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Protecting the persona: personality rights take center stage

As challenges like deepfakes and AI-generated likeness continue to grow globally, Ranjan Narula, Swati Dalal, and Vanshika Oberoi of RNA, Technology and IP Attorneys, discuss the evolution of personality rights in India as courts increasingly recognize the need for legal protections against the unauthorized commercial exploitation of individual identity.

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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.

Celia Lerman: Founding Partner, Lerman & Szlak

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

Celia Lerman is a Founding Partner of Lerman & Szlak helping technology companies protect their intellectual property in the US and Argentina. She is also on the faculty of the Torcuato Di Tella Law School.

What inspired your career?

I started my law career with a technical background first. I attended a technical high school in Argentina and graduated with a degree in programming; one of only five girls in a class of 30 boys at the time. I loved math, physics, and computer science (I was a total nerd and still am!), and I even competed in the high school olympiads. At the same time, I was curious about the world and wanted a career that connected me to people and ideas, which led me to study law.

In my last year of law school, I took two elective courses in intellectual property and entered a paper competition organized by the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) Argentina. I wrote about software protection under Argentine and US law, and I won the competition. The prize was a full scholarship for a master's in IP law.

That experience shaped my career and, looking back, my inspiration has always been a combination of my interest in law and my passion for science and technology.

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

The path to my current role as Partner at Lerman & Szlak has been a journey of connecting worlds. After studying my Master of Laws at Stanford University and passing the California Bar, I returned to Argentina with a clear mission: to build bridges between Latin America and the world. Since the beginning of my career at 21, I've been passionate about navigating different cultures: understanding their differences, as well as the opportunities





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that emerge when you bring them together. That dual perspective shaped how I wanted to practice law and the kind of firm I wanted to build.

When I came back, I quickly realized that I couldn't find a firm that truly aligned with my values. So, together with my business partner, we decided to create one. Lerman & Szlak was born with a vision: a female-led firm that embraces our clients' business-first mindset, is not afraid to stand behind their business goals, that operates paperless and remotely (long before the pandemic proved it possible), and even rethinks the way legal services are billed.

Building a firm that reflects these principles has been both challenging and rewarding, and it has also confirmed that innovation in law is not only possible but necessary.

If I could offer one piece of advice from my journey, it would be this: believe in yourself. There will always be challenges, moments of uncertainty, and people who question your path. But if you hold on to your vision and trust your own capacity to grow, you can build something meaningful, even if it doesn't look like the traditional model. Confidence in your own strengths is what allows you to innovate, take risks, and ultimately open doors that others might not even see.

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

One of the main challenges we faced as a growing firm was the fast turnover of junior lawyers, a reality that many firms are experiencing today. For a boutique practice, this was especially difficult, as continuity and alignment with our values are key to delivering the service our clients expect. Instead of accepting it as inevitable, we made a bold move: we created a Talent Department, even though our firm was considered "too small" for such a structure. That decision transformed the way we attract, train, and retain our team, and showed us that investing in people is the surest way to ensure stability and excellence.

Another challenge I've often heard mentioned, especially for women in leadership, is the balance between career and motherhood. I am the proud mother of four, and while some might

assume this makes professional growth harder, I see it very differently. It is not in spite of being a mom, but because I am a mom that I bring the creativity, focus, and efficiency our work requires. There is truth in the saying: "If you want something done, give it to a busy person." Parenthood sharpened my ability to prioritize and strengthened my empathy; qualities that serve me daily as a lawyer and team leader.

In both cases, the key to overcoming challenges has been refusing to see them as roadblocks. Instead, I've learned to see them as opportunities to innovate. Each challenge has been a chance to affirm our values, grow stronger, and build a firm that reflects the reality of the people who lead it and the clients we serve.

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

My greatest achievement so far has been building Lerman & Szlak from the ground up into a top-ranked boutique firm that truly reflects our values and vision. When we founded the firm, the legal market in Argentina was not accustomed to the ideas we wanted to introduce: a business-first mindset, a paperless, remote practice, female leadership, and alternative billing models. Many thought these were unrealistic or too "different" for a traditional industry. Today, those same principles define who we are and set us apart in how we serve clients across borders.

Perhaps the most meaningful part of this journey has been seeing the impact on people: our clients, our team, and even my family. Building a firm is not just about cases or deals; it is about creating an environment where others can thrive, grow, and feel proud of the work they do. Knowing that we have built something lasting, innovative, and values-driven is what I consider my greatest professional accomplishment.

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

Looking ahead, one of my biggest aspirations is to embrace technology and automation to transform the way we practice law. The legal industry is changing rapidly, and I believe that an AI-first mindset is already here. I am returning to my roots as a programmer and my interests in law and technology to implement tech-driven solutions that make our work more efficient, more creative, and, frankly, more fun. My vision is to leave the repetitive, boring tasks to automation, so that our lawyers can focus on what they do best: strategy, problem-solving, and building trust with clients.

At the same time, I want to continue strengthening our position in the market. While Lerman & Szlak is already recognized and ranked, my goal is to be the first go-to firm in Argentina

across all our practice areas. This is not about prestige for its own sake, but about setting the highest standards for our clients and our team. For this, I will keep doing what has always guided our path: investing in technology, developing talent, and staying relentlessly focused on the needs of our clients.

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

Well, first of all, more female-led firms! (Just joking... or maybe not entirely!). In truth, I believe leadership diversity can genuinely reshape the profession, and it's exciting to see more women and underrepresented voices stepping into positions of influence.

Beyond that, I would like to see a broader openness that goes beyond stereotypes. Too often, the industry relies on traditional molds of what a lawyer "should" look like, sound like, or how they should build their career. Diversity isn't just about gender, but about welcoming different career paths, cultural backgrounds, work styles, and even new ideas about what law firms should be. By challenging these stereotypes, we open the door to greater creativity, empathy, and innovation in how we serve clients.

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

I believe the empowerment of women in the IP sector can be continued and expanded through intentional networks, mentorship, and education. Building strong professional networks allows women to connect, collaborate, and gain visibility in spaces where they have historically been underrepresented. Sharing experiences, both successes and challenges, helps create a sense of community and shows that no one is navigating their career path alone.

Training and skill development are also essential. By providing targeted opportunities for women to develop expertise in IP law, leadership, and business strategy, we ensure that they have the tools and confidence to take on more complex roles and responsibilities. Education opens doors, but it's just the first step; it must be paired with active encouragement and support.

Ultimately, empowerment comes down to helping women believe in themselves. Encouragement, mentorship, and role models can make all the difference in giving women the confidence to lead, innovate, and make bold decisions. When women are supported to trust in their own capabilities, the whole IP sector benefits from greater creativity, collaboration, and ultimately, more impact.

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