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Ballard Spahr Teams Up with Anaqua, a Trusted Partner

Trademark Specialist Nicole Fulton is a long-time fan of Anaqua. Indeed, when Nicole was applying for the role of Trademark Docketing Coordinator at US law firm Ballard Spahr, the job posting mentioned the firm recently transitioned to Anaqua's AQX® Law Firm as its primary IP management system, and this made the position even more appealing to her. Since joining Ballard Spahr, Nicole talks about the work she and her team are doing at the firm and how Anaqua is supporting them in delivering better results for their clients.

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— Nicole Fulton, Trademark Specialist, Ballard Spahr

Could you tell us a little about your role at the firm, your team, and how you are using Anaqua's AQX Law Firm.

Nicole Fulton (NF): I supervise a Trademark Docketing Team located in Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Arizona. We use AQX to help manage the firm's main docketing mailbox as well as two client docketing mailboxes. We work both for domestic and international clients – primarily in-house corporate IP departments – and the amount of work the docketing team handles on a daily basis is very varied and robust. It can be anything from new trademark filings all the way to trademark litigation matters. Although we are in different locations, we work extremely well as a team. Each person has their own strengths and experience that they're willing to share with one another. Everyone has a strong sense of ownership and responsibility, and we have a very collaborative approach, working through a new or challenging docket process together, and ensuring our docketing is done accurately and quickly for the firm and our clients.

How has AQX Law Firm helped you and the team?

NF: One of the key areas is in reporting to clients. Law firm IP practices are very report driven and need to be able to tailor their reports to individual client requirements. Utilizing AQX Law Firm has made this much simpler and quicker for us. At the end of the day, it comes down to three factors: cost, speed and quality; and, thanks to AQX Law Firm, we have been able to deliver on all counts. By further automating the process, we have been able to assemble reports quicker, at a lower cost to the client, while offering richer content and ensuring greater accuracy. It's all about improving the overall quality of the work product that we deliver to clients – and at competitive rates. I'll give you an example. Previously, for one of our big trademark clients, we had to do all the reports manually. That meant updating a tremendous number of trademarks and dispute matters through manual docketing. Now we can do all that and generate reports with a couple of clicks, bringing significant cost savings that we have been able to pass on to the client. The speed with which we can deliver the reports has also impressed the client as it is something they were just not accustomed to in their previous way of doing things.

What are some of the key challenges you and your team have faced?

NF: With our previous docket system, there were many different, individualized reports that had to be pulled together. There was no standardized process or format, which meant the reporting process was very time consuming with a huge amount of manual input for every client. Things have improved dramatically now and we are in the process of automating the final few processes through the AQX system. We're also implementing Anaqua's Hyperview dashboards, which bring a much richer depth of content and insight to our client reporting. Of course, implementing a new system across a firm is never simple – and not a decision that is taken lightly. Fortunately, Ballard Spahr has an excellent teamwork-ing ethos – and that teamwork is important, both within the firm and with an IP management software vendor.

How do you find working with Anaqua?

NF: It's great. I've been a champion of the system since I came on board. When I saw that the job posting for Ballard Spahr mentioned Anaqua, it made me even more keen to apply for the role.
And when I got here, it was like being reunited with a trusted 'friend' – as if we'd never been apart! I think it was also a big advantage for the firm that I was so familiar with the system and knew what all the different components and modules were. It helped me understand what needed to happen in order to make things work the way that Ballard Spahr needed them to work. But it's not just the system, it's also the people. Our Anaqua team, led by Joe Bichanich, have been excellent. They understand law firms and the language that we speak. With me coming from an in-house background, they've been a tremendous help in showing me how to do different things from the law firm perspective. It's a good partnership.

"Anaqua is my favorite docketing system. I used it in a previous in-house role and was so impressed. Then, between that role and me coming to Ballard Spahr, I worked with two different docketing systems, and they simply didn't compare."

Having been on the client side before, working in in-house corporate roles, do you feel that has been an advantage in moving to a law firm?

NF: Absolutely, especially when it comes to reports and the Anaqua Client Portal we are introducing through AQX Law Firm. When the firm's clients ask for a report, it's often for a specific purpose or a pressing matter so they need it quickly. I recognize – from a client's perspective – what these requests really involve and what should be included in the data. Also, when it comes to the client portal, knowing what information the client wants to be able to readily access is important too.

Apart from being able to work with Anaqua again, what else have you enjoyed about moving to Ballard Spahr?

NF: From my perspective, Ballard Spahr is the best firm I could have joined after working in-house for so many years. It has a strong client value ethos, a tremendous culture of innovation and collaboration within the firm, and a more flexible structure and management style. It is not like your traditional law firm with rigid structures and responsibilities which often hamper good teamwork and the ability to give the best service to clients. Ballard Spahr highly values its client and employees.

ANAQUA®

U.S. HEADQUARTERS
31 St. James Avenue
Boston, MA 02116 USA
+1 617-375-5808

OTHER OFFICES
Australia | France | Germany | India | Italy | Japan | United Kingdom

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02/2026