

EIP



Careers in Ideas Week 2020: Monday

To support CIPA's Careers in Ideas week initiative we are interviewing people at EIP about how they found a career in intellectual property. To start the week off, we asked Monika Rai and Takeshi Osada to share their stories.

Monika Rai, Partner & Patent Attorney

What made you train as a patent attorney?

I was at University in New Delhi at a time when scientists became very involved in discussions around patents. A WTO ruling against India on the issue of pharmaceutical product patents caused discontent while the success of Indian public sector research institutions in using traditional knowledge to revoke a US patent was celebrated. Having always loved a good argument, I found the debates surrounding patents fascinating! A career in patent law also seemed ideal as it provided an opportunity to keep a day to day connection with science outside the constraints of structured scientific education.

When did you move from India to the UK - why, and how did you find the transition?

I first came to the UK for a year in 2002-2003 to study at the London School of Economics and Political Science and then returned in 2006 as I had decided to get married to a Brit working in London! I joined the UK Patent profession in January 2007. The transition in 2002-2003 was exciting and exhilarating as the LSE was a melting pot of people and ideas from all over the world – everyone was different so no one was out of place! The transition in 2007 was much more challenging. Despite the opportunity to work with welcoming and talented colleagues, the profession at the time seemed somewhat homogenous to me and I sometimes felt very different and out of place. It took stubbornness, years of experience and the confidence of some amazing, sometimes unexpected, friends and mentors for me to eventually feel that I belonged.

What are the benefits/challenges of being a native Japanese speaker working in a UK-based business?

Perhaps every foreigner would give a similar answer to this question responding how cultural differences can be the greatest benefit and the biggest challenge when living abroad. Even after living in this country for years, I still face cultural "wonders" and "mysteries" almost every day. Why are there so many British people obsessed with Sudoku on train journeys? (And they even carry a pen for that everywhere). What is a "chip butty"? Why are the jokes in Christmas crackers so unfunny? Cultural differences could be more complex and difficult to manage in work places, but generally I try to enjoy and admire them. If everyone were the same, I cannot imagine how dull and boring life would be.

What transferable skills have you found from your previous roles in hospitality?

When I came to the UK, my dream was to run my own Japanese restaurant, somewhere outside Japan. This dream never came true, but I still worked for a few years in the hospitality business in the UK. One of my previous managers during this time taught me that when you think about hospitality, think about how you would treat a partner on your first date. I also remember how another manager explained the importance of treating not just guests, but also your colleagues with the same hospitality. In fact, we called work colleagues "internal guests" in this company. I must admit I haven't mastered that "skill" just yet, but shouldn't this attitude apply to all industries?