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TOP CALIFORNIA LAW FIRMS

Vying for the Best In Intellectual Property

By Sara Randazzo
Daily Journal Staff Writer

In a market crowded with intellectual property attorneys, Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP's intellectual property group has grown into one that routinely finds itself on equal footing with more established competitors.

Rather than focus on the highest-paying work and push lower billing assignments aside, Sheppard Mullin employs a one-stop shopping strategy that its attorneys say helps keep clients close.

"Any time you send a client elsewhere, you risk losing the client," said Carlo F. Van den Bosch, who co-chairs the practice with Stephen S. Korniczky and Daniel N. Yannuzzi. The group counts 65 attorneys with specialties across the board, including patent litigators, patent prosecutors, copyright specialists and trademark experts, many with advanced degrees in engineering or the life sciences.

Korniczky said they'll take a bet-the-company patent case worth \$500 million just as easily as a patent troll case for less than \$1 million, and work for multinational companies alongside start-ups.

Like most of the firm, the group has grown rapidly — Van den Bosch said he was one of the first intellectual property attorneys when he joined 15 years ago — and its leaders are scouting at least 10 new candidates at any given time.

Recent hires include Russell B. Hill, who joined from Howrey LLP last spring, and Korniczky, who left Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker LLP in September.

The additions have brought technology expertise, Van den Bosch said, along with clients such as Samsung, Lenovo, HTC Corp. and Hewlett-Packard Co. The new hires have quickly integrated into the firm; since joining four months ago, Korniczky said he and his group have added seven patent lawsuits to their workload.

Other major clients for the practice group include TaylorMade Golf Co. Inc., Marvel Semiconductor and Novatel Wireless Inc. Over the past year, a few key victories have included: partner Gary A. Clark winning summary judgment on behalf of lighting company Mole-Richardson Co. in a patent infringement case in the Central District of California; Yannuzzi defending before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office the validity of key satellite signal distribution systems patents for Entropic Communication; and Korniczky leading the defense of Samsung SDI Co. Ltd. and Samsung SDI America Inc. in a patent infringement action brought by Honeywell International Inc. in the District of Delaware.

As the group expands, firm chairman Guy N. Halgren has kept a watchful eye. "[Halgren] sees IP as being a critical practice area for the modern economy," Van den Bosch said. "Of course, I think he's right."