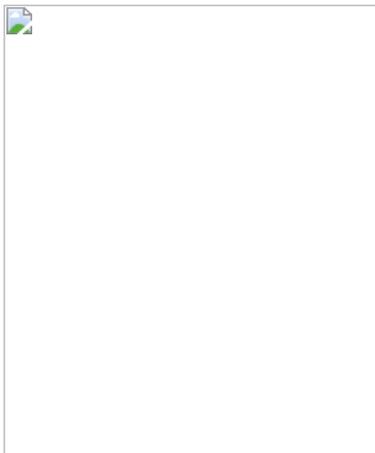


#WorldIPDay Spotlight on Lara Hammoud: Improving Access to Justice with @LawyerlyCanada

April 24, 2018 by IP Osgoode

Lara Hammoud, co-founder of [Lawyerly](#), is a B.Comm. and LL.L graduate of the University of Ottawa. Lara's career epiphany – to use her knowledge, skills, experience, time and energy on helping others – transpired as she was working as a Financial Operations Analyst at a large American bank. That year marked the beginning of a challenging, yet very exciting journey to master law and all the legal tools to serve her aspiration of making the world a better place. After graduating law school, Lara decided to continue pursuing her dream of improving access to justice by working on her new venture, "Lawyerly", an online marketplace that connects clients in need with legal professionals to provide unbundled legal services fully online.



Lara Hammoud

Lawyerly

Q1 Do you believe that it is important to have more women involved in the IP system?

It is important that every citizen gets the chance to contribute to the economy in one way or another. Diversity of opinion and thought is the cradle of creativity and innovation. The gender, race or age of the contributor is insignificant as long as their contribution furthers our goal to make a positive difference in each other's lives. This especially applies to the IP system as the shield and the protector of innovation. People from different backgrounds and experiences and of different gender see the world through different lenses. With that diversity and a dose of female sense of compassion and responsibility, women's participation in the IP system will certainly boost innovation and ensure a proper intellectual property protection.

Q2 Have you noticed a gender gap in your industry? Is the situation changing?

In my brief experience in the finance and legal world, as well as my current experience as an entrepreneur, the gender gap is definitely evident in some industries more than in others. However, I would definitely say that the tide is turning. At the Western Accelerator that I am currently a part of, female entrepreneurs are by far not a minority. As a matter of a fact, out of the group of eight start-ups, only three are led by men.

Q3 Do you think it is more difficult for female innovators and entrepreneurs to secure funding (and, therefore, be able to afford IP costs)?

Based on reports and stats, it is obvious that female-led start-ups are funded less. Now, the reasons for that may be various (e.g., not enough women venturing into the entrepreneurial route). However, there are many emerging initiatives that are addressing this specific concern. We are witnessing more and more venture capital firms, collaboration spaces, incubators and accelerators that either fully focus on female-led start-ups or make an effort to recruit more female entrepreneurs.

Q4 Are there unique challenges that female inventors and entrepreneurs face?

In my opinion, female entrepreneurs have the same opportunities as their male counterparts with respect to resources such as training, mentorships and sometimes funding. The challenges that women most often face are building their credibility and being taken seriously. In some industries, women have to prove themselves worthy to get that funding or to close that deal. In this sense, entrepreneurship is not any different than any other male dominant field.

Q5 How can the innovation and IP ecosystems become more inclusive for under-represented groups, such as female entrepreneurs?

Any change starts with a change in perceptions and values (i.e. culture). To make innovation and IP ecosystems more inclusive, the industry and the society should undergo a shift towards an impartial and more inclusive culture. The culture will then trickle into action and common practice. This is when we will drop the word "female" when we address a woman who is an entrepreneur, and the word entrepreneur will stand for both female and male entrepreneurs.

Q6 What types of assistance will benefit female entrepreneurs?

I believe that the best assistance an entrepreneur would benefit from is mentorship. Strong mentors can drag entrepreneurs out from their down-moments and help them reach their highs. As mentioned earlier, female entrepreneurs need to be resilient and must learn how to prove themselves worthy. And with a strong and trustworthy mentor – the sky is truly the limit.

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