Science Innovation – A Career as a Patent Attorney

Ellie Purnell
What is my background?

- MA (Hons) Natural Sciences (Biological) at University of Cambridge – double 1st class
- Joined Appleyard Lees after graduating in 2010
- Qualified as a chartered patent attorney (CPA) in Summer 2014
- Appleyard Lees is a northern based specialist IP firm
- 150 years old
- Covering all technical specialisms
- Medium size (30 attorneys)
What is a Patent Attorney?

• Type of lawyer
• protect inventions by writing patent applications and prosecuting before the UK and European Patent Offices
• attack patents by filing oppositions or revocation actions
• Deal with patent infringement
• Conduct strategy analyses such as freedom to operate, due diligence, and patent landscaping
• Some design, trademark and copyright work
Requirements to become a patent attorney

• A science/engineering degree – at least a 2:1 often a 1st
• Likely at least a masters degree, often a PhD
• Industry experience is helpful, especially from a large R+D company in your field
• Language skills are sought after – german/french/japanese/mandarin
• Writing skills are sought after – English/Lit qualifications, societies
How to get a trainee position

• Read a copy of the inside careers guide to being a patent attorney
• Prepare a CV and covering letter – get different people to check it
• Ask around for work experience, uncommon but you may be lucky
• Look on the CIPA website for jobs as well as firm websites
• Usually no restriction on hiring, as and when
• Send out speculative applications to HR and the relevant partner of firms
Route to Qualification

• There are a lot of exams to pass
• Within first year – take 5 foundation UK exams/take a year long course
• Within second to third years – take 4 advanced UK exams and 1 pre-European exam
• Within third to fourth year – take 4 European exams
• Become UK qualified (CPA) and European qualified (EPA) at 4-7 years.
Day to Day job as a trainee

• Usually ‘belong’ to a certain partner who trains you
• Will not be asked to make coffee or photocopy!
• Will be thrown in at the deep end with every day tasks for a mixture of clients
• May be asked to take new enquiry calls/meetings
• Will be your partner’s right hand man – checking emails and managing deadlines when they are away, generally supporting them
• Will be expected to learn on the job and manage own study/attendance of courses/entry for exams
Career progression

• Trainee (1-7 years) ~ £25-50k
• Associate (next 2-4 years) ~ £50-70k
• Senior Associate (next 2-4 years) ~ £70-90k
• Partner ~ £90-£300k
• Salary increases fairly quickly when training in line with the exams
• Bonuses are also available
Other Perks of the Job

• Professional job yet rarely work outside 9-5 hours
• Varied and stimulating
• Travel (Germany, USA, Canada, Australia, Japan, China, Korea, Malaysia etc)
• Conferences and events
• Company cars/phones are common
• No lab work (!)
Ellie Purnell
Ellie.purnell@appleyardlees.com
www.appleyardlees.com