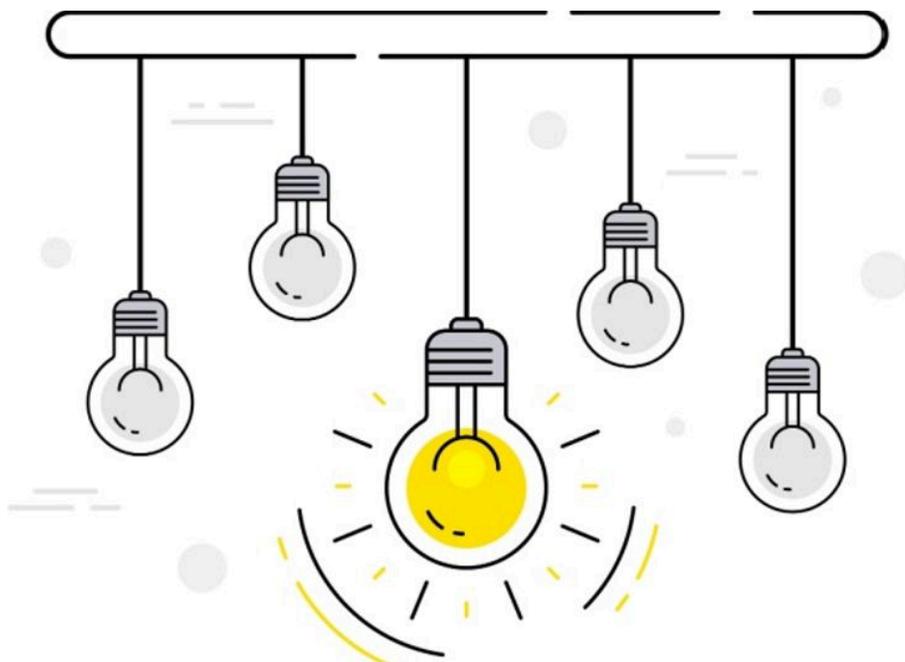


How female executives turn patents into business powerhouses

Angela Morris

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In 2025, IAM's Women in IP series spotlighted how leading female executives are redefining the role of intellectual property in business. From leveraging patents as strategic growth engines to mastering complex negotiations and fostering inclusive leadership, their insights reveal that IP success hinges on both technical expertise and human connection.

This round-up distills three of the year's most powerful lessons on building value, shaping relationships and driving innovation through diversity and vision.

First, a review of the high-level executives we featured in Women in IP articles this year:

1. **January:** **Kathi Vidal**, partner in Winston & Strawn, former director of the US Patent and Trademark Office
2. **February:** **Renee Brown**, head of intellectual property, LinkedIn

3. **March:** Jane Bu, chief licensing officer, Via Licensing Alliance
4. **April:** Susanna Martikainen, chief licensing officer for wireless technologies, Nokia Technology Standards
5. **May:** Sonja London, IP strategy consultant, former president of the Licensing Executives Society International
6. **June:** Women in IP Live panel, IPBC Global 2025, San Francisco
7. **July:** Shuang Cheng, patent licensing director, Xiaomi
8. **August:** Diana Pani, wireless engineer at InterDigital, chairwoman of RAN2 at the 3rd Generation Partnership Project
9. **September:** Lorie Goins, licensing executive at Intellectual Ventures
10. **October:** Tarianna Stewart, technology licensing and business development manager of physical sciences, quantum and radiology, New York University Langone Health and the New York University Office of Technology Opportunities and Ventures
11. **November:** Women in IP Live panel, IPBC Asia 2025, Tokyo

Without further delay, here are three insightful takeaways from the series in 2025.

IP as a strategic business driver

Across the profiles, executives emphasise that intellectual property is not just a legal function but a core business asset that drives revenue, competitive advantage and innovation. Whether through licensing programmes at Nokia and Xiaomi or technology transfer at NYU, these women portray IP strategy as deeply integrated with corporate goals and market positioning.

The message is clear: companies that treat IP as a value engine rather than a cost centre can unlock growth opportunities and shape industry standards.

Renee Brown, head of intellectual property at LinkedIn, highlighted how intellectual property serves as a critical competitive advantage for the social media company, particularly through patents that complement Microsoft's broader portfolio and trademarks that protect its billion-dollar brand. She explained that aligning IP strategy with product development ensures that her company safeguards innovations such as LinkedIn's recruiter tools while maintaining flexibility for future growth. Brown also emphasised that trademark enforcement must reflect LinkedIn's brand personality, adopting a nuanced approach that protects rights without alienating users.

Not only private companies, but also universities must view intellectual property as a "value engine" rather than a cost centre to sustain research and drive impact, Tarianna Stewart told us. At New York University Langone Health and the New York University Office of Technology Opportunities and Ventures, she explained, her team assesses every patent for its ability to map to a product, platform or negotiation

lever, ensuring that IP strategy aligns with commercialisation goals and societal benefit. Stewart highlighted that quality, not quantity, of patents is critical. The reason? Strong portfolios attract industry-sponsored research, generate licensing revenue and ultimately translate taxpayer-funded innovations into real-world solutions.

