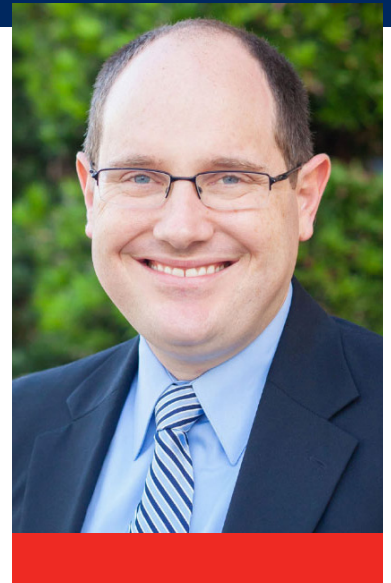


Florida IP attorney relishes the use and advantages of technology in his practice



By Brian Cox

Dan Pierron has a reputation in legal circles – and not just as an intellectual property lawyer.

The Widerman Malek, P.L. partner is well known at his firm and within Primerus' Young Lawyers Section as a fervent promoter of employing automation and technology whenever possible to increase efficiency.

He encourages lawyers to make the time to identify repetitive manual tasks and workflow that might easily be automated or frequently used language that could be incorporated into templates.

"I believe attorneys should be open to using software more frequently because it will make their practice easier," he says. "I think technological literacy is just becoming more and more table stakes for the practice of law."



Widerman Malek, P.L. attorney Dan Pierron with his wife Allison and their two children, Charlie, 13, and Amy, 9.

When he first joined the Melbourne, Fla. law firm in 2012, Pierron was given (mostly) free rein to explore how the firm could use the software it already employed more robustly. He seized the opportunity and felt a personal investment in the growth and development of the firm. The experience taught him a lot about how people respond and adapt to new methods and processes, especially when time is often a rare commodity.

"Change is hard for everyone," Pierron says. "Not everyone is as comfortable with technology as I am. I'm someone who is always willing to help with tech issues. I've learned to temper my drive and recognize we all have differences and that it's a matter of identifying what's important."

A self-confessed tech hobbyist who has his own home server and delights in integrating smart home devices (some to his wife's dismay, he jokes), Pierron earned a degree in robotics with a minor in physics from the University of Kansas. His initial career plan was to become a robotics engineer, but a manufacturing design class introduced him to patents and he soon afterward decided to become an IP attorney.

That he had not considered a career in law earlier strikes him as ironic now. After all, his father, G. Joseph Pierron, was the longest-tenured judge to serve on the Kansas Court of Appeals when he retired in 2020. Before his appointment to the Court of Appeals in 1990, Pierron's father was a district judge and an assistant district attorney.

But as a child growing up in Olathe, Kan., where his family had lived since the late 1940s, Pierron didn't find his father's work particularly interesting.

His father occasionally enjoyed speaking at community events about the U.S. Constitution and Pierron is purported to have once asked who would want to hear him speak. His father replied, "You know, outside this house, some people think I'm important."

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Pierron and Allison attended the Primerus Global Conference in Paris. The couple met in college at the University of Kansas and married in 2008 after graduation.

When he was 16, Pierron's mother, who was a nurse, active community member, and with whom he shared a love of community theater, died after a series of strokes. The loss forced Pierron to become more independent and responsible than most kids his age. He found support through the difficult time from a wide range of varied friends.

It was at the University of Kansas that Pierron met his future wife, Allison, who was studying to be a nurse and midwife. The couple married after graduating in 2008 and left for Chicago, where Allison pursued a graduate degree at Rush University and Pierron attended Chicago-Kent College of Law, which has a top-ranked IP program.

"There wasn't a whole lot of discovering the law for the purpose of what I wanted to do," says Pierron of law school years. "I knew what I wanted to do."

After his 1L, Pierron took the Patent Bar Examination to become a patent agent, which allowed him to file patent applications and

interact with the U.S. Patent Office. By the fall, he had started working in a boutique law firm in a northern suburb of Chicago.

His career path seemed set. He just needed to finish law school.

Soon after he graduated, however, the firm's future became less certain and Pierron started looking around for other opportunities. On a patent law blog's bulletin board he came across a posting from a law firm in Melbourne, Fla.

"Widerman Malek flew me down for an interview," recalls Pierron. "It was a solid recruitment tactic, to go from Chicago in February to Florida in February."

It didn't take Pierron long to determine Widerman Malek was a good fit.

Founded in 2003 by law school friends Scott Widerman and Mark Malek, the national law firm prides itself on taking a down-to-earth and common sense approach to clients' complex legal issues. Pierron was drawn to the firm's culture, which emphasizes bonds with family and community as the cornerstone of its practice.

When Pierron joined Widerman Malek, the firm had five attorneys. It has since grown to around 30 lawyers.

"Our firm is a very broad civil practice," says Pierron. "When we have big partner discussions, everyone brings their own perspectives and opinions based on their personal experiences and I think the firm really benefits from it as a whole."

Pierron and Allison, with their new son, Charlie, adapted fairly quickly to the change in climate, though it can still feel "weird to put Christmas lights up while sweating profusely" and it was difficult being so far away from family. Charlie is now 13 and their daughter, Amy, is 9.

A large majority of Pierron's practice involves shepherding patents and trademarks through the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office for clients that run the spectrum from individual inventors to large international companies.

When writing patent applications, Pierron prefers to use clear language that "regular folks" can understand rather than trying to obfuscate the invention to readers.



The Pierron family skating at 30 Rockefeller Center.

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“Part of what I think of when I’m drafting an application is who the target audience is,” he explains. “If you adopt an obfuscation strategy, then your target audience is your competition. You don’t want them to be able to read your patent and then understand it and make a strategic decision based on what they’ve learned. A different approach is to view your target audience as a jury. The jury needs to understand what it is that is protected by your patent.”

With the advent of artificial intelligence, Pierron sees its use in legal practices as inevitable, a natural technological evolution. He foresees generative AI serving as a powerful drafting tool as the legal profession becomes more comfortable using the burgeoning technology.

“It will never do the job completely,” he says. “I think its ability to develop a coherent theme across an entire brief is definitely lacking now.”

He compares AI to his self-driving Tesla, which still requires him to be in the driver’s seat and fully engaged with driving.

In his practice and personal life, Pierron values diverse perspectives and varied opinions. As the only Jewish student in his grade at elementary school in Olathe, Pierron has experienced feeling as an outsider, which is the root of his belief that giving equal time and voice to everyone is necessary and productive.

“Having this element of myself, this part of my identity that made me categorically different from other people showed me the importance of diversity on a very personal level,” he says. “I think a certain amount of intentionality in trying to seek out and listen to different perspectives along any variable that you can think of is worthwhile and is going to have a lot of positive returns.”

Pierron will stake his reputation on that.



On a recent trip to New York City, the Pierron family visited the top of 30 Rockefeller Center.