

Sheppard Mullin Lures 3 Pillsbury IP and Tech Partners

By **Kat Greene**

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Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP lured three Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP intellectual property pros with experience in Internet and technology law, patent portfolio sales and e-commerce to its offices in southern California and Washington, D.C., the firm said on Monday.

James D. Gatto and Bradford C. Blaise are joining Sheppard Mullin in Washington, D.C., and Benjamin Esplin is coming to its Del Mar, California, office, according to the firm.

The team's experience is wide-ranging, including advising clients on developing IP legal strategies, monetizing existing IP and prosecuting patents, the firm said. All three new hires were once patent examiners in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

"As extremely well-regarded IP specialists, they are sought out coast to coast by technology and game companies for patent portfolio strategy and business model advice," Sheppard Mullin Chairman Guy Halgren said in a statement. "They are first-rate attorneys that significantly add depth and breadth to our existing IP and technology capabilities, especially in the games, social media, Internet, open source, mHealth and FinTech industries."

Gatto brings his 30 years of experience in IP and technology to advise his clients on all aspects of IP, Internet and technology law, including issues involving patents, trademarks, copyrights, trade secrets and open source, the firm said.

Gatto has worked with clients on the use of social media, video games, mobile and social games, e-sports, fantasy sports, online gambling, virtual goods and currencies such as bitcoin, virtual reality and other technological advances. He got his start in IP in 1984 as a patent examiner, and has since worked on virtually every facet of IP law, the firm said.



Bradford C. Blaise

Blaise shifted from examining applications for patents for surgical endoscopes and electro-surgical instruments to focusing his law practice on patent prosecution and counseling clients that make computer software, business methods, medical devices, video games and more.



James D.
Gatto

Blaise has worked with clients on patent appeals, inter partes review, re-examinations and infringement and validity issues, the firm said.

Esplin first honed his technical focus examining patent applications for optical systems, including film photography, cameras, projectors, photocopiers and other devices. He's bringing his experience helping clients develop patent filing strategies, patent preparation and prosecution, and the sale and licensing of patent portfolios to Sheppard Mullin's Del Mar office.



Esplin also has experience with IP and legal issues surrounding video games and social media, the firm said. His technical expertise hones in on virtual worlds, augmented reality, computer graphics processing, sound recording and wireless communication, among other advances, according to the firm.

Benjamin Esplin

--Editing by Stephen Berg.