

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.

Maria Cecilia: Partner, CorralRosales



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

Maria Cecilia is Partner at CorralRosales. She has a Juris Doctor degree from Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, as well as several diplomas in various intellectual property topics. She has acted as an International IP Mediator and Arbitrator and has experience in the public sector, from her time as a judge of the Administrative Litigation Court.

Maria Cecilia received the Chambers Women in Law Award for Ecuador in 2018. She is the only Ecuadorian to have been recognized among the 250 most influential women in IP as selected by IP Stars. Maria Cecilia is a member of the EUIPO's Observatory International Panel of Experts. She is the first Ecuadorian both to sit on INTA's Board of Directors and to form part of the Programming Committee of the International Association for the Protection of Intellectual Property (AIPPI).

What inspired your career?

A curious fact is that I didn't want to be a lawyer, or at least it wasn't in my plans.

It all started when my aunt told me the news that I had been enrolled at the Law School. At first, I was shocked, as I had not planned it, but as time went by, I fell in love with my career and studied it with enthusiasm until the end.

At that time, intellectual property was not very developed in Ecuador and it was not a main focus at the university.

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

The road to my current position has never been easy. From something as simple as being a woman and studying for a university degree, to becoming the first and only Ecuadorian woman to be recognized by IP Stars among the 250 most influential women in the world or being a member of the Panel of International Experts of the EUIPO Observatory. Everything has involved



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significant personal and family sacrifices to achieve it.

The best advice I can give anyone is that playing the victim will not get you anywhere. No matter how many obstacles life throws at us, the best we can do is take what life gives us and make the best of it.

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

Throughout my career, I have faced many challenges, most of them related to being a woman in a historically male-dominated environment. Still today, most law firms have a significant number of female associates or employees, but when we look at the partners, the number of women is low or none. This reality is consequence of a sad but true fact: being a woman and a lawyer means that, by default, our path will always have more obstacles than our male colleagues.

In my experience, the only way to deal with these and any other obstacles is to move forward. If I had spent time lamenting over all obstacles or taking criticism personally, I would never have achieved a quarter of what I have achieved in my professional and personal career.

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

Being the first Ecuadorian to have been part of INTA's Board of Directors, as well as the first Ecuadorian to be part of the Programming Committee of the International Association for the Protection of Intellectual Property (AIPPI) are some of the greatest achievements.

Some of the recognitions that have most fulfilled me have been receiving the Chambers - Women in Law Award Ecuador 2018. Likewise, being the only Ecuadorian recognized among the 250 most influential women in the world in intellectual property by IP Stars and having been appointed a member of the Panel of International Experts of the EUIPO Observatory.

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

At the moment, one of my greatest aspirations is to leave a legacy for future generations - especially women, and that they see themselves represented. I feel that I have achieved most I have set out to do and at this point in my personal life, I would like to leave a footprint that young people can use as a guide for each of them to pursue their dreams of success in the areas they desire. Leaving the door open for young women lawyers to reach high positions and make a difference is one of my goals, and what better way to do that than to teach by example and give them opportunities in my environment. The female lawyers who work

hand in hand with me know that I intend to empower them to be independent and successful on their own.

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

Undoubtedly greater female participation in positions of power. In most IP associations there are a high number of women members, however, when we look at the boards of directors, the gender inequality is striking. Changes are needed not only in the IP industry but in society, in general, with a greater representation of women in positions of power, but for this to happen, the necessary conditions of evaluation and equal opportunity must be given so that these are occupied by capable and competent women and not just to fill gender participation quotas.

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

The first thing is to create awareness of the need to empower women. Once we are aware of this need, opportunities will come our way, as more empowered women will result in women daring to do something new, different from what has been socially expected of them in the past, and this will lead to greater representation not only in decision-making positions within the IP world but also in the legal field in general. For this to happen, work has to be done on a large and small scale, both in the most influential organizations in the IP world, as well as in individual law firms. Equal access to opportunities is the key to achieve a better society.



Tomoe Takahashi: Partner, Hogan Lovells Japan

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

With extensive international experience, including qualifications in three different countries, Tomoe has lived and worked in Tokyo, the United Kingdom, Spain, and New Zealand, and regularly advises clients on complex multijurisdictional issues. Tomoe's practice largely focuses on multijurisdictional trademark enforcement and portfolio management. She also counsels on IP issues on a variety of commercial transactions spanning a broad range of industries including the automotive, consumer electronics, cosmetics, food and beverages, gaming, chemical, and energy industries. Tomoe's clients also seek her counsel on product compliance issues that may arise in the product life cycle for protection of their brand images, such as product safety regulations and labelling.



I was trained in domestic work in New Zealand and Australia but after two years I decided to come back to Japan, my home country, for family reasons and since then I've been mainly helping Japanese clients to expand into the overseas market. I didn't realize until I started this line of work that it was a perfect fit for me because I grew up overseas for much of my childhood, but I always thought that Japanese products and services were, for me, the best in the world; helping Japanese companies grow in other countries is something from which I take great enjoyment.

