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Young manager brings energy

Marcus J. Thymian listens to the firm's former managing partners for advice

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With four former managing partners remaining at a local intellectual property law firm, Marcus J. Thymian relies on them for suggestions.

"I have found their input invaluable," said Thymian, managing partner at McDonnell, Boehnen, Hulbert & Berghoff LLP.

The firm established in 1996 now consists of 78 lawyers, along with 15 technical agents and patent agents working in Chicago and at an office in Durham, N.C.

Thymian, 40, joined the firm fresh out of the University of Minnesota Law School in 1998. He became a partner in 2007 and started as managing partner in January. He expects the stint as managing partner to end in late 2014.

His law practice focuses on patent litigation, patent prosecution and client counseling, particularly in the electrical, software and mechanical technical fields.

"I'm learning a lot as managing partner and when I'm done, I look forward to using the business knowledge I've learned to help my practice and the firm in general," he said.

Daniel A. Boehnen, a founding firm member who served as its first managing partner, said Thymian represents the youngest lawyer to serve in the leadership role.

"Because he's young, he's got lots of energy he throws into it," Boehnen said. "He's adapted well trying to balance all the competing interests" between veteran and younger partners, including different financial pressures.

Boehnen and Thymian share ad-

joining offices and the younger lawyer sometimes consults with Boehnen.

"I would never push my view on him," Boehnen said. "We talk whenever an issue comes up that has a level of sensitivity or controversy."

Thymian said he tries "to be a good listener and I think that helps me understand where our firm's perceived weaknesses are and what we can do to get better."

For example, he said a lawyer hired several years ago mentioned that a previous employer handled docketing differently.

"We were able to get some further input and made our docketing system more efficient and more effective," he said.

Thymian said he tries to display a positive attitude because he considers firm morale important.

"I want other people who work at the firm to enjoy coming to work each day like I do," he said.

He heads the firm's seven-member management board and addresses day-to-day issues that arise. He also participates in compensation decisions and plans its annual partnership retreat, which typically occurs in January.

The firm's lawyers work on the full range of intellectual property matters, primarily patents, trademarks, copyright, along with counseling, Thymian said.

Its lawyers earned advanced degrees in technical areas such as software, biotech, electrical, chemistry, pharmaceuticals and diagnostics.

"All of our attorneys practice in some type of technical area and will also practice a regular specialty such as litigation or counseling, for example," he said.



Marcus J. Thymian

Managing Partner, McDonnell, Boehnen, Hulbert & Berghoff LLP

- **Location:** Chicago.
- **Size:** Declined to provide revenue figures.
- **Lawyers:** 78.
- **Offices:** 2.
- **Age:** 40.
- **Law school:** University of Minnesota Law School, 1998.
- **Interests:** He enjoys spending time with his wife and their two young sons, competitive sailing, cross-country skiing and distance running.

The firm's clients include Bristol-Myers Squibb, Merck & Co. Inc., Panduit Corp. and Sprint.

Thymian and the firm began to represent Panduit, a manufacturer of network telecommunications products, about 12 years ago, said Christopher S. Clancy, the company's chief patent counsel.

Clancy called Thymian "very responsive to his clients' needs and (he) understands what needs to be done on a specific project. He's a good listener, understands clients' problems quickly and takes the necessary steps to provide a solution."

As for the firm's goals, Thymian

said he wants "to help our firm to adapt with our clients' changing needs and practices. We've seen many of our clients having to make changes in how they obtain and enforce intellectual property due to changing budgets and a changing legal landscape."

Thymian said he spends between a quarter and third of his time on firm management matters. He works closely with the firm's directors of operation, finance and information technology.

He said his main challenge as a firm leader involves "managing the time commitment.

"It's difficult to find the time to implement ideas I have for improving the firm. Another challenge is identifying potential problems before they become real problems."

Thymian said he also wants "to continue to develop and leverage the talent we have and attract new talent."

During the past two years, the firm hired 17 lawyers and 11 technical professionals.

"The growth occurred because of our clients' increasing needs for obtaining intellectual property, primarily patents in the software and electrical technologies," Thymian said.

As for 2013, Thymian said he expects the firm will hire five or six lawyers, based on its needs throughout the year.

Thymian, a Minnesota native, became interested in patents as a teenager. He received an undergraduate degree in electrical engineering from the University of Minnesota before attending its law school.

While a law student, Thymian worked as a patent law clerk in the legal department of Honeywell.

At the law firm, Thymian found a way to combine his interest in sailing with marketing.

For the past three years, Thymian participated in the sailing race from Chicago to Mackinac Island, Mich., which the firm co-sponsors.

He also participates in the Patent Cup, an annual sailing regatta in which patent lawyers compete at a different location around the world. Next year's race will be conducted in New Zealand.

"I've made lots of friends sailing and appreciate the excitement and teamwork," he said.

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