



Focus on the Future

Guest Predictions: Carol Beckham

Guest Predictions is a regular feature in which we ask leaders in a number of professions a set of questions that affect us all.

Carol Beckham,
President – Beckham Intellectual Asset Management, LLC.

Carol Beckham has 40 years in the telecommunications business at both BellSouth and AT&T. In the early '90s, Ms. Beckham worked with the BellSouth legal department to create and implement strategic intellectual property policies throughout the Corporation and its affiliate companies. In 1998, she was named Vice President of the BellSouth Intellectual Property Marketing and Management Corporations and after AT&T's acquisition of BellSouth, Ms. Beckham was named AVP of Strategic Intellectual Property Business Development. In January 2011, Ms. Beckham retired from AT&T and set up her own consulting practice. Recently she became a TRG Affiliate.

Q: What changes in your professional environment in the past 3-5 years have you found to be the most beneficial?

A: After AT&T's acquisition of BellSouth, managing and growing the intellectual property portfolio of the combined companies became quite the challenge. The companies operated differently and managed their IP differently. Implementing a common process and finding solutions that worked to increase our IP revenue and patent portfolio were the most rewarding and beneficial.

Q: What changes have been the most troubling to you?

A: The dramatic downturn in our economy has stifled innovation in our country in many ways. Companies have not been able to put dollars into innovation at the rate previously done and patent issuances have slowed down. The net is that you have to work smarter and your priorities have to be dead on. If companies don't have a clear strategic direction, they will flounder.

Q: How will globalization affect your professional area in the near term?

A: In the world of Intellectual Property, both China and India have been a challenge. The Intellectual Property laws in those countries are different and enforcement is sporadic. The good news is that some strides have been made to improve the laws and enforcement globally but much more work needs to be done to bridge that gap.

Q: What significant challenges might be anticipated in your professional area in the next few years?

A: I believe that innovation is one of the keys to emerging from the recession. Each company has innovators in every area of their business. Extracting those significant innovations and

leveraging them will be the key to how successful companies will become and how successful we are as a nation. When I talk with innovators I am amazed at some of the things they are creating. In the world of innovation we have barely scratched the surface and I feel both challenged and hopeful.

Q: What are the greatest challenges confronting young professionals in Western culture today?

A: The good news is that the young professionals that are coming into the intellectual property business are very educated, many having both an MBA and a law degree. The challenge is that when I started in the business it was common to stay in one place and work your way up and that is rare today. Networking and social interaction in the field is a must today to gain the reputation needed to build a successful career in intellectual property.