

Kate Barrett

Co-founder of Markster

Diana Lee, sat down with Kate Barrett, co-founder of Markster.

Kate is an experienced intellectual property lawyer and co-founder of Markster - an alternative legal service provider that makes trade marks easy. Markster combines legal excellence and expertise with a purpose-built user-friendly platform to deliver trade mark legal services in a revolutionary way. Kate's passions include all things IP, legal tech, innovation and helping in-house legal counsel better manage their intellectual property portfolios.

Kate is admitted with the High Court of Australia and Supreme Court of Queensland, and has experience working in a top-tier law firm and in-house for an international technology company. Kate holds a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Economics from the University of Queensland.

DIANA LEE: What does a typical day look like for you?

KATE BARRETT: Since we started Markster, I've found each day has been very different. When you start your own business, you constantly discover new challenges and opportunities. I tend to start each day with a strong coffee and a priority list of things that need to get done, but other important things tend to pop up along the way.

In the early days when we were starting Markster, the days were filled with interviewing potential customers about their trade marks and pain points and building, iterating and re-iterating the Markster platform based on this feedback. We are still in the early stages of our start-up journey, but now that we have several foundation clients, more time is spent assisting these clients with and advising them on their trade marks.

Other things that I might do during the day when working on Markster include arranging meetings with clients and potential clients, drafting pitches and proposals, business



admin (super fun!), developing and implementing strategies for the business, talking with our software engineer Adam to further improve the Markster platform, learning about the business environment in which we operate, and connecting and networking with people in the industry.

LEE: Did you always want this job? If so, what did you do to position yourself to get it? If not, how did your career path lead you here?

BARRETT: I've always wanted to be a lawyer. There is an old family video of my mum filming my little brother and in the background I can be heard proudly telling my grandparents "when I grow up I'm going to be a lawyer". However, I never imagined I'd be running my own legal practice or delving into the legal tech space.

I started out my legal career as a graduate in a mid-tier firm in Brisbane. I had three rotations -

banking and finance, insurance and construction law. I got my choice at the end of my grad year and settled in the insurance practice, but I knew it wasn't for me long-term. So, when a chance came up to go in-house at an international technology company called Megaport, I took it. I remember at the time, most people I spoke to told me that it was too early for me to go in-house. I didn't know enough. I didn't have enough legal skills. But I've never been a big believer in listening to other people when they tell you that you can't do something. I think I took it as a personal challenge. And I'm so glad I did.

Making the move in-house changed my life. It opened my eyes to a whole new career path that I never knew about. I met so many amazing people, working closely with the other lawyers in my team, but also people in the business – the marketing team, sales team and software engineers, people I still consider close friends. It was in this role I was exposed to intellectual property, charged with managing the company's IP portfolio, which I really enjoyed. This was when I fell in love with IP and knew this was the area I wanted to specialise in. I eventually went back to a firm to deepen my skillset and increase my knowledge in this area.

Both these experiences led me to co-found Markster. Working on the client side, I understood the pain-points of managing a large intellectual property portfolio and the problems in-house counsel face. While my experience on the external counsel side taught me the intricacies of intellectual property law and the trade mark process, but also how administrative, inefficient and costly trade mark work can be without the use of technology. I thought there had to be a better way. And so, Markster was born.

LEE: How do you unplug from work?

BARRETT: My partner and I temporarily moved to the Gold Coast last year. It was only meant to be for a few months, but then

Covid-19 hit, and we have been here ever since. Being so close to the beach allows me to escape from my desk, take the dogs for a walk and reset. It is great way to start or finish the day. I have also recently taken up surfing, which is an amazing way to unplug. I am an absolute beginner, but it is so much fun! There is something very grounding about being in the ocean. You have no choice but to be in the moment, or you'll soon find yourself getting smacked in the face by a wave.

LEE: If you could have dinner with any woman – living or passed, real or fictional, who would it be and why?

BARRETT: The women on my dinner list would include Gloria Steinem, AOC, Nina Simone, RBG, Emma Watson, Malala Yousafzai, Amal Clooney, but at the top of the list would honestly just be my mum. Family is the most important thing to me and life is so short. It's important to spend time with those who mean the most to you. An inspiring woman in her own right, as a single mum who worked hard to raise two kids, my mother has always supported me, encouraged me and believed in me. I credit her with a lot of the traits that have enabled me to be where I am today. Michelle Obama would definitely be a close second though...

LEE: The 2021 International Women's Day campaign theme is #ChooseToChallenge. What does this mean to you and how would you suggest this is implemented in our readers' work and personal lives?

BARRETT: #ChooseToChallenge is such an important theme. The legal industry in Australia still has a long way to go to achieve true gender equality, from the lack of women representation in partnership or at the Bar, to the expectation that women will leave their careers to go and become mothers, to the inappropriate comments made in meetings or over afterwork drinks, to the issues of sexual harassment and discrimination faced by women in our industry every day. It's important that people choose

to challenge the status quo of inequality at whatever level they feel comfortable, whether that is calling someone out for a sexist joke, speaking up when they see gender bias or discrimination at play, or celebrating the achievements of the women in their lives loudly and proudly.

LEE: What advice would you give to the next generation of female leaders in the industry?

BARRETT: Believe in yourself. If someone says you can't or shouldn't do something, respectfully listen to them (if you think they have your best interest at heart). But if you don't agree, back yourself and do it anyway.