

# Pro Bono Spotlight Son Doan



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## Spotlight Article on Pro Bono in Viet Nam and the IPMAX Law Firm by Alice A. Kelly



Son Doan, a member of the INTA Pro Bono Committee, is managing partner of IPMAX Law Firm in Vietnam. IPMAX is a boutique intellectual property law firm which is admitted to practice before the National Office of Intellectual Property (the NOIP) and the Copyright Office of Vietnam (the COV). IPMAX provides a full range of intellectual property services in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

IPMAX Law Firm shares the common desire to engage in community activities. Son reports that the firm is actively involved in charities and other non-profit endeavors. The firm encourages and recognizes personal efforts by members of the firm in giving back to the community in their own ways. Son notes that in Vietnam, Pro Bono service is still not yet a common practice as in other developed jurisdictions such as in the States or European countries, especially in the field of intellectual property (IP). Son feels fortunate to have the opportunity to work in this field and truly believes that an effective IP system will contribute greatly to promoting the welfare of Vietnam. IPMAX focuses

on other charitable endeavors as well.

Every year, IPMAX contributes to the Mountainous Underprivileged Students Fund – a charity association, formally known as “only Rice is Not Enough” program which provides underprivileged students, mostly in mountainous and indigent areas, with nutritious meals, warm clothes, study materials, books, medicines etc. Every year, IPMAX participates in organizing Mid-Autumn Festival parties for underprivileged children in indigent areas and offered them foods, gifts and other primary supplies.

Since 2010, Son and his IPMAX colleagues have participated as sponsors for the Globalized Era Scholarship (GES) program. Sponsored by a number of law firms and other organizations and individuals (the Sponsors), this program aims at providing selected students (the Scholars), who are final year law students with some financial support and, much more importantly, training and mentoring in career development as they are about to enter the legal profession.

Being a GES sponsor, IPMAX provided assigned scholar with a monthly financial support for a period of one academic year. They meet the assigned scholar approximately once a month to discuss on his/her study or career plans, provide legal career advices and offer other help as necessary and invites the scholars to participate in training or social events at IPMAX Law Firm. The firm also regularly conduct talks to all the scholars on IP and particularly trademark related topics. IPMAX provide internship opportunities for ones who have strong interest in IP and trademark career, many of them have been recruited and become talented IP lawyers.

Son has served as an invited expert on *ad hoc* panels hearing and counselling the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) and the National Office of Intellectual Property of Vietnam in complicated trademark disputes in Vietnam. He is also involved in reviewing and providing comments to the Intellectual Property Textbook for training enforcement authorities in Vietnam prepared by the National Office of Intellectual Property.

Son is an active member of INTA. He has served on the East Asia & Pacific Round Table Committee and INTA's Well-known Trademarks Committee. He also works as a member of the INTA taskforce working closely with the Ministry of Science & Technology (MOST) and supported the project team to successfully implement the MOST-INTA Well-Known Marks Project in Vietnam. The project studied Vietnam and international laws of well-known trademarks, analyzed the difficulties and made recommendations for changes of regulations and practices in protecting well-known trademarks in Vietnam.

Son is excited about the opportunities for pro bono IP services in Vietnam and regularly meets with start-up entrepreneurs to

talk about IP protection generally and provided free advice in securing and protecting IP rights, including trademark rights. The firm also provides free advice and representation for a non-profit association in the application for its trademark in Vietnam. The Association is set up aiming at promoting English teaching and learning activities in Vietnam.

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