

# The Patent Lawyer

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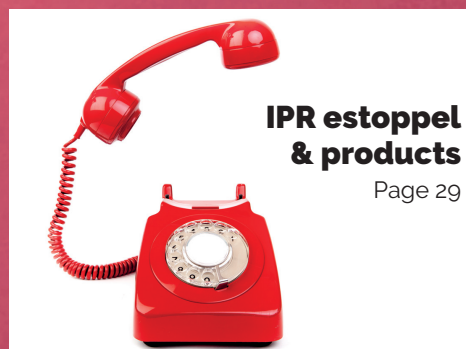
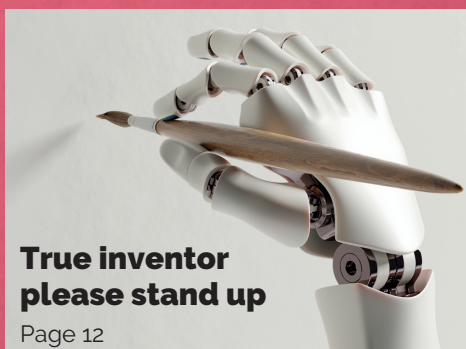
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## The power of paralegals post-pandemic

  
IP TrendMonitor

*The Patent Lawyer* investigates the changing legal landscape that has resulted in a shift in the function of paralegals, discovering how one particular solutions provider is opening the door to new opportunities for leveling up in the patent space.



# The power of paralegals post-pandemic

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**W**hile the pandemic brought little to be thankful for, we can be grateful for the evolution that it has encouraged for the role of the paralegal. With the necessity to work remotely thrust upon the world, the ways of working were forced to change too. The rapid reliance on technology and the need for adaptation not only highlighted the value of paralegals but exacerbated it through the adapted role that became – given the space to use their minds, the modern-day paralegal has far surpassed the admin role it once was.

A 2019 Annual Insight Report produced by Totally Legal “indicate[d] a gradually rising number of career Paralegals taking on the fee earning work traditionally reserved for [Attorneys] [...]. These professionals aren’t using the role as a stepping-stone to qualification or as a means of gaining experience but are instead choosing to carve out long-term Paralegal careers.”<sup>1</sup> The advantages of this adaptation are obvious, and just one of the many factors demanding recognition and respect for paralegals in the space.

In addition to the changes brought by the need for remote working, many European IP firms are struggling to hire and retain paralegal talent which is raising important questions about workplace culture and opportunities in the industry. Attitudes from the next generation entering the workforce – Gen Z – are also influencing workplace culture which is having a ripple effect on how firms are adapting their way of working, not just for new hires but throughout the firm with some going to exceptional lengths to show recognition for their paralegals including offering increased salaries, broader opportunities, and equity partnerships to attract and retain talent, something that many firms are finding more and more challenging. If handled correctly, IP firms can leverage this influence to better their services and client experiences, as well as to retain highly skilled and experienced support staff.

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Influenced by both the pandemic and Gen Z’s push for an equal and prosperous work culture<sup>2</sup>, there has been a visible shift in expectations for firms to up their game when it comes to equality and diversity in the workplace (In a 2023 report conducted by ThoughtExchange, amongst a study group of 600 Gen Z members, “71% of respondents specifically look for company diversity when applying for jobs.”<sup>3</sup>), as well as to provide opportunities and an environment in which professionals of all levels can thrive. We see that corporates are pushing their law firms to do better, and forcing the needle by voting with their feet by selecting firms that conform to shared values.

Additionally, the recent introduction of the European patent administration certificate (EPAC), issued by the European Patent Office, supports the evolution of the role of paralegals, patent administrators, and formalities officers. The qualification, obtained via exam, demonstrates the “required knowledge and skills to deal independently and autonomously with the procedures associated with the filing, prosecution, grant and maintenance of European and international patent applications before the EPO, as well as post-grant procedures.”<sup>4</sup> The creation of this qualification, and the obtention of it, is commanding the deserved value recognition from law firms for their staff members in these relevant roles.

At a glance, the evolution of the paralegal role has an outlook of positivity for the IP industry, with an influenced workforce dedicated to leveraging their skill sets to benefit both their employers and clients. However, in recent years, the race to the bottom has seen an attempted shift to cut out legal professionals, threatening roles including paralegal. Bypassing the legal professional doesn’t just result in the lost value found in the lived and earned experiences that have always defined the success of the profession, the provided service can also fall short when it comes to strength, interpretation, and client interaction. This pursuit

to save on margins is leading to a compromise in quality and customer experience, resulting in a trajectory of dissatisfaction.

### So, how can the industry protect and leverage the value of the modern-day paralegal?

It is well known that the implementation of service provider solutions can benefit a firm's way of working, ultimately benefiting the end client. Understandably, some in positions such as paralegal feel threatened by the adoption of service provider solutions; with workloads reduced by automation, the need for support staff can be reduced. As suggested by Michele Vrouvas on the topic of the evolving job role, "[t]he paralegal job description changed when law firms realized they could use non-lawyer professionals to cut costs and boost profits."<sup>6</sup>

However, one recent entrant to the service provider space is determined to change this narrative, with a mission statement to "keep IP professionals at the heart of the industry."

Whether returned to the office, hybrid, or working remotely, empowering paralegals with solutions that streamline their workflows for maximum efficiency frees up time for them to delve deeper into complex legal analysis and enhance client support, including facilitating pro-

active interactions, providing a more comprehensive service to better client satisfaction.

