EIP

Partner profile: Gemma Wooden

Having left academia in 2012Gemma Wooden might have followed her peers into software development, but instead chose IP. Here she explains her career path from joining EIP as a trainee patent attorney through to her recent promotion to partner.

What did you do prior to joining EIP?

I did a DPhil in particle physics at the University of Oxford, during which I spent two years at CERN in Geneva working on the search for the Higgs Boson. I then spent a year as a post-doctoral research fellow at the University of Michigan but based at CERN, continuing the search for the Higgs boson, which was discovered in July 2012. It was the culmination of everything I had been working on and was quite an exciting time.

What made you decide on a career in IP?

I enjoyed my subject at university and in my DPhil and post-doc, but I wanted a new challenge. I still wanted to do something related to science – I committed a number of years of my life to it - so I didn't want to do something totally unrelated. Most of my fellow DPhil students went into software development but I wanted to do something different. I have always enjoyed writing, language and arguing persuasively. When I was looking for a new career, IP seemed a really good fit. It has the element of personal satisfaction gained from drafting patent applications and helping clients.

Describe your career progression since joining EIP.

I spent my first year as a trainee in the London office and then did the Certificate in IP Law at Queen Mary University of London, which involved working part time and doing the course part time. It was good to meet trainees from other firms and get more of an understanding of IP in general. I then took the UK and European exams and qualified as a

UK and European Patent Attorney in 2016.

Since starting at EIP, I have gained more and more experience and as I have progressed through I have taken on an increasing amount of responsibility. I now manage my own clients and supervise other people, so it's gone full circle from when I was a trainee myself.

What is your job like day-to-day?

I work generally in electronics and software, particularly in video and image processing, artificial intelligence and electronic devices. My job is quite varied on day-to-day basis. I could be meeting with inventors to discuss a new concept, drafting a patent application, providing strategic advice to a client, or preparing a response to an examination report from a patent office in one of various different jurisdictions. I've now been through the cycle of drafting patent applications and getting them successfully granted and it's very satisfying to get good results.

Since the end of January 2020 I have been on secondment at BT working on a variety of technology including telecommunications and cyber security. I'm also line managing one of our trainees, Roy Kimachia, which has been a new experience that I've really enjoyed.

What has been your most memorable outcome for a client?

The client was a small business and they had one patent application, which they had been relying on. Despite a very limited budget we managed to get it successfully granted in the US with a good scope of protection. We were able to keep the US examination process compact to keep costs to a minimum, while nevertheless achieving a commercially useful scope. The client was really pleased with the outcome.

What do you enjoy most about working at EIP?

I enjoy a number of things about working at EIP. There is a great variety of interesting, and challenging, work for different clients. I particularly enjoy the fact that so much of our work at EIP is for direct clients, where we speak to inventors and get to understand the technology at an in-depth level.

Another aspect that makes EIP a fantastic place to work is the people. Everyone is very friendly and motivated and the atmosphere is incredibly supportive.

What do you know now that you wish you knew when you started at EIP in 2012?

I found the fluctuating nature of the workload a bit of a change compared to academia at first. It can be difficult to maintain the level of work at a constant level because this

depends to some extent on factors outside your control (such as commercial concerns of a client or how quickly the patent office issues examination reports). I wish I knew when I first started that there's little point in worrying too much about this. I actually enjoy the unpredictability now - it really keeps me on my toes.