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

When I joined Hogan Lovells about 10 years ago, the team was very small with only one lawyer, one trademark attorney, a paralegal, and a few secretaries – maybe six or so in total. Now, after 10 years, there are more than 40 just doing trademarks. We grew quite quickly.

I believe the reason we have succeeded is by having a varied team of people with different qualifications and backgrounds. It's very rare, at least in Japan, to find foreign qualified personnel focusing mainly on trademarks, for example. Unfortunately, it's more common for lawyers to go to the practices such as M&A, finance, or litigation, likely because these practices are common in international law firms. But we manage to find those rare characters that are foreign qualified and specialize in trademarks (we have myself – I'm qualified in New Zealand, the UK and Ireland – UK and French trademark attorneys, and several US, AU and UK attorneys) as well as Japanese qualified patent attorneys with overseas experience. I think this mixture of qualifications and backgrounds has attracted the clients that helped us grow. Also, the firm has a system where junior lawyers can work in other overseas offices to gain experience. I have been given an opportunity to work in our London and Alicante offices for which I am really grateful.

Law firms are normally a pretty competitive environment I think, but we manage to retain friendliness and not have too competitive a

What inspired your career?

It was a bit of a coincidence; I could study one master's topic during my undergraduate degree, and I picked IP because it fitted well with my schedule. Then later on I was in a six-person study group for professional legal training and three out of the six other trainees were involved in IP, as was my teacher, which is very rare as there are not many people who specialize in IP in New Zealand, where I trained initially. At that time, there was an opening at one of the biggest IP law firms in New Zealand and Australia; I applied and got the job – the path fell into place and that started my career.

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structure with little hierarchy dominance. I am trying, though not always successful, to keep the team happy as this in turn makes the client happy as the team will work well together and can grow in strength. I spend a considerable amount of time doing HR-related work, and maybe it's not what some people think lawyers should be doing but I believe it's an important part of my role.

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

We realized that we have to be pretty efficient because trademark works generally have narrow profit margins, to be competitive. We invest time on, for example, making manuals/templates for newcomers to follow, developing the robotics, and consolidating the trademark portfolio management system of the firm's network to increase efficiency and accuracy of our data.

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

I prefer to think about it as many successes, including each time I get a new instruction – no one client or work is more important than the other but I'm always grateful for getting a new opportunity. I'm so grateful to the firm, the clients and the team for allowing me to stand where I am, and their continued assistance. I'm really grateful for my colleagues especially, not just my immediate team but the whole Hogan Lovells network as they are very helpful and have taught me many skills on the instructions we work together.

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

We are working on developing a practice that offers Total Brand Care to our clients, comprehensive brand-related services not just services relating to trademarks. We want to assist our clients to respond appropriately to all of the legal and business threats and opportunities that may arise over the life of a brand. We would like to be a one stop shop for protecting the clients' brands, by giving holistic advice on creating, commercializing and protecting their brands, including by giving advice on regulatory, product library, data privacy issues as well as antitrust and M&A. That's what makes us unique. As we're a full-service law firm, we can build a bigger practice together to support our clients even more. In an effort to achieve this, I asked to be seconded to a product library team for a while, and we try to send the juniors to other offices to gain experience in additional areas to trademarks.

We are also working on growing domestic services for overseas clients coming into Japan because, as a result of the economic climate,

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we're definitely seeing more opportunities for foreign companies coming to Japan than ever before. I can already see much more foreign traffic coming to Japan these days so hopefully American, European, and Asian companies will begin to realize there are opportunities in Japan and they'll bring more inbound work, as we have a lot of senior Japanese lawyers and patent attorneys with overseas experience who will be ready to help them and be a great bridge between the different laws, practices, and culture.

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

In the trademark world, I think there are more women than in the other practices; for instance, our team has fewer than 10 men out of 40. For gender diversity, our team actually needs to recruit more men but for people who are already in the office, we are trying to be flexible regarding working hours to accommodate the needs of our team members. For example, those with young families can pick up their children at four and be with them until bedtime then pick up work again afterwards. We're also working to make our process more efficient so that our paralegals and administrative staff don't have to work overtime so they can have more of a work/life balance. There is a belief around the world that Japanese people tend to work till late at night all the time, but that's not the case in our office. Of course, some people will work longer hours to meet the client's expectations, particularly senior staff, but even then we are offering the flexibility to work around other life commitments to find more balance.

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

I'm really not an outspoken person but I was always told that you have to speak up more than men in order to be recognized in the world. Hopefully that's not the case for everyone; if you're doing a good job and you are kind to your team and work hard for your clients, hopefully the people around you will recognize that effort and take you where you should be regardless of your gender. This is what I would like to see, and now I am in a position to help others grow, I would like to be the one who recognizes such hidden talents and assesses people objectively for their work. I think this will be the key, together with keeping the flexible working arrangement as discussed above.