



Kwasi Yeboah



Emilio Fabrizi



Rohan Massey

**Kwasi Yeboah:** Welcome to another episode of *RopesTalk* London, the podcast all about life as a trainee solicitor at Ropes & Gray in London.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** This podcast is for everybody who has an interest in building a successful career at the firm’s London office.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** We are actually delighted today to be joined by none other than Rohan Massey.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** Rohan is the London training principal partner at Ropes & Gray, and the lead of our data and IP practice. Rohan is key to the training program here at the firm, and if he doesn’t sign off on your Fresh Unity entries—a record of our training experiences—we do not qualify, so a very important person. Moreover, he’s world-renowned and highly regarded in his field and has been quoted in a range of publications, including *Bloomberg Legal*.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** Rohan, it’s great to have you with us today. How are you doing?

**Rohan Massey:** Hi, I’m very well. I’m looking forward to the end of lockdown. I am in the office today, which is rather quiet, so it’ll be good when everybody is back and there’s a bit more buzz around.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** Very nice. Yes, it’s been a bit of a bizarre experience for us all, but it looks like everyone’s kind of handling it well. What’s it like being back in the office?

**Rohan Massey:** It’s quiet. I’d say the office is really about the people, and I can’t wait until they’re all back.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** Sure, I think the same on this end, as well. Well, thank you again for your time today. And obviously, we look forward to hearing all about the great insights you’re going to provide.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** With that being said, let’s get right into the episode, as we know you have a lot of matters on today. So this podcast is a real opportunity to get an insight into your career, the training program at Ropes & Gray, and to get some tips from yourself on how to succeed as a junior lawyer.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** So, Rohan, you’re clearly someone who is genuinely enthused by your field. So I guess I’m interested in knowing how you’ve remained, and how you continue to remain, engaged with your subject matter outside of your practice, and how that engagement has benefited your clients as well as your career development?

**Rohan Massey:** Well, I first got interested in data and the internet way back in the early ‘90s—really much at the very start of the internet being commercialized. I remember getting an email account to contact the only other person I knew that had an email account and telling everybody about it, and they all thought I was a bit of an idiot and this was a passing fad. This included my father, who asked me to stop messing around with the internet and data, and focus on the law. Having sat through the last 25+ years of seeing how the internet has shaped our lives, and how data has become so pervasive across society, it really has been an interesting experience for me. When I look at it these days, data and cybersecurity are on the front page of the paper most days, and I find that a great resource for learning and it gives me new ideas. But I’m also being asked to advise on new products and technologies which haven’t yet made it to the public space, so advising on them gives you this window into the future where people are leading, whether it be on technology and data as an asset, or even as a liability. So having advised on everything from social media, delivery apps, to

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—Rohan Massey, Partner

sports on your handset, it’s amazing to think that this keeps developing—it will keep developing and changing the way we live. And all of this has happened in such a short space in time. If you think about it, smartphones have been around for less than 15 years.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** Yes, absolutely—that makes a lot of sense. I guess there’s an interesting attraction between law, obviously being this very traditional field, and data and technology, which is really fast-paced. So I guess for you, is that, would you say, the most challenging aspect of the job in terms of being able to understand all the new developments as they come in and making sure that you can advise clients appropriately?

**Rohan Massey:** Yes, that’s certainly a challenge. Trying to apply old laws, as it were, to new concepts is always a challenge. But from everything from e-commerce (which is really just contract law) through to advertising sponsorships on social media, these are all concepts that we’ve had, just being used in different ways. And we do see the law catching up. When the GDPR came into Europe, that was brought in because the world had gone digital and people’s data was being used in a different way. So it does catch up, but technology usually leads the way.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** Absolutely. And I suppose what would be interesting for us to know as trainees generally, in terms of being able to keep up-to-date with developments in the law and being able to apply that on a day-to-day basis, do you have any kind of advice or practical tips?

**Rohan Massey:** I’d say be interested in your subject and read, read, read. These days, there is so much availability of information, so you can find good sources on any topic you’re interested. It could be newspapers, legal or industry journals, government or regulator’s websites, even blogs or following certain journalists and the way you like the style that they write and the insight that they give—but do that

reading. As trainees as well, learn from those around you, ask those around you—that’s the great thing about being a trainee. And as you move around seats, it doesn’t mean you have to drop off and go forward. You can stay in touch, go to training sessions, or ask if there’s any work you can be doing with those areas that you do have the most interest in. That’s really where you’ll keep your level of expertise developing, and hopefully keep garnering more and more interest as you learn more and more.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** I think those points especially around being aware of all of the resources—I mean, even this podcast is a great example. There are so many platforms and avenues that you can explore irrespective of your level, whether you’re a law student, applicant, trainee or qualified lawyer. There’s so much out there and there’s a real breadth of knowledge that I think people can dip into—it’s just about going out there and seeking it. I think a question which our audience would really learn from, and it’s something which is very hard I guess to appreciate from reading about a firm on a screen or any legal journal and publication, but as someone who’s had a varied experience in the legal sector, and you’re incredibly well known and popular in the Ropes & Gray London office, what makes the culture at Ropes stand out from other firms? Why is Ropes unique in the city?

