

LAW FIRMS

Small Boston firm makes a big IP play in D.C.

Hanify & King to open new office with five Bingham attorneys.

By Sheri Qualters
STAFF REPORTER

BOSTON—Prominent Boston commercial litigation boutique Hanify & King is making a major play for intellectual property litigation and transactional work with a new Washington office staffed by five attorneys moving from Bingham McCutchen.

Hanify & King traditionally focuses on business litigation, bankruptcy work and corporate and real estate transactions, but some of the firm's trial lawyers have also made limited forays into intellectual property litigation.

Besides considerably expanding the firm's intellectual property litigation expertise, the new Washington lawyers add patent prosecution and opinion capabilities to the firm, said president and firm co-founder Jim King.

"We really didn't have the depth and overall capability to go very far in that practice," King said. "That's really the primary motivation behind this change."

Keeping five busy

The Washington office opened on March 17 with former Bingham partner Ed Pennington, who is now a Hanify & King shareholder. Pennington said four Bingham associates will follow him shortly.

"My client following is sufficient to keep five attorneys busy full-time," Pennington said.

King, who will shuttle back and forth from Boston and manage the new office, said he has a number of significant clients in Washington, including venture capital group Paperboy Ventures LLC.

The firm's Boston litigators will also spend more time in Washington, he said.

The Bingham team brings the firm up to 36 attorneys. Hanify & King also hopes to add another couple of intellectual property lawyers by the summer, King said.

Adding intellectual property heft in Boston is also a priority, Pennington said, but the main intellectual property team needs to be in Washington to be close to several key venues: the International Trade Commission; the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, which hears patent and trademark appeals; the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office; and the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, a popular patent lawsuit venue known with a so-called "rocket docket," or speedy trial schedule.

"This is probably the most important IP venue in the country," Pennington said. "It would make sense for Hanify & King to have the flagship IP group in D.C."

Legal consultant Marci Krufka, a principal with Altman Weil Inc., wasn't familiar with Hanify & King's expansion, but she said it makes sense for a litigation firm without much intellectual property depth to acquire an IP group or another firm, as long as the types of clients and



JIM KING: One of his Washington clients is venture capital group Paperboy Ventures.

market sectors mesh.

"It's hard breaking into a new market, period," Krufka said. "If you can start with an ongoing practice that is on the ground in that market and has clients [it] is always a lot better."

Intellectual property remains a desirable practice area because there's a high demand for knowledgeable practitioners and firms can charge premium rates for the work, Krufka said. "A lot of firms would like to acquire an IP practice," Krufka said.

Pennington, who began his legal career in the early 1980s when intellectual property was mainly a boutique practice, was seeking a chance to start an IP group from the ground floor.

Pennington worked at successively larger firms, including stints at New York-headquartered midsize intellectual property firm Morgan & Finnegan and Swidler Berlin, which he joined in 2000 to launch that firm's intellectual property group. Bingham acquired Swidler in February 2006. **NLJ**

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Spotlight

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