

Cahill Has 'Great Ambitions' To Take IP Litigation By Storm

By **Dani Kass**

Law360 (March 8, 2024, 9:53 PM EST) -- Cahill Gordon & Reindel LLP has spent the last year building up a new intellectual property practice, with a veteran of top law firms leading the way and attorneys from White & Case LLP joining the firm earlier this year.

Gerald Flattmann joined Cahill from King & Spalding LLP in January 2023 to lead its new life sciences patent litigation practice, aiming to increase the breadth of a firm historically known for its financial services and corporate work. He has been carefully recruiting a team, including White & Case LLP duo Colleen Tracy James and Peter Armenio, to lead the firm in a new direction and build up a strong IP reputation.

"We don't have an upper limit to how big we can grow this team," said Herb Washer, chair of Cahill Gordon's executive committee. "We have great ambitions. We want this to be a very significant part of the firm's practice. We want to be able to handle any kind of IP litigation."

The new practice group has the three co-chairs — Flattmann, James and Armenio — as well as one additional partner, two counsel, six associates and one law clerk.

"[Before,] we had a modest IP practice that was principally focused on serving our existing corporate clients when they had intellectual property needs," Washer said. "We have some IP lawyers who have very broad expertise, and they just served where needed."

"What we didn't have," he continued, "was a really targeted practice that was top-tier in every respect. A real destination practice for large pharmaceutical companies, for example."

That push to become a destination practice is where Flattmann, James and Armenio come in, according to Washer.

Flattmann, who has been named an IP MVP by Law360, came over from King & Spalding, but he'd also practiced with Paul Hastings LLP and Kirkland & Ellis LLP.

James and Armenio joined Cahill in January 2024, making it their second jump together. Before White & Case, they worked together at Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP.

"The excitement is really contagious," James said of her new firm. "Everyone is feeling it here. It's been nothing short of fabulous."

Earlier in her career, James was managing partner at Fitzpatrick Cella Harper & Scinto — now part of Venable LLP — and partner at Mayer Brown LLP. Armenio had spent more than a decade at Kirkland, where he overlapped with Flattmann.

"Peter and I built the IP life sciences practice at Kirkland in the 2000s," Flattmann said.

When leaving King & Spalding, Flattmann brought then-senior associate Andy Cochran, who is now counsel at Cahill.

The firm is focused on expansion, with its crypto group being another big-ticket area. But Washer said they're being deliberate in that growth. With those efforts, Cahill hopes to make a more public name for itself.

"The attitude decades ago was the clients who really need to know Cahill already know Cahill. We don't need to advertise." Washer said. "We were a mystery, and in recent years we've tried to remove that shroud of mystery and let the world know who we are and what we do."

Flattmann brought over longtime client Galderma SA, a pharmaceutical company focused on products for the skin. The company's chief IP counsel, David Banchik, told Law360 the transition has been seamless.

"Gerald has this ability to surround himself with top talent," Banchik said. "I was perfectly satisfied at King & Spalding, and I'm very pleased for what he's been able to do with Cahill."

The team's mostly focusing on life sciences, but they do have work in other industries like technology and telecommunications, and would be open to expanding that practice "if we find the right people," Flattmann said.

The firm's roster increase is "not just [growth] for growth's sake," he said. Instead, the firm is trying to curate the best team, whatever that looks like. The firm now has about 325 total attorneys, 80 of whom are partners.

The entire IP team is in New York, but the firm also has offices in Washington, D.C., and London.

One thing Washer said he knows is that the firm is not interested in becoming a megafirm.

"We've made a very conscious decision not to compete with the Kirklands and the Lathams of the world, who have every conceivable practice area in every jurisdiction in the world," he said. "That's a great model, but that's not our model."

James praised Cahill's approach to uplifting women, saying there's a large culture of being "extremely supportive of women" and their advancement, along with mothers with younger children.

"The fact that I have the co-chair title with Gerald and Peter is really something that speaks volumes," she said. "At other firms, there are women who are chairs of departments, but to be on par with men who are name-brand icons in this field really says Gerald and Peter agree we are equal, and that, I think, is a big statement."

A mutual friend had connected Washer and Flattmann knowing they were looking for new IP opportunities, and there was one vital skill that made Flattmann stand out to the Cahill executive.

"We were looking for somebody to organize our karaoke nights, which was critical to hiring Gerald in my mind," Washer joked. "He's an excellent emcee, should anybody ever need his services in that area."

"The key," Flattmann said, "is to sing not necessarily what you like, but what you can sing. My range tends to be more