Millien’s Patented Success

RAYMOND MILLIEN BS’92

Raymond Millien said he heeded his parents’ advice to “major in something practical” when he settled on a computer science degree. As far as usefulness goes, the degree has paid dividends, especially now in Millien’s work as a patent attorney for PCT Law Group, a firm he cofounded in 2007. Millien’s engineering background helps him better relate to clients, many of whom are software engineers, he said.

Recently, he said, “I was out working with a client who had a new compiler invention, and all the things I learned at Columbia were still running in my head.” Some of those lessons began during meetings with his core undergraduate study group when he was trying to plug through courses such as first-year chemistry. It’s these kinds of experiences that helped shape Millien’s ability to think logically and successfully problem solve—skills that prove invaluable as an entrepreneur today.

At PCT, Millien counsels clients on patent, copyright, trademark, and trade-secret matters. He also performs intellectual property portfolio evaluations and due diligence for mergers and other corporate transactions. The firm has 11 attorneys, and revenue recently hit seven figures.

While proud of these achievements, Millien acknowledged starting the firm has been challenging. “It’s not like your job is over at 5 p.m. and you go home,” said Millien, who is married with two children. “I think about work seven days a week.”

Millien’s decision to start a business was preceded by a distinguished career and educational path. While he grew up in Brooklyn, he didn’t consider Columbia Engineering until his high school history teacher, an alumnus, made the suggestion. After touring the campus, “I loved it and said I was going to apply.”

After graduation, he was accepted into General Electric’s Edison Engineering Program, a technical training program. He enjoyed the work there as a software engineer, but found it difficult to sit behind a computer 8 to 10 hours a day. “I am much more a people person,” said Millien, who decided to pursue an interest in patent law and entered George Washington University Law School in 1994.

After graduating in 1997, Millien practiced law at the Washington, D.C., offices of OLA Piper U.S. LLP, as well as Sterne, Kessler, Goldstein & Fox PLLC. With the technology boom under way, the majority of his clients were entrepreneurs. While he gained a great deal of experience working with these start-ups, he eventually moved back to New York City in 2004, taking a job as patent counsel at American Express. Two years later he got an opportunity to be general counsel at Ocean Tomo, a Chicago-based, start-up IP merchant bank. The position required him to split his time between legal and management responsibilities, giving him a better window into what it’s like to run a business.

“It was there I got the entrepreneurial bug,” Millien said. While starting PCT during the recession proved challenging, the firm continues to grow. Millien has his sights on doubling the number of lawyers on staff and growing the international client base.

Said Millien: “Who knew this little kid from Brooklyn would have a minority-owned firm with seven-figure revenue and clients all over world?”