Backed by a team of professionals with over 100 years of combined experience in the IP field, iPify is opening up the opportunity for paralegals to take on larger responsibilities and to explore and provide better outcomes for their clients.

iPify's solutions help to streamline repetitive tasks without compromising on quality to redirect resources toward improving the overall customer experience while providing paralegals with a greater purpose. As a result of paralegals leveraging these solutions to level up, clients, in turn, benefit from faster turnaround times, reduced risk, and a heightened personalized service that only a human-driven legal team can provide.

Lesley Fenton, IP Administration Manager of Simmons & Simmons LLP and user of the iPify platform, stated:

"There are many validation services out there, each with varying prices and offerings, but I can certainly recommend iPify for its user-friendly online platform and comprehensive legal database which makes checking current validation requirements simple. But this is not why we have chosen iPify as our provider; we have partnered with them due to the customer experience. From the get-go,

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**By investing in solutions that empower support staff, IP firms demonstrate the value they place on the paralegal position while providing room for growth and space to make a difference.**

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iPify evaluated our needs and requirements for our workflows and helped us tailor their platform accordingly to maximize our output. They actively seek feedback on user experience and make changes to their platform appropriately. We value iPify's customer service team who check in on us to ensure everything is working well and we appreciate being able to contact them directly through their live chat (and converse with an actual person!) to receive immediate assistance. We have worked with many big providers where we, the client, are only a tiny fish in their sea, but working with iPify feels like working with a family-owned business where we are valued regardless of our size. Our relationship with iPify continues to be friendly and personalized to our firm's needs."

iPify offers the bridge to provide teams with an efficient solution for all work structures, as well as being an effective tool for integrating teams, training new staff, and even incorporating workflows during or after acquisition. By prepping IP professionals with comprehensive solutions, IP firms can provide a supportive and prosperous working environment that will not only benefit the firm and its staff directly, but also the clients as a byproduct. This goes hand in hand with supporting the evolved expectations of the workforce. By investing in solutions that empower support staff, IP firms demonstrate the value they place on the paralegal position while providing room for growth and space to make a difference, equating in that desired sense of purpose. "Companies will need to adapt their policies, processes, and technologies in order to recruit and retain the best new talent – but those who invest [...] will be rewarded with long-term, dedicated employees who will hold them accountable and keep them relevant."<sup>2</sup>

## A glimpse into iPify's offering

On the face of it, iPify offers two main services: European patent validation services coordinated by their team of industry experts in collaboration with prestigious IP law firms across Europe, including instant quotes backed by unique, expert technology to compare validation with unitary effect; and patent annuities services with a digitized "quote to instruct" process for coordinated renewals - technology set to revolutionize the process for the industry with impactful benefits for both teams and margins. The software offering is made up of a white-label quoting engine designed to allow instant generation of quotes for PCT national and regional phase entries, exclusively using your network of foreign

- [1] Ethan Cumming (2020), The Paralegal Profession in 2020, <https://www.totallylegal.com/article/the-paralegal-profession-in-2020>
- [2] Ali Francis (2022), Gen Z: The workers who want it all, <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20220613-gen-z-the-workers-who-want-it-all>
- [3] ThoughtExchange (2023), Gen Z at Work, <https://thoughtexchange.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/guide-te-corp-gen-z-at-work-2023.pdf>
- [4] <https://www.epo.org/en/learning/professional-hub/epac-european-patent-administration-certification>
- [5] Michele Vrouvas, How the Job Description of the Paralegal Has Changed Over the Last Twenty Years, <https://work.chron.com/job-description-paralegal-changed-over-last-twenty-years-20096.html>
- [6] Ritu Kaushal (2024), Evolution of Paralegal and its Impact on the Legal Industry, <https://www.cogneesol.com/blog/evolution-of-paralegal/>

associates and the fees they apply to your firm. Also offered is a standalone web tool allowing for unitary patent/traditional validations cost comparison to support client decision-making. This is another example of iPify's respect for business relationships, as its solutions enhance rather than displace law firms' practices.

But these offerings encompass much more than initially meets the eye.

Led by the vision to *build the ultimate platform for cohesion in the IP industry*, and supported by their core values ('Your trusted, long-term partner,' 'recognizing and supporting, not disrupting,' and 'empowering all professionals') iPify is committing itself as an ally to professionals in the IP community, taking pride in offering exceptional customer service with a promise to avoid compromise on attention to detail or quality.

Additionally, iPify respects diverse ways of working, offering completely customizable solutions built with the client's requirements at the core to support new and existing workflows. iPify's solutions are not designed as a replacement for IPMS, instead, they can be connected to and integrated with IPMS to sync with your existing way of working. Their platform eliminates the traditionally rigid and closed processes, enabling IP professionals to establish their own ecosystem within. Their services and software can be tweaked or be entirely customized based on analysis from mapping a firm's entire process, then remapping with a new and improved process executing iPify's tailored solutions. To assist, their internal team of experts will provide conduct of change consultancy to ensure a fluid transition with support on hand as and when required throughout the partnership.

The team's way of working means they constantly predict and override concerns before they become a barrier to their clients, and they track software usage trends to optimize and improve the platform, demonstrating assurance in providing the needed solutions to their clients.

iPify's focus is centered around empowering IP professionals across the board, specifically acknowledging paralegals' contribution to the industry and supporting them to evolve. In a recent article, Ritu Kaushal, Legal Associate and Trainer at Cogneesol Inc., stated, "In the landscape changes constantly, the paralegal role will continue to evolve. Not only legal firms but paralegals must embrace this change, continually learning and adapting to meet the demands of the industry. By doing so, [they] will be well-positioned to contribute to the ongoing success of their legal firms and clients."<sup>6</sup>

Adopting the very same notion, iPify's solution is not designed to replace paralegals, but actively enable their growth to thrive in an era where purpose and innovation are key to success.

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