this all need to be embraced and well addressed. Diversity is not something that just looks good on paper. It is what makes teams thrive.

Also: representativity matters. And I'm saying this because I am an immigrant, I'm a woman of color, from Latin America. It is a relief to be part of an organization that respects it and, in case I need to address something, it will be heard and understood since there are other women there, in the same positions - and higher ones - that will get the point. This should be a standard, not an exception.

The best way to work with those issues is working on giving more and more opportunities. I still think there's a lot to do, but IP is a great place. I love what I do; I love that I had the opportunity to make this choice at a super early stage in my career. But there are plenty of

biased situations that we haven't overcome. And I'm up for the challenge.

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Alice Stephenson: Founder, Stephenson Law

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

Alice studied her BSc (Hons) in Sociology & HR Management before completing her Graduate Diploma in Law, PGD Legal Practise Course and PGD Intellectual Property Law & Practice. Alice has worked in private practice and in-house as a legal consultant in multiple roles. In 2017, Alice founded her own firm, legal services provider Stephenson Law, in the pursuit of "challenging the legal industry by offering unparalleled service and expertise without the typical corporate stuffiness."

What inspired your career?

I took a bit of a long way around in getting into law and it was actually my second career. I originally started my career in human resources and worked as a HR advisor in the NHS. But after a couple of years, I realized it wasn't really what I wanted to be doing for the rest of my life and I wanted to create a secure future for me and my daughter. I'm not sure why, but I was drawn to law.

I decided that law was what I wanted to do. I managed to secure sponsorship from a law firm to go back to university for two years to do the GDL and the LPC, before returning to the company to do my training contract.

I get asked a lot 'why law?', which is a really difficult questions because I don't really have a very good answer to it at all, but I think I liked the idea of being intellectually stimulated and challenged and the variety that comes from the role - and I think from the outside looking into the profession it can look like a really good place to be.

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

I've had a bit of a journey, I suppose. I trained and qualified in 2007- 2009 during the recession so the job market was really, really poor and that meant that I couldn't stay with the law firm that I trained with. So, once I was done with my qualification, I moved to another law firm, and I moved around a little bit and tried to find a law firm that I enjoyed working for - and I couldn't do it.

I really struggled and I initially thought that the problem was with me, that I couldn't find somewhere that I fitted in. But then I started to

I moved around a little bit and tried to find a law firm that I enjoyed working for - and I couldn't do it.

become a little bit more aware of the cultures and the environment that I was working in and started to see issues with them, especially in terms of the way that women were being treated. I've always been somebody that's wanted to express myself, whether through what I say, or wear, or any other way I can. I've never been the type of person that naturally conforms and falls into line, and I think that's fundamentally why I couldn't find the right law firm for me because I'm not the kind of person that they're looking for.

So, having worked in private practice for about three years I actually decided that I was



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 I would give
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 give up.**
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going to leave law because I just didn't know what else I could do. So I left, but I was completely stumped about what I would do next. While I was trying to figure this out I got offered some legal consultancy work and I accepted that, because I still had bills to pay! I thought I'd just do that until I figured out something better to do, and it took me three years of working as a legal consultant before I realized that actually, what I really wanted to do was to start my own law firm.

So that's what I did, I started Stephenson Law in 2017 – I had just had my third child and he was four months old when I started. And now we have 23 people, and we are growing really fast.

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

There's been so many challenges, but my biggest challenge was having a baby at 18. I got pregnant when I was in my final year at school – I was seven months pregnant when I took my A Levels – and I didn't have very much support from the people around me at the time. I was kind of written off at that stage and so I had a big challenge ahead of me in terms of making a life for myself and for my daughter, and how I was going to do that with very little support.

I went to University when she was one, I supported myself through University, and her of course, and worked my way up from there. And when it came to applying for training contracts, the fact that I didn't do very well in my A Levels, because of this situation and the timing, made it a lot harder to get into law because a lot of the firms that offer that kind of training contract still looked at A Levels. So that's definitely been my biggest challenge.

There was definitely a challenge I had to work around as a result of training and qualifying during the recession, that was not easy – I really had to fight for my job!

And starting a law firm has so many obstacles and barriers. So many people told me I wouldn't be able to do it, that it's not possible, that the insurance would be too expensive, that I'd never be able to grow it, that I'd never be able to have a holiday... all of these stories from people who said that they had tried but not been able to do it. I don't really know how hard they actually tried, but they were right to a certain extent – there were a lot of obstacles and there were a lot of points where I could have easily turned around and said, "it's just too difficult, let's forget it!". But I didn't, I just kept going.

The advice I would give is: just don't give up, there are so many times where I could have given up but I never did. It never even crossed my mind. I think this is the most important piece of advice, and you might have to change your

way slightly or take an unexpected path, but you can find a way around it if you need to.

