

The Trademark

Issue 2 2023

GLOBAL REACH, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

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Lawyer

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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.

Simona Lavagnini: Founding Partner, LGV Avvocati

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



Simona Lavagnini graduated with honors, holds a PhD and taught Copyright and Advertising Law for 10 years at the University of Pavia. Simona publishes regularly in legal magazines (Italian and English), and has recently edited a book dedicated to directive 790/2019 and its implementation in Italy. In 2023, Simona became president of AIPPI Italian Group, and is also a partner of INTA, Itech, Les and ALAI. After some professional experiences, in 2003 Simona became a founding partner of the law firm LGV Avvocati. She is currently a cassation lawyer and provides legal advice on intellectual property for national and international clientele, with a focus on trademarks, copyright, and new technologies.

What inspired your career?

A series of events that were as random as they were fortunate. When I had to choose which direction to take in my university career, I was very confused and chose law without any particular conviction, although my passion was literature and history, for fear of not finding a suitable career opportunity. After a few years of university, I - quite by chance - met a foreign colleague who had done an internship in the USA in a patent office, who praised intellectual property and told me that it was a fast-growing sector. By another chance, that very year my university had instituted, for the first time, the teaching of industrial law. I took it, and since it was a rather unknown and entirely optional subject, the course was attended by very few students. The professor noticed me and asked me to graduate with him, with a thesis on copyright law. It was an epiphany: I thought that by heading towards industrial property law I could deal with things I was passionate about, such as literature, but also fashion, and technology.



I think another useful tip is to train yourself to see problems from different perspectives and always try to come up with multiple solutions with a strategic approach.



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

The path so far has been exciting, thanks to the fact that I have always been driven by a strong interest in the subjects I deal with, so that studying them does not weigh me down. I think my academic training has helped me in the profession, which pushes me to delve into issues with a systematic and interdisciplinary approach, and then use the results of my in-depth study in a very practical way, as a lawyer interested not in the solution in principle but in the concrete result for the client. For this reason, I think it is always good advice to build a solid preparation, combining study experience with practical/professional experience. Another important element of the pathway was international networking: thanks to some clients I was able to get in touch very early on with groups of lawyers from different jurisdictions, with whom on an annual basis we meet and brainstorm with each other, where everyone shares their results and draws inspiration from each other's suggestions. Through this experience, I have gained the conviction that the IP sector is particularly fertile for those who have creativity and can find out-of-the-box solutions. For this reason, I think another useful tip is to train yourself to see problems from different perspectives and always try to come up with multiple solutions with a strategic approach.

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

The first barrier I faced was language knowledge. Coming from an Italian classical high school, I had studied a lot of Latin and ancient Greek, but little or no English or other languages, which are nevertheless crucial in IP. The first success was therefore to learn English very well, and then also German: I was helped - as often happened to me - by chance and luck, since I managed to win the first Erasmus scholarship set up at my university, to attend the University of Bristol in the UK, and then also some scholarships at the Max Planck Institut in Munich, Baviera, where I completed my PhD thesis. My activities at that time were hectic, because I had to simultaneously work, follow my PhD, and also do a lot of activities at the university (attending examinations, editing the journal of our university group, and more). I had to give up a lot of my private life for a number of years. Another problem I had to face was being able to be taken seriously. As a young woman, I felt that sometimes the others thought that I could not be as assertive and 'successful' as a colleague of the opposite sex. Sometimes I also doubted myself. I, therefore, had to work a lot on my self-esteem, to convince myself that this was pure prejudice, and that the first to over-come it was me,

in my own head. I don't know if this is a problem that young women still have: in this case, my advice is first to study and learn a lot, to reach a solid level of preparation, and then to work on one's self-esteem, to acquire the confidence that is necessary in our profession and that we must communicate to those who come into contact with us.

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

I am particularly proud of the leading cases that I have brought for some of my clients in the field of new technology. One important case related to the defense of the search engine Yahoo!. The case arrived at the Supreme Court in 2018 and represented the first-ever decision on search engine liability in Italy.

Another important set of actions are those connected with the enforcement of rights on sports events: we managed to obtain the first dynamic injunctions in our jurisdictions against illegal IPTV, with orders issued *ex parte* by the competent civil court and immediately executed by mere conduit (something in as little as two hours).

