



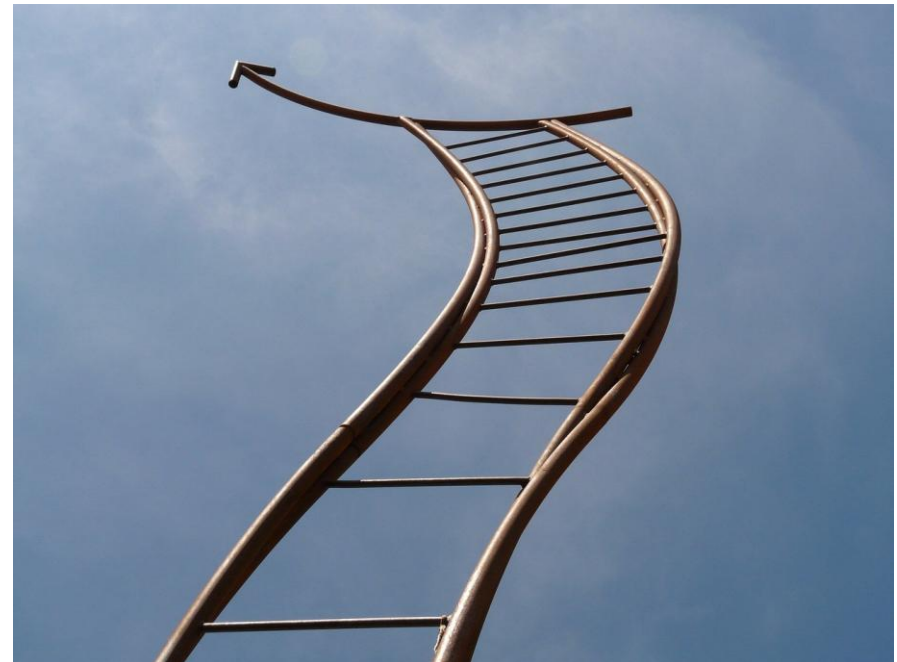
# WOMEN IN IP CAREERS GUIDANCE FOCUS GROUP

*Is there a secret to climbing the ladder?*

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# Welcome and event format

- Introduction and survey findings overview
- Small group discussions
- Collective insights and key themes
- Networking over drinks and canapes

*Our goal: practical solutions for career progression and to create meaningful connections*

# Survey outcomes - overview

- In 2025, the Women in IP Career Guidance sub-Committee conducted a survey in relation to the requirements and barriers regarding career progression.
- We heard from **147** respondents across **all professional levels**, predominantly from **England** and medium-to-large **patent and trade-mark firms**.
- The results highlight significant **workplace barriers to promotion**, with nearly half of respondents reporting **no** published criteria for advancement and limited access to sponsors or formal training.
- The findings suggest a **need for clearer frameworks** and **more equitable support structures** to foster career progression for women in IP.

# The transparency gap

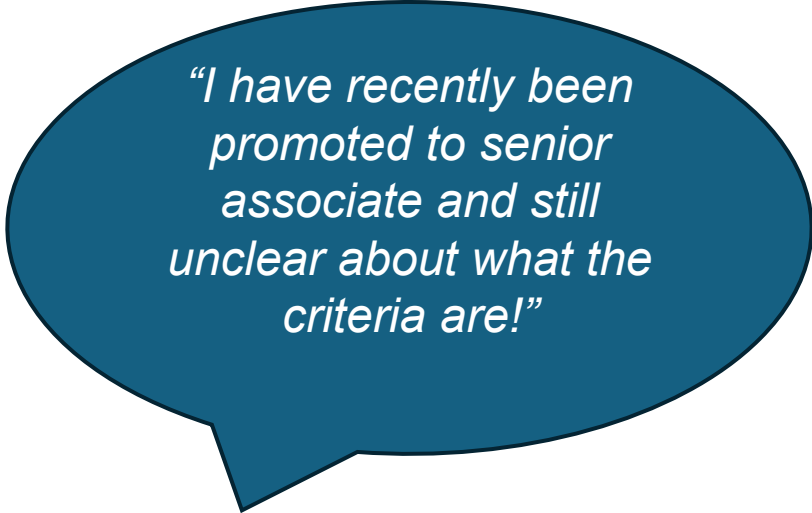
## Do you know what you need to do for promotion?

Fairly even split of respondents saying published criteria exists (46%) versus none (43%)

### **Key findings:**

General law firms were much more likely to have published criteria than patent & trade mark firms (70% vs. 48%)

Virtually all in-house respondents stated no published criteria



*“I have recently been promoted to senior associate and still unclear about what the criteria are!”*

# What it takes to level up

## Common themes across promotion levels

**Early Career:** Technical/legal knowledge + independent working

**Mid-Career:** Client management and communication skills, as well as legal and technical knowledge and independent working

**Senior Level:** 75%+ of respondents stated business development and marketing, communication and client management skills plus a business case were the required criteria