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

Starting and growing my business to the stage that it is at now. We've still got an awful lot to achieve, we're only three and a half years old and we've grown a lot in that time, and we've achieved a lot, but we've still got a lot that we want to do. We've got a lot of plans for this year and we're going to continue to grow, and we've got some really great new people starting as well. I definitely don't feel like I've achieved everything I want to achieve.

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

For now, my aspirations are to grow the business and, through doing that, I want to demonstrate to the industry that there are better ways of doing things. I want to prove that you can run a law firm that allows people to be themselves; that we don't have to try and pigeonhole everybody into these little boxes and stifle everybody's individuality and creativity; that it is possible to be a law firm and to be innovative and driven by technology, and inclusive of all of these things that I'm really passionate about.

I talk a lot about these topics on social media, and to people like you, and that as an industry we're really doing quite badly as a profession in this area.

Obviously, I want the business to do well, and I want it to grow, and I want it to be successful, but it's more than just growing a business – it's about proving a different way of doing things with in a really traditional, old-fashioned, and male dominated industry.

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

I talk a lot about this. I think equality and diversity within the industry is absolutely shocking. I've experienced gender inequality issues firsthand, but obviously there are a lots of other issues surrounding race, ethnic minority, religion, and other minority groups that are also not represented enough.

I think that the problem really lies in the recruitment stage into the industry. I think that the barriers, as I mentioned earlier, to get into the industry are really high, the fact that (in the UK) you have to have £9,000 to be able to do the legal practice course, for example, is prohibitively expensive for the majority of the population.

I spoke to a law fair organizer recently, who was running a virtual law fair, who was segmenting

the attendees at their careers fairs into students that attended Russell Group Universities and students that attended non-Russell Group universities. They were actually dividing people attending the careers fair because the sponsoring law firms were wanting to target a particular type of student. So there's a real problem with people getting into university, and people accessing the education they need to become lawyer, and then the prejudice that exists in these law firms.

Some law firms are still asking, in the recruitment stages, what schools applicants went to - and it's just bizarre that these things are still happening!

There's lots of noise being made about the fact that "they're changing their processes", and that "they're becoming more inclusive" - but it's just not happening fast enough. It can't be because of the terrible stories that I'm still hearing about.

And then we've got the whole issue that, even if you can get into the industry - and typically women don't have as much difficulty getting into the industry as I think the balance of men and women at entry level is fairly equal - women aren't staying in the industry. They're not progressing into the top leadership positions and that, for similar reasons why I decided to leave, is just because there are so many barriers that women have to progress through that men don't have too, and it can just be quite an unpleasant place to be. Plus, if you're wanting to have a family and children then lots of women are just thinking that they can't be bothered - partnership is not an attractive proposition.

There are so many problems to solve, it's incredibly complex.

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

I'm seeing some of the big legal companies taken this seriously, and putting their money where their mouth is, and I can see that they are making real efforts to make changes. And there are other law firms that just aren't there yet. I think an element of that is that there is an older generation running a lot of these firms that have a very fixed mindset, and they're not going to change. So, I think, as a frustrating as it is, that it will be a waiting game for some of these people to retire so that we can get some fresh blood leading these firms with perspectives that aren't quite so prejudiced.

I think clients are becoming a lot more demanding which is great, as they're requiring law firms to take diversity a lot more seriously. I think this is helping, but it is annoying that law firms are having to be incentivized by clients to do something that they should just be doing



anyway, but if it's working it's working, isn't it! And then I guess there's people like me coming along too and talking about it, and doing it and, like I said, trying to show that there is a different way of doing things as well.

One of the things that we do as a firm, and I do as an individual, is really trying to humanize lawyers. Lawyers have a bad reputation for lots of different reasons, to be honest I think that we are perceived as quite stuffy, as bad communicators, money grabbing, boring - all of these types of things that all of these lawyer jokes are made from! So, what we try to do is show that we are actually real people, that we can have a bit of fun even though our job is serious, and we are trying to remove the corporate associations that people make with lawyers. I think that lawyers have a reputation for holding themselves out as being better than the rest of the population and as speaking a language that people don't understand, using long difficult words that people don't know the meaning of, and sitting in these tall glass buildings wearing fancy suits, and it's all, in a way, alienating lawyers from 'normal' people. What we're doing is breakdown those barriers and just showing the world that we're just like everybody else - we speak in plain English, we don't always use long words that people don't understand, we wear normal clothes, and we do the same things that normal people do. Lots of lawyers just don't seem to want to do or represent this, I don't know what the reason is - it's bizarre to me. So, I guess that's probably the biggest stereotype.

And from a personal perspective, I talk a lot about my tattoos and about how that doesn't affect my ability to be a lawyer - that is still quite a controversial one, and is often quite good fun!

I want to prove that you can run a law firm that allows people to be themselves.

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