

PERSONAL & PRACTICE:

Faegre Baker Daniels Attorney Profiles

Petar Orlic

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petar.orlic@FaegreBD.com ▼ Direct: +44 0 20 7450 4554

PERSONAL:

WHAT IS YOUR IDEA OF PERFECT HAPPINESS?

- ▶ I lived in Japan for three years and really adapted to that culture and way of thinking and living, especially the idea of living a positive, healthy and contented life. My idea of perfect happiness is always having a “glass half-full” attitude, and being content with my family life and being fit and healthy.

WHICH LIVING PERSON DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?

- ▶ I’m going to break the rules on this one because the person I truly most admire is Nikola Tesla who died in the 1940s. He is a Serb who came from the same region in Croatia as my father, and was a brilliant inventor, engineer and thinker far ahead of his time. He knew eight languages, could memorize books and was talking about Wi-Fi and green energy in the 1920s—he was fascinating.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST EXTRAVAGANCE?

- ▶ From my time in Japan, I developed a love for really good sushi, specifically the Kama toro: a rarely-known piece from the flesh around the collar bone of a blue fin tuna.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE JOURNEY?

- ▶ When I was at University, I had a year abroad and studied Roman and Greek law at Aristotle University, Greece. While abroad, I would take the train that ran from Athens to Belgrade along the most beautiful path through the Balkans – commonly known as the Silk Route. I remember waking up on the train to the most breathtaking mountain and waterfall views.

WHO OR WHAT IS THE GREATEST LOVE OF YOUR LIFE?

- ▶ Apart from my immediate family, I have what some people call an obsession, but I call a healthy admiration for Novak Djokovic. I admire his professionalism, his attitude and the way he changed his diet and trained his body to become the best tennis player in the world.

WHICH TALENT WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO HAVE?

- ▶ To play tennis like Novak Djokovic.

IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT YOURSELF, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

- ▶ I’m very impatient; I want things to happen immediately. Even when I make medium-term goals, I expect to achieve them right away, so I would like to become more patient.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT?

- ▶ While living in Japan, I climbed to the top Mt. Fuji. It was such a physically, emotionally and mentally demanding accomplishment, that every time I face a new challenge, I look back on it and it always motivates me. I once heard the saying “if you can climb a mountain, you can do anything” –I absolutely believe there’s truth in that.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST TREASURED POSSESSION?

- ▶ I try to understand things from an Eastern-world perspective where your mind and body are far superior to material things. My health and brain are my most treasured possessions.

WHAT DO YOU MOST VALUE IN YOUR FRIENDS?

- ▶ Honesty – if my friends can’t be honest with me, who can?

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE HERO OR HEROINE OF FICTION?

- ▶ While studying in Greece, I grew an affinity for Greek myths and heroes. My favorite is Odysseus who came up with the idea for the Trojan horse. I admire him because even as a strong and mighty warrior, he used his brain to come up with a solution.

WHAT IS IT THAT YOU MOST DISLIKE?

- ▶ Laziness. One of my favorite phrases is, “it’s not luck, it’s hard work.”

PRACTICE:

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO PRACTICE LAW?

- ▶ I was born in the small town of Halifax, home to what was the largest building society in the world. While in school, I had a placement in the deeds division of the building society, and it was there I first saw law in action. I realised lawyers were the key to making all things happen in the real estate world. After that, it just clicked, and at 13 years old, I said I wanted to be a real estate lawyer in the city of London.

IN WHAT AREA WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN MORE OR IMPROVE?

- ▶ I continue to fine-tune my understanding of the financial principles of the real estate market in order to give better advice to my clients.

WHAT DO YOU MOST ENJOY ABOUT WORKING AT FAEGRE BAKER DANIELS?

- ▶ I have worked for U.S. law firms my entire career, but the support that I get as a member of the team here in London from my colleagues in the U.S., is second to none. That kind of commitment can only mean that we're going to be successful.

WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU COULD CHANGE ABOUT THE LEGAL INDUSTRY?

- ▶ The use of legalese. Clients find it exhausting, and it's not an effective way to communicate.

WHAT DO YOU FIND MOST CHALLENGING ABOUT YOUR AREA OF FOCUS?

- ▶ A challenge that has recently come to the forefront with the London real estate team is the competition against much larger firms in some areas where our exposure hasn't been as great as theirs. It's going to take some time to build up our name against these larger firms.

WHAT DO YOU FIND MOST REWARDING ABOUT YOUR AREA OF FOCUS?

- ▶ I really enjoy being involved in the client's complete journey from initial acquisition of land to the finance, planning and tax perspectives to the final development. Going on that long journey with them, I feel like a truly integral part of their business and successes, and that's a great feeling.

HOW HAS YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON LAW CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?

- ▶ Over the years, I've begun to understand all top lawyers have excellent legal knowledge; therefore, it's more about what extra you can give to the client. Clients are looking for commercial awareness, they want you to have an understanding of the working of their business so you can give them solutions based on that knowledge rather than telling them the legal problems.

IF YOU COULD CHANGE YOUR AREA OF FOCUS, WHAT WOULD YOU SWITCH TO AND WHY?

- ▶ Real estate combines many different areas of the law, and I find it very satisfying. I really wouldn't even contemplate switching to a different area.

WHAT IS THE NEXT BIG PROJECT YOU'D LIKE TO TACKLE?

- ▶ I've had great traction and success on the London element of my practice, my next focus would be an infrastructure project or private equity deal in the Central and Eastern European region to gain good traction in that market, too.