



## my Legal Life



Ludovico Giannotti, Paul Hastings (Europe)

# SUSPENDED COFFEE CULTURE

**I was one of the few fortunate pupils from my school to study law at university.**

From 2012 to 2015 I attended the London School of Economics, a university that prepares many of its students for a career in banking and finance. That path interested me in particular because it afforded me the opportunity to work internationally, which is also what led me to Paul Hastings, a firm which, at the time, had offices in France, where I was raised, and in Italy, where I am from. My mum and sister move around a lot and being a financial lawyer has allowed me to be close to them wherever they are. I joined the firm right after graduating and have been there for coming up to eight years.

**Right about the time that I was starting at Paul Hastings, someone I knew was a victim of severe domestic abuse.** I would not have been able to help them without the help of the front-line team of the charity Advance. As a result, for the past eight years, I've done my best to support Advance's mission. Paul Hastings has been incredibly supportive in this and I was able to on-board Advance as a pro bono client, becoming the key point of contact to coordinate legal support to the charity. The charity is the third-largest domestic abuse charity in the UK. It helps thousands of women each year by providing practical and emotional support in their communities, through its women's centres and in collaboration with a variety of partners.

**Last year, I was honoured to be elected a trustee of the charity and have been able to take an active role in shaping its governance.** I am also involved in fundraising efforts. My clients have also been incredibly supportive, with most recently a large credit fund providing a sizeable donation of unrestricted funds. Building on private donations is really important and we're

currently on a fundraising drive to revamp Advance's IT equipment so that our work can be rendered more efficient. This, in turn, will free up money that can be channelled into the critical front-line work to help women who rely on the support of Advance.

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**I have also done pro bono work with The International Rescue Committee, with whom I got involved when the Taliban took back control of Afghanistan in 2021.** Again, Paul Hastings was tremendously helpful and approved me to on-board the IRC as a pro bono client. We were able to provide significant support to the NGO by leveraging the breadth of our platform and its international presence. At its peak, I was coordinating the efforts of 30 lawyers across eight offices. Our work helped inform the settlement decisions of hundreds of thousands of refugees and asylum seekers, and won us second place in The British Legal Awards 2022's CRS Initiative of the Year category. A proud moment for our small pro bono team.

The winners ended up replicating the work we are doing, but on a bigger scale – which is great, as it's all about collaboration.

**Beyond pro bono work, I have for many years taken an active effort in social mobility, and mentored a number of students from state schools and minority backgrounds.** Unfortunately, the legal profession remains over-represented by those who attended private schools and have parents who know people who can help get them an 'in'. I want to use my experience to help others with no such advantages enter the profession too.

**I take a very hands-on and tailored approach with my mentees.** I learn about their academic and professional background, which helps me understand what field they want to specialise in and the type of culture they are after, using that information to select about 20 law firms to apply to. When they get called for interview, I carve out time to advise them on how to stand out. I also try to connect students with associates at firms at which they are interviewing, so they can hear first-hand how to stand out among candidates and see if the firm is the right fit for them.

**With my hectic work schedule, I am unfortunately limited on the number of people I can help.** But I have come up with a strategy, taken from our 'suspended coffee' culture in my native Neapolitan background. Before helping I always ask if they can return the favour by helping any others that I put forward to them. The most beautiful thing is that most don't forget. When I reach out a couple years later they take the time to provide the very same help that I did.

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