

## 2012 WEST Leadership Awardee



Cynthia Gilbert

Technologist and Patent Attorney, Founder and CEO of Hyperion Law

*“Pay Attention To Your Passion! Listen To Yourself!”*

**What achievement in your career are you most proud of?**

Accomplishing my goal of building a successful legal career and sustaining my career during particularly tough economic times.

**What advice do you have for young women in science and technology careers who want to expand their options?**

Pay attention to your passion! Listen to yourself. What is it each day that fascinates you? What are the projects you enjoy and the skills that you have? Learn how you can incorporate your passion and skills into your career. Talk to people who are excited and passionate about what they do. How did they end up in those jobs? Be purposeful, follow your inspiration, and learn from those who have successfully done this in their own careers.

**What significant obstacles did you have to overcome?**

Growing up, I did not have a network of people to guide me professionally so I had to work to develop my own professional network and find my own mentors. This was daunting at first but I've learned to love networking and genuinely enjoy developing those professional relationships.

**What was one of your major accomplishments?**

Successfully managing full-time work and law school. I was working at GTE/Verizon Laboratories and attending Suffolk University Law in the evenings. I had to balance two very rigorous schedules. I was successfully able to do it and landed a job at a top, nationally recognized law firm.

**What mentor had the biggest effect on your career and why?**

I am very fortunate in that I have had so many good mentors, career sponsors, and important people that have provided career guidance over the years. If I had to pick one, I would say,

Sarah Columbia, who was Department Chair of Choate, Hall & Stewart's Intellectual Property Department for part of the time that I worked there. She was amazing! She had an incredible ability to bring people together and work cohesively. She would have litigation attorneys (those who enforce patents) and patent attorneys (those who create them) and have them sitting at the same table collaborating and working cohesively together. She was a very effective communicator and was an example of how to be tough, smart, and build rapport with others. She was the first woman boss that I'd worked for and she was outstanding!

**Can you describe your career progression and what roles were significant in getting you to where you are today?**

I started as an intern, then a part-time employee at GTE/Verizon Labs while in college. I then switched to full-time work, developing architecture and policy for securing next generation networks and managing one of their technical analysis labs, while going to law school at night. After law school, I spent a year at a boutique firm and then five years at a nationally-ranked general practice law firm. Then, in the summer of 2010, I started my own patent boutique firm. I enjoy the challenges of entrepreneurship and being able to take the time to partner with my clients, aligning their patent operations with their business goals.

In hindsight, the skills I honed at Verizon – translating technical jargon for business leaders and being mindful of business restraints while working in a research and development environment – were invaluable to the work I do now, translating technical work into legal documents and explaining the opportunities and constraints of the patent system to technical innovators and business leaders. Starting Hyperion Law has been an incredible opportunity to build on the skills I've developed over the years while doing work I'm passionate about.

**How do you balance your work and life?**

Imperfectly! It's a constant challenge. I have been better at it at some times and worse at others. Another mentor of mine once gave me some great advice: "You can have it all, but you cannot have it all at once and get a good night's sleep." I really focus on the elements of my life that are mission critical for me as a human being and work hard to keep my priorities straight. If I look at how I spend my day and don't see how any of my activities are furthering any of my vocations, I know I need to reevaluate.