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After graduating from the University of Birmingham I accepted a role as a software developer in a global investment bank in London. This was an exciting opportunity as it allowed me to interact directly with the in-house Traders and to develop bespoke software to facilitate foreign exchange transactions throughout the world's financial markets. After several years in this position, I changed career and retrained as a Patent Attorney specialising in Intellectual Property law. I am now a UK Chartered Patent Attorney and European Patent Attorney authorised to act before both the UK Intellectual Property Office and the European Patent Office.

What is the best thing about what you are doing now?
It is said that a Patent Attorney operates at the interface of law, commerce and science, and in my experience this is certainly true. Each day is totally different and presents its own unique challenges. One moment you may be discussing some new technological breakthrough with a leading scientist or engineer, while in another moment you may be drafting a new global licence agreement between two corporate entities. This is why a career in Intellectual Property is varied, diverse and exciting.

How has your PhD helped you in your Career?
In order to become a qualified Patent Attorney you must have a degree in a scientific field. Many Patent Attorneys also have a PhD. The experience and skills obtained from carrying out PhD research, such as time management, independent thinking, ability to handle complex issues, multi-tasking and writing up large volumes of information in a concise and coherent manner are invaluable in many careers.

What advice would you give to current PhD students?
No matter what field your PhD research relates to you should try to be commercially aware. Afterall, at the end of the day once your academic studies are over you will most likely be seeking an employer who runs a company which will be effected by economic and commercial issues. Simply keeping an eye on current affairs and business news will generally be enough, and in most cases you will find that this is also useful for job interviews as employers generally like candidates to be topical. When applying for a job always do your research on the company offering the position. The Internet is a wonderful resource for obtaining information about companies and their commercial activities. You should also speak to your careers department. When I chose to re-train as a Patent Attorney, I used the resources of the University of Birmingham's career department to learn about the role and then applied for a vacancy that was advertised in their job listings. Without their help I would not have found my current job.

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