

Sheppard Mullin Expands Its New York IP Practice

By Aaron Vehling



Law360, New York (May 16, 2014, 1:56 PM ET) -- International law firm Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP has added a former Amster Rothstein & Ebenstein LLP partner to boost its intellectual property practice group in its New York office, the firm announced on Tuesday.

Michael V. Solomita, who joins Sheppard Mullin as partner in the IP group, has nearly 20 years of experience representing clients in a broad range of IP matters, focusing on patent issues in diverse high-tech areas. Patent litigation and licensing have been a centerpiece of his practice, according to the firm.

Don J. Pelto, co-chair of the firm's IP practice group, said in a statement on Tuesday that hiring Solomita is part of the firm's strategic goal to expand its patent litigation capabilities in New York and throughout the firm.

"[Solomita] is an accomplished IP attorney and the latest high-profile lateral partner to join our practice group," Pelto said.

Sheppard Mullin has added 20 attorneys to its New York office over the past year in an effort to expand its presence in the region, according to the firm.

Solomita said in a statement on Tuesday that he is thrilled to join Sheppard Mullin and has been "very impressed by the firm's strategic vision and successful growth of the IP group. I was especially attracted to the firm's full-service platform, which is ideal to continue to build and leverage my practice."

He told Law360 on Friday that in addition to helping the firm build its patent litigation presence in New York, he will help solidify and formalize its Japanese counterpart. He spent a combined year and a half in Japan as in-house counsel for Panasonic Corp. while he was at Amster Rothstein, and has since established relationships in the country with repeated return visits, he said.

"I built trust [with clients] that will last a lifetime," Solomita said.

While at Panasonic, Solomita spearheaded patent licensing programs, directed litigation and provided counseling in all areas of patent law. Although he knew "virtually nothing" about Japan before he moved there the first time, he established himself as a go-to IP expert, publishing articles for Japanese IP professionals and lecturing extensively on a variety of IP-related matters.

"I love the people and the business culture," Solomita said.

Overall, Solomita has focused on patent issues in areas such as LCDs, laser printers, lithographic plates, circuits and digital cameras, among many other high-tech products.

A recent case that stands out for Solomita involved a summary judgment of patent invalidity in Arizona. In a suit involving a patent that covered airborne particulate detectors for clean rooms, Solomita was able to keep an adversary from "essentially trying to put our client out of business," he said.

He started his professional career in the aerospace industry, but constantly had his eye on practicing patent law. He said he sees the combination of his love for technology and the law as a "perfect marriage."

Solomita earned his law degree from New York Law School in 1997. Before that, he graduated from NYU Polytechnic School of Engineering with a degree in aerospace engineering. He is admitted to practice in all New York state courts, the U.S. District Court for the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York and is registered to practice before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, according to Sheppard Mullin.

Sheppard Mullin has 60 attorneys in its New York office and 670 attorneys total in 15 offices in the U.S., Europe and Asia. The firm's IP practice group includes 100 attorneys, according to the firm.

--Editing by Stephen Berg.