Finally, I have been recently managing a leading case concerning DNS providers' liability, again the first decision in our jurisdiction in relation to this very special type of provider.

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

I feel I have now fulfilled quite a few of the ambitions I had in my 20s. First of all, I founded my own law firm, which just this year turns 20 years old and is still considered a reference point in the legal landscape of intellectual property in Italy. I plan to continue to grow it, together with my colleagues, so that it can further establish itself in the market, as a boutique where the customer is treated with the utmost attention.

In recent years, I have also managed to fulfil my university aspirations, not only thanks to my PhD, but also because I taught the subject of Copyright and Advertising Law for 10 years at university.

I recently had the honor of being elected president of the Italian group of the AIPPI association (The International Association for the Protection of Intellectual Property), and for the next three years I will be in charge of managing the main training and educational commitments that the association pursues in favour of specialized consultants and lawyers.

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

When we talk about equality and diversity, we

are talking about something that goes far beyond the opposition between men and women, and even the issue of gender, to a broader concern for all diversity. I think we can learn a lot from young people, who already in many cases live in a world where diversity is accepted and considered equal, precisely because there is a new and more open notion of 'normality'. Over the next five years, I would like to see this same change of mentality take place in the intellectual property industry, which in my view could be fostered by the fact that in our sector there tends to be a more open mode of dialogue, as each professional often comes face to face with foreign colleagues, with cultures that are also very different, and therefore must be accustomed to seeing, understanding and accepting diversity.

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

With regard to equality between men and women, I think a real change of mentality should take place. It should first of all be men who change

their perspective and become more proportionately and equally involved in the family and childcare. Only when this privilege/responsibility is felt by men as much as by women will we have achieved the basis for creating a real competitive opportunity for women. The latter, for their part, must continue along the path of emancipation, cultivating the goal of becoming authoritative and assertive, and doing so in their own way, valuing their own diversity and wealth. In other words, there should be different ways for different people to exercise leadership. In the IP sector in particular, I would like to see more women 'in charge', especially in traditionally male roles. It still happens today to see meetings, or conferences, where there is an absolute prevalence of men; and indeed in many realities we see the creation of a pyramid, which at the base is very much attended by women and then gradually tapers off. For instance, there are many female intellectual property law graduates; and also many young female professionals. And yet, in the roles of heads of departments, or partners, you still see very few women because, for many, career development is hindered by so many factors, and sometimes even some prejudice. I think the effort is to remove the obstacles that still exist, to enable everyone to demonstrate their abilities and aspire to roles of responsibility, regardless of gender (or other such elements).

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Olga Plyasunova: Head of the Trademark Department, Zuykov and partners

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

Olga Plyasunova is a Trademark Attorney and the Head of The Trademark Department at Zuykov and partners. Olga has the status of Patent Attorney of the Russian Federation (No 1258) and Eurasian Patent Attorney (No 63). Olga has been working with Zuykov and partners LLC since 2007. She specializes in Appellations of origin of goods, trademarks and service marks, and industrial designs. Olga is fluent in English and is a member of ECTA (2019). She has extensive experience in the consideration of disputes, objections, and statements in the Chamber on patent disputes of trademarks. Olga regularly participates in conferences and seminars on the protection of trademarks in Russia and abroad.

What inspired your career?

When I studied at the institute, I had the subject "Patent Law", but I did not assume that my whole life would be connected with IP. It's fate that after graduating from the institute I started working at Rospatent. At Rospatent, I was surrounded by interesting people devoted to their specialty, real professionals in their field. This inspired me to devote my life

to the protection of intellectual rights, I realized that I was interested in this and I wanted to do it.

