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Jobs in intellectual property

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2021/22

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RUSSELL IP
DIRECTOR

Entrepreneurial patent attorney with 15+ years' experience in the IP profession. Particular expertise in high-tech (especially telecoms) and music tech patent work. Founder of Russell IP. Inventor on over a dozen granted patents from drones to dishwashers. Author and lecturer on passing the UK and European patent attorney qualifying exams. Here, Iain tells us about how his career has progressed throughout the years.

IAIN RUSSELL

2020
Director at Russell IP

2010 - 2019
Senior Associate/Partner at EIP

2006 - 2010
Patent Attorney at Brookes Batchellor

2006
IP Consultant at Innovia Technology

2004 - 2006
Trainee Patent Attorney at Venner Shipley

Not your typical patent attorney! Founded Russell IP in 2020 after 15+ years in the patent profession, mainly in private practices. Wannabe rockstar in spare time!

Why did you choose a career in the industry?
As a maths and physics undergraduate, I was initially considering a career in accountancy. My Dad had been looking into patenting at the time and suggested patents as a possible career for me. After reading the IP Careers guide in the university careers library, I felt a real draw to the profession. I really liked the idea of continuing to use my science background, which is definitely still the case. I also liked the prospect of reasonably predictable working hours, which has usually, but not always, happened. The potential remuneration was also a factor, though I'm not particularly motivated by money.

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What is a 'typical' day like for you? - be honest, too!
My typical day has changed a lot since I set up Russell IP. Some days I'll be heavily engrossed in technical work such as patent drafting, reviewing and responding to official communications from patent offices, etc, and others I'll be working on things like the Russell IP website, LinkedIn updates, and other initiatives. I also file patent applications for my own inventions. While I don't work on those every day, I can often be found scribbling down notes on new ideas or looking for possible partners to commercialise those ideas. All of that said, I started Russell IP just before the first COVID-19 restrictions came into place in the UK. I suspect a typical working day will change for me once in-person events resume and once I can meet clients and other professional contacts again in person.

What do you enjoy most about your job?
Honestly, I've always loved business development (BD). Some people equate BD with awkward networking events. I personally think of BD more as a way to meet new people with mutual interests; not about trying to sell something to a stranger. I find

I found the employee profile section of the IP Careers a great way to get a feel for the various different employers

that if you can keep in contact with people you meet professionally and do things to help others, such as introducing them to other contacts who they could benefit from knowing, BD sort of takes care of itself. I also really enjoy having creative control over my business; from what I invest time and money in to branding, new initiatives, etc.

What would you like to achieve in the future?
I'd like to cement my reputation as the go-to patent attorney for music technology inventions. I've launched a dedicated Patents Rock offering and am already lucky to be working with a number of incredible music technology companies. I'd love this to become an even bigger part of my practice.

What are the current challenges the industry faces?
As mentioned above, BD has been more of a challenge with COVID-19 restrictions in place, but videoconferencing platforms and networking platforms such as LinkedIn have helped and will continue to help. Another challenge will be around remote working vs office-based working. I've seen firms needing to become more flexible with how their staff work in this way. Some people would like to work remotely all the time, some prefer to work remotely a few days a week with other days in the office, and others prefer to be office-based. With this comes considerations around confidentiality, training, culture, and the like. It's also been suggested that AI

or automation tools could be threat to the industry. Personally, I don't see them as a threat but more as something that, if developed and used correctly, can help improve efficiency. I'm actually currently helping develop a platform that automates an aspect of patents that's very laborious, and unexciting, to do manually.

For more senior profiles:
www.ipcareers.co.uk/career-advice

Do you have any advice for anyone wanting to get into the industry?
It can be hard to get into the profession initially as competition and quality of candidates is very high. Once you're in the profession, there are lots of different career paths you can follow. It seems to be easier to find new roles and opportunities when you're in the profession compared to when you're trying to enter in the first place. I should say that I've been surprised how little some people wanting to enter the profession know about IP and, in particular, patents. While they would, of course, not be expected to be an expert, it can be helpful to be able to demonstrate more than a very basic understanding if you're looking to join the profession. I think it's also well worth looking at a range of potential employers to find those that feel like a good fit for you; that's not just a case of industry / private practice, but the ethos, focus, and vibe of different employers as this varies very widely across the profession. I found the Employee Profiles section of IP Careers a great way to get a feel for the various different employers. You can also check employer websites, social media accounts, published articles, ranking guides, etc. ●