



Next Gen



This week's Q&A with

Ben Hitchens

***Ben Hitchens**, a London-based Partner and intellectual property disputes lawyer at Locke Lord, works with clients principally in the fields of tech, luxury goods and social media within a digital/online context. Much of his work is focused on addressing infringements of clients' brands, designs and creative works (including software), and he strategically advises clients to proactively secure IP protection and minimize the risk of future conflict. He works regularly with startups, helping them overcome potential conflicts cost-effectively and practically, mindful of the financial pressures at the start of their life cycles.*



More About Ben

What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career?

I lost my job as a junior associate during the nadir of the financial crisis in 2009, which was a significant speed bump! I didn't realise it at the time, but it was actually a blessing in disguise as it forced me to refocus my energy on IP law and motivated me to ensure it would never happen again. With the support of my (now) wife, I went back to university for a year to obtain a master's in IP law, which differentiated me from the competition in the challenging job market. After a chance introduction to London Partner John Olsen, the rest was history. The lessons I learned from the experience were to never give up, remain positive and stay focused on the task at hand. Those mantras have continued to serve me well to this day!

Tell us about the most interesting or significant matter you've worked on in your career.

I was Batman's lawyer. He used to get into all sorts of scrapes, so it was a real challenge keeping him out of trouble (and protecting his secret identity).

How did you know that you wanted to practice law? // What inspired you to become a lawyer?

I was inspired to practice law by Sandy Cohen, a principled public prosecutor who later established his own firm in Orange County. Sandy's commitment to social justice and fairness set me along the path to law. The lack of lucrative career options for a history graduate specializing in revolutionary Russia was also influential.

What do you do to give back to the community?

Since 2005, I have been a trustee of the Rafiki Thabo Foundation, a charity that provides financial support to students in secondary and tertiary education in Kenya, Uganda and Lesotho. Last November, we hosted our inaugural fundraising ball, with Formula 1 driver Mark Webber serving as our guest speaker. We managed to attract some of the great and the good from the city, raising over £60,000 in the process. The money has allowed us to continue our feeding programme in Uganda, increase the number of sponsored students in Kenya and improve the infrastructure of a school in Lesotho. I also mentor law students at the University of Law and am a visiting lecturer (along with London Partner Sean Donovan-Smith) on the University of Chicago Booth School of Business Executive MBA Program.

What do you do to relax and reset after a long week?

It sounds clichéd, but the best tonic to a stressful week is to spend quality time with my wife and son. Leo is almost 2 and is such a powerful and fun personality — 10 minutes in the garden with him kicking a football and all my work-based woes are gone.

What would be your fantasy career if you weren't a lawyer?

I would like to have had the chance to wear the cape (see q. 2 above). Other than that, I would have been intrigued and frustrated in equal measure by a career in politics...



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