**Rohan Massey:** Well, I think Ropes & Gray in London is still of a size where we’re lucky enough to be able to get to know everybody, and I think that’s really important. And as trainees, it’s something you’re in a great position, possibly a unique position, as you rotate around your seat to meet people in every department in the office and get to know them quite well. So that size is important, but I think if we look at the culture of Ropes & Gray, it is a very collaborative culture. I mean, that goes through the firm from the top to the bottom and across all of our offices. And the fact that everybody wants to collaborate and sees the benefit in collaboration is really important. The encouragement that

we give to collaboration means not only can we achieve more together than we would as individuals, it also means that good ideas will be supported to the point of implementation and fruition. It's a bit like this podcast, which I'm proud to say was instigated by the trainees and not by another department within the office. It's great that it's being led that way, and I always want to see that collaboration coming through.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** That's definitely an experience that we've both had, I think, as trainees. That shows, I guess, the entrepreneurial nature of Ropes & Gray as a firm, I suppose, where you are encouraged to be entrepreneurial and think a bit outside the box, as well as become a very strong technical lawyer. I guess with that in mind, how can prospective applicants, trainees and junior lawyers, stand out at Ropes & Gray, and I guess positively influence the already-great culture that we have at the firm?

**Rohan Massey:** I think the firm benefits from having self-starters. You used the word "entrepreneurial"—I think that's a great word to use. We want to have individuals with us that are motivated, that can think for themselves. It's important to remember that not all the work we do is incredibly exciting, and sometimes it can be mundane or boring, so you've got to have people that are able to carry on through those elements of the job. Hopefully still be able to find a laugh at the end of a very long transaction, or able to stay focused at the end of a very long night when it's really needed to ensure that we're getting the excellence in our documentation drafting that we require for everything that we do. So I really do think that sort of balance of being self-motivated, focused, with a great sense of humor, would be a really good way of fitting in with the culture of the firm.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** I think those points really do run true with Ropes and certainly when I was applying. I think why Ropes is so special is that it's a place where there are incredibly hardworking people who are extremely intelligent, doing very high-level work, but at the same time, very personable and will answer any questions, and there's no question that's so stupid that it can't be asked. And then, the types of people who will always be having fun in the office. There's a great sense of humor and warmth that exists at Ropes, and that certainly hasn't been my experience at other places

which I've worked. Going back to data specifically, you previously discussed technological developments and AI, and the associated risks for data subjects' privacy rights and freedoms is a really hot topic right now, but from your perspective, what developments in the data and IP space are likely to have the greatest influence on data and the IP practice in the years to come?

**Rohan Massey:** We will continue to see data growing both as an asset and a liability for business. There's a lot of talk of AI and machine learning becoming very empowering, but I think also a big challenge as people look to understand more clearly how personal data is collected and used. All you have to do these days is look at something on the internet once, and you'll have adverts for it following you around wherever you go. People want to know more. So I think equally as challenging is the fact that we are seeing the increasing fragmentation and localization of data protection requirements, meaning that in some instances, data has to be collected and processed in a specific country or jurisdiction. Now, that may sound easy, but data doesn't recognize geographic boundaries, so localization becomes a very complex and regulated issue. And I think these are the sort of challenges we'll be seeing in the future—how we can have localization working in a global environment.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** In terms of Ropes & Gray generally and the broader strategy of our London office in particular, what's the very important role that the data and IP practice play in that strategy?

**Rohan Massey:** So I think the answer to this question comes from two perspectives. One is our clients and their focus, so what they are doing, acquiring technology companies or data-related companies, as well as beginning to commercialize and commoditize their own data by using analytics and machine learning. We will be advising them on all areas of that, whether it's the transaction, whether it's compliance, whether it's in relation to incident response. The flip side as well is that as a firm, we have to think how we can use technology to assist our business in giving our clients a more efficient and more effective service. So I think that obviously the role of data IP technology will continue to grow, especially as we see the global economy moving to a more digital footprint.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** Yes, I can definitely see how that's going to be an issue. I mean, I remember doing some work in the data department, doing some research on data laws in various jurisdictions, and was amazed at the plethora of countries on the list, ranging from Guatemala, Venezuela, places where you would never really think, I suppose, as a layperson that there would be some form of data legislation in existence. But it is there, and it applies, and it's parts that have to be considered, especially as you said, data doesn't recognize geographical boundaries but is spread and shared across our world every single minute. Before we let you leave, if you don't mind, we like to give our audience a bit of a holistic view of Ropes & Gray and our people. So with that being said, could you give us one interesting fact that we might not expect, such as a favorite holiday destination or song or even an activity that you enjoy?

**Rohan Massey:** Okay, I think the one thing I'll give you that you may not expect is that I have my own entry on the International Movies Database on the internet as an actor. So I'll just say that was in a previous life.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** Wow. What's the movie?

**Rohan Massey:** I'll leave it up to you to find.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** There we go, a bit of homework for our audience. That's amazing.

**Emilio Fabrizi:** Well, everyone, we hope you enjoyed today's discussion, and thank you very much again to Rohan for his time. Please follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) at @Ropes-GrayGrads, and please also feel free to get in touch with us via our social media if you have any questions or thoughts for future episodes.

**Kwasi Yeboah:** Hopefully we've given you some stuff to think about. That's it for today. See you for our next episode, where we'll be talking to other inspirational figures at Ropes & Gray and providing you insights into the firm's culture, and how you can succeed as a trainee or junior lawyer. Take care.

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