**Equity Partner:** Almost 90% of respondents stated that a business case was a key requirement

# The support structure challenge

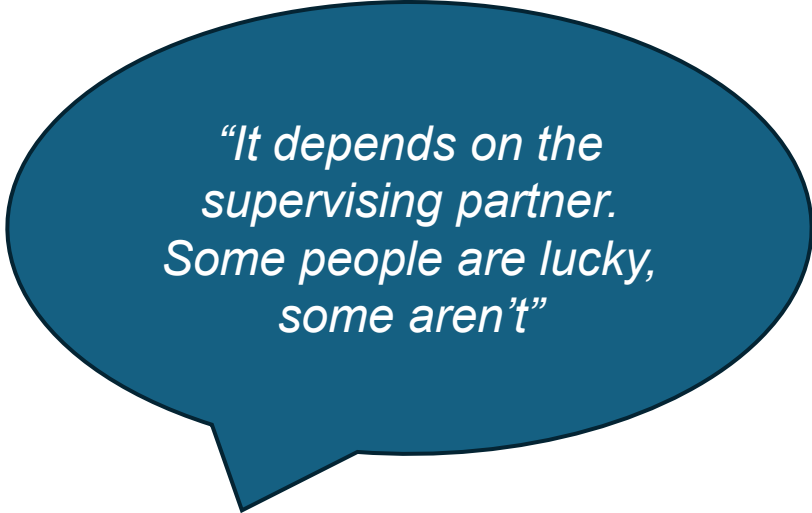
**Where is your career heading?**

**Do you get offered the following in support?**

**Sponsors:** Vast majority No (46%), although 18% of responses were Yes, for nominated sponsor

**Training:** 39% responded Yes, training to meet the criteria for promotion is offered, categorically vs. 32% saying No, none at all

**Mentoring:** 42% stated Yes, regarding mentoring schemes – with a further 11% specifying this was only available conditionally or informally



*“It depends on the supervising partner. Some people are lucky, some aren’t”*

# The career path question

## Alternative routes to success?

Just under half responded that an alternative career path (such as director or counsel) is offered (46% stating Yes vs. 33% stating No)

Respondents from general law firms much more likely to state alternative career path offered (83% vs. 40% for all other work category types)

90% of respondents answering No were from Patent & Trade Mark firms

*“Yes... but generally all just lengthening the path to equity partner. Not an independent path rather a longer route to partner and often taken up by females who had stints out”*

# The part-time question

**Can you reach the top working flexibly?**

**Is it compulsory to work full time?**

Largest proportion of responses was for No, it is not compulsory (43%) – so quite consistent across the industry

But the **reality**:

Respondents stating Yes for compulsory full time working to equity partner (5%) ALL came from Patent & Trade Mark firms

*“... observation suggests that part-time is detrimental and will definitely slow progression”*

# Apprenticeships and entry routes


## Opening the Door

### Is there an apprenticeship offered?

Almost 2/3 responded No, there was no IP apprenticeship offered (63% vs. 12% Yes)

Of the in-house group, 100% respondents answered with No

If the firm had published criteria for promotion they were also more likely to offer IP apprenticeships (approx. 20% vs. 5% for no published criteria)



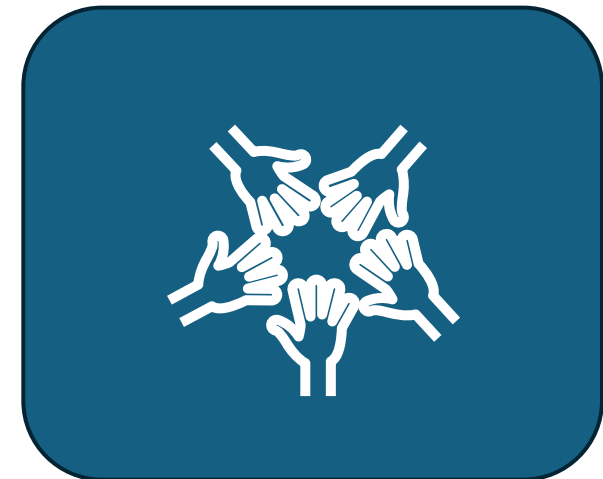
*“Only for junior level to patent paralegal”*

# Building a framework together

## Your turn: discussion themes

- 1:** Transparency – What promotion criteria should firms publish?
- 2:** Support structures – Sponsorship, mentoring, and training that actually works
- 3:** Alternative career paths – Creating valued routes beyond partnership
- 4:** Work-life integration – Making flexible working compatible with progression
- 5:** Systemic change – What would you like to see at your workplace?

**How it will work: guided group discussion** (you don't have to remember the questions!)



# Round up/Feedback

**What were the key outcomes from your table:**

- 1:** Transparency – What promotion criteria should firms publish?
- 2:** Support structures – Sponsorship, mentoring, and training that actually works
- 3:** Alternative career paths – Creating valued routes beyond partnership
- 4:** Work-life integration – Making flexible working compatible with progression
- 5:** Systemic change – What would you like to see at your workplace?

**What's the one insight or action point you're taking away from tonight's discussion?**

**What support do you need to make that happen?**



# Next steps

- The outcomes from our discussion will allow us to create a framework that can provide guidance in relation to career progression.
- Following on from this event, the Women in IP Career Guidance sub-Committee will be holding a future event this year (date TBC) to facilitate discussion on the following topics and how they impact on career progression:
  - Sabbaticals / career breaks
  - Options for extended leave
  - Pre/post-parental leave support
  - Caregivers leave and support

# Thank you - from the Women in IP Career Guidance Focus Group



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**VERONIKA BRÁZDOVÁ, PATENT ATTORNEY AT BRÁZDOVÁ IP**



**CHLOE FLOWER, PATENT ATTORNEY AT MEWBURN ELLIS**



**TRIONA DESMOND, TRADE MARK ATTORNEY AT PINSENT MASONS**



**CASSANDRA HILL, PARTNER AT MISHCON DE REYA**



**RACHEL KELLY, GROUP INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DIRECTOR  
(GLOBAL HEAD OF IP) AT JOHNSON MATTHEY**



**KATE O'ROURKE, FORMER PARTNER AT MEWBURN ELLIS**



**CHARLENE NELSON, TRADE MARK ATTORNEY AT FOOT ANSTEY**