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

My IP career began in 1996 when I worked at the Russian Patent Office as an expert trainee in the expert department. While working at Rospatent, I simultaneously studied advanced training courses, including those organized by WIPO, which allowed me to grow professionally. A few years later, I took a management position and became Deputy Head of Trademarks at the Patent Office. After working for some time in this position, I realized that I wanted to plunge into this work from the "other side" and set myself the goal of becoming a patent attorney. In 2007, I joined Zuykov and partners and have been working here for 15 years. I continued to develop my career and in 2008 became a patent attorney with the right to work in the field of trademarks and appellations of origin. In 2021, I expanded my qualifications and became a patent attorney for industrial designs. In 2022, I received the status of a Eurasian patent attorney, having received the right to work in the field of design not only in the Russian Federation, but also in the CIS countries (Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Belarus). In our company, I am the head of the trademark department. The department employs 10 people - four of them are patent attorneys, the rest are assistants. The Trademark Department provides clients with trademark registration and design services.

Intellectual property is an integral part of our life, and protecting the rights of customers is our priority. If you came up with a company



logo, or invented a device or method, you must definitely register them, you can't let the situation take its course. Otherwise, your competitor will appropriate the results of your intellectual activity and will reap commercial benefits.

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

During my professional development, I realized that achieving professional goals and success depends only on me, and I need to work on myself and constantly improve myself to achieve them. In the Patent Office, I became a high-level manager at a young age, some of my subordinates were older than me and had more experience in the office than I had. It took a lot of strength, tact, and professional skills from me to gain authority among employees. But I coped with this task because I am a professional in my field.

In addition, it was difficult for me, like any working woman, to combine my work, career growth, family, and children, since legal work in the field of IP requires complete immersion in the process. But I managed with this because I believe that a woman should be a diplomat and be able to negotiate not only in the legal field but also in everyday life.

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

In my opinion, the most significant achievement in my work is the progress that I have made, climbing the steps of the career ladder from an intern in the field of IP to the head of a department in a large company, becoming a Russian and Eurasian patent attorney. I was able to realize myself in the profession and became a professional in my field.

I also consider my department, which I created and developed, as my achievement – a team of colleagues who surround me and for whom I try to be an example in my professional activities, including working as a mentor, teaching the profession of young experts. So, many employees of the department came to the company in the position of attorney's assistant, and in the process of working in the company they themselves became attorneys. This is a real team of professionals, ready to work in the difficult conditions that have now developed in the world.

Life does not stand still. Our company is constantly expanding - both in terms of the number of employees and the geography of the provision of services. Recent events have forced us to look to the East - the countries of Asia, China, the United Arab Emirates. On January 1, 2023, we opened an office of Zuykov and partners in Dubai, UAE. This country and the region as a whole is a very promising area for business development. We are pleased that now we can provide our clients

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with a full range of services for the registration of intellectual property, including the services of trademark registration in the UAE.

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

Today, I am the Head of the Trademark Department at Zuykov and partners, which is the Russian market leader in the field of IP. In order to meet this level and not stop there, I plan to continue my professional growth, participate in IP conferences to exchange experience with colleagues and clients, such as INTA, ECTA (I have been a member of ECTA since 2019). I also plan to continue to develop the trademark department and its employees professionally.

Particularly interesting for our clients in the current market conditions is the topic of regional patenting - the registration of Eurasian industrial designs, trademarks. Therefore, as soon as we have a Eurasian trademark, I will definitely become a Eurasian trademark attorney.

I would like to see the introduction of a procedure for pre-registration public opposition to the Russian system of verification examination of intellectual property objects, in particular, for applications for industrial designs.

The mechanisms of public opposition have been tested by a number of patent offices around the world when registering various industrial property objects. I believe that the introduction of public opposition will ensure convergence of the registration procedures for Eurasian, international and Russian industrial designs.

In addition, we have been waiting for a year for a Eurasian trademark to appear. The Treaty on Trademarks, Service Marks and Appellations of Origin of Goods of the Eurasian Economic Union entered into force on International Intellectual Property Day on April 26, 2021. The Treaty creates a regional system for registration and legal protection of means of individualization of the EAEU, within which the applicant will be able to obtain legal protection of a trademark or an appellation of origin based on a single application filed with any of the five national patent offices.

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

In my opinion, in Russia, unlike foreign countries, especially European ones, there are a lot of women working in the IP field compared to men. But at the same time, for the most part, they occupy ordinary positions, doing routine work. Women should invest more in their education, and develop professionally in order to show their value in the labor market, i.e. so that quantity turns into quality and more women can succeed in the IP industry in the future.