

# TOMORROW'S LEGAL WORLD, TODAY

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By Michael Heron

At the Milan offices of Eversheds Sutherland, Iberian lawyer interviewed **Charlotte Walker-Osborn** (pictured), International head of the technology sector and international head of artificial intelligence. The lawyer shared with us her career to date, spanning 23 years.

Walker-Osborn is a selfconfessed and proud tech geek. This is something valued most by her clients and colleagues. She is a TMT lawyer through and through, at the forefront of innovation. She is arguably leading the way in AI law, having worked on her first artificial intelligence related matter six years ago.

**You have been at Eversheds Sutherland for most of your career, but what initially attracted you to dedicate your practice to the TMT area?**

When I had settled on becoming a lawyer, I chose to train at a good criminal law firm. However, whilst rotating seats, I found myself relishing contractual law (which I had also loved at university) and intellectual property law, especially where it related to technology. I think that interest in technology is in my family blood. My dad used to code simple computer games on our Spectrum with me when I was young. As I was graduating from law-school, my eldest brother had just taught himself to code and was rising up the ranks of programming within a bank. Upon qualification, it was clear to me I wanted to be a technology lawyer and the dotcom boom was growing exponentially. My mentor and boss at that firm, Robert, was a phenomenal teacher.

**What attracted you to Eversheds?**

As the "dot-com bubble" was growing, legacy Eversheds were looking for good young lawyers who were specialised in technology (of which there were not many). I love all things technology and I've been working in the TMT space as a specialist tech lawyer for nearly 24 years. I often use this phrase when I introduce myself within a work context: "if it's not technology, I'm not interested". Whilst that's not strictly true (I like many facets of being a lawyer including management, negotiation, coaching, looking after clients and much more) but it is tech that is my core focus from a technical standpoint, across a number of sectors. Clients call me a tech geek, and I take that as a compliment.

**I am sure that gives you a lot of credibility with your clients, because you can't fake passion, so you must get genuinely excited when you talk with them about your work...**

Yes. I love helping clients launch new products or to deliver contractual agreements in the tech space which will derive real benefit for all companies within the ecosystem and hopefully for wider stakeholders too. I was representing Eversheds Sutherland at London Tech Week recently and I heard a tech founder say: "I can't wait to leave my current job when my business takes off." At that moment, I thought to myself how lucky I am, as I have always loved being a technology lawyer.

**Correct me if I'm wrong, but I saw that you did a secondment early on in your career at Cisco? What was that like?**

Amazing; literally the making of me as a tech lawyer and frankly as a lawyer overall. Apologies to Eversheds Sutherland (she says jokingly, editor's note), but I did consider whether I should be applying to work at Cisco after that secondment! I didn't apply but they were fantastic to work for. That was where I learned about technology and data from a practical viewpoint in context, I had a baptism of fire there learning technology acronyms/jargon, and I spent a lot of time reading about how technology worked.

**When I interview GCs, they always tell me that when they've worked with a lawyer who has either been on a secondment or worked inhouse, it gives them a lot of comfort that they understand their role and business in more depth...**

That resonates with me. I think that while my firm has a reputation for producing business savvy lawyers, Cisco is where I learned to really communicate complex legal concepts as well as document technology "deals" in a simple and plain English no nonsense manner (albeit some of that is inherent in my personality). For us, as a firm, we have had a lot of good feedback from our clients who work with our lawyers who have inhouse experience from secondments. In the UK, for example, we seek to set up all or most of our lawyers on secondment within the first few years of their career.

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