

# Maria Maras

Associate Director, Intellectual Property

*Accenture*

**In current position for:** About one year, but almost 10 years at Accenture

**Years in-house:** Almost 10 years

**Law School:** Harvard Law School

**Undergrad:** University of Chicago (B.A., Political Science)

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## **An overview of my role is:**

I partner with our business to resolve IP litigation and disputes and investigate matters involving misuse of confidential information and IP around the world. I also develop strategies to protect Accenture's IP and mitigate IP risk for Accenture's operations in more than 120 countries.

## **Brief description of your past legal jobs:**

I joined Kirkland & Ellis LLP as an associate in the intellectual property and litigation departments right after I graduated from law school and became a partner in 2010. I worked on high-stakes IP cases there for almost 10 years until I left to join Accenture in 2014.

## **The best thing about my current job is:**

I get to partner with smart, passionate people to help our clients and communities accomplish amazing things with technology.

## **The most challenging thing about my current job is:**

I fondly recall the down time after a big filing or the end of a trial when I was a law firm litigator. Given the size of Accenture, there are always matters to tackle after a big one ends.

## **What I've accomplished as an in-house lawyer of which I'm most proud:**

I've worked on many *pro bono* projects with Accenture's Legal Access program, and this year I'm proudest of helping a refugee from Afghanistan apply for asylum and supporting him at his asylum immigration.

## **Advice I would give to new in-house lawyers:**

Don't be afraid to ask questions and seek help from your colleagues. There's so much to learn when you're new that you can't just "go it alone."

## **My favorite *pro bono* projects or volunteer activities:**

A personal favorite is an ACC Chicago Chapter volunteer event at Bernie's Book Bank. My family has done it for the past two years, and it was a fantastic experience for all three kids (ages 7, 10 and 12).

## **Most valuable life lesson that I still apply:**

"Look for the solution." As a young lawyer, I was very upset about a negative development in one of my cases, which I worried had been caused by a choice I had made. My father (who has now practiced law for 40+ years) advised me to focus on the solution – rather than the problem – and reassured me that there is always a way to move forward, if you can lift your head up enough to see it.

## **If I were not practicing law, I would probably be:**

A librarian. No question.

## **My favorite book:**

*A Wrinkle In Time* by Madeleine L'Engle. I wrote an essay about it for my application to the University of Chicago, and it helped me get accepted.

## **People may be surprised to learn:**

I blast Notorious B.I.G. when I clean the house.