Indeed, concern over IP should rise to the nation-state level, considering how tightly that innovation strategy is linked to national competitiveness, urged former USPTO Director Kathi Vidal. She argued that a strong IP ecosystem is critical not only for economic growth but also for addressing global challenges such as pandemics and climate crises. Vidal emphasised proactive engagement across government agencies and international forums to ensure that policies, particularly around AI and standard-essential patents, support US leadership in technology rather than create disadvantages for domestic innovators.

Negotiation mastery and relationship building

A recurring insight is that successful IP monetisation depends on more than technical knowledge. It requires strong negotiation skills and trust-based relationships. Leaders like Jane Bu and Shuang Cheng stress the importance of cultural sensitivity, resilience and timing (“deal windows”) in cross-border licensing talks. The series repeatedly shows that effective negotiators combine commercial acumen with empathy, the key to creating collaborative, long-term partnerships.

Bu, chief licensing officer, Via Licensing Alliance, underscored that successful licensing negotiations hinge on trust and understanding rather than confrontation. She advised treating every question from a licensee as an opportunity to build rapport, rather than dismissing it as a delaying tactic. By answering questions thoroughly and respectfully, negotiators can foster transparency and trust, which are essential for moving deals forward. Bu also introduced the concept of the “deal window” – a critical period when conditions align for closing an agreement – and stressed the importance of acting decisively when that window opens.

Beyond timing, Bu emphasised the power of curiosity and cultural sensitivity in negotiations. Her mantra is simple: ask “why” to uncover the underlying reasons behind a counterparty’s position, which often reveals hidden priorities, opening paths to compromise. She also highlighted the importance of informal relationship-building, such as sharing meals during in-person meetings, to bridge cultural divides and create goodwill. For Bu, resilience is key. She advises never taking “no” as final and celebrating incremental progress as a win. After all, negotiations are ultimately about crafting solutions that satisfy both sides and sustain long-term partnerships.

Effective negotiations require flexibility, creativity and a focus on uncovering shared value rather than confrontation, stated Cheng, patent licensing director at Xiaomi. She described how Xiaomi successfully navigated complex, multi-party deals by

maintaining openness and adapting strategies to changing circumstances, such as regulatory shifts. Cheng advised negotiators to keep communication channels open even after setbacks, view a “no” as an opportunity to explore underlying needs, and prioritise trust-building, especially in cross-border contexts, through transparency and as much in-person engagement as possible.

Diversity, leadership and the human element

Many executives highlight the role of diversity and inclusive leadership in building high-performing IP teams and advancing innovation. The articles underscore that psychological safety, mentorship and varied perspectives are essential for success. This theme also touches on gender dynamics in the profession, encouraging women to assert themselves, occupy space and lead with confidence in traditionally male-dominated environments.

Sonja London, former LESI president, championed the importance of diversity and authenticity in leadership, urging female IP professionals to drive their own development actively rather than waiting for opportunities to appear. She argued that true diversity goes beyond gender or race, encompassing varied thinking styles, personalities and backgrounds to improve problem-solving and corporate performance. London also highlighted the role of professional networks like LESI in fostering visibility and recognition, noting that speaking at international conferences and sharing expertise can accelerate career growth. Her advice to women leaders: stay authentic, embrace unconventional paths and leverage global networks to build influence and impact.

The Women in IP series has broken out into the real world at IAM’s IPBC-branded events. DEI is one of many leadership topics that panellists covered this year.

For example, at IPBC Global in San Francisco in June, Eeva Hakoranta, former chief licensing officer of InterDigital, emphasised that psychological safety and empathy are essential for building high-performing IP teams, enabling trust and risk-taking. During the same panel, Ashleigh Landis highlighted the importance of internal alignment and relationship-building with business teams as a foundation for successful negotiations and leadership.

At IPBC Asia in Tokyo in November, Lynne Browne, of counsel at Greenblum & Bernstein and former administrative patent judge at the USPTO’s Patent Trial and Appeal Board, urged women to assert their career goals clearly and view unexpected changes as opportunities rather than roadblocks. Katie O’Sullivan, senior corporate counsel of US litigation at Renesas Electronics, stressed self-advocacy and confidence, noting that women must believe in their expertise and actively push for resources and recognition.

As 2025’s Women in IP series revealed, intellectual property is far more than a legal safeguard. It is a strategic engine for growth, a platform for skilled negotiation and a

catalyst for inclusive leadership. These conversations underscore that success in IP today demands both technical excellence and human insight.

In 2026, we look forward to continuing this dialogue and uncovering fresh strategies from female leaders shaping the future of IP. If you are a licensing executive ready to share your story, please email angela.morris@lbresearch.com.



Angela Morris

Deputy editor

IAM

angela.morris@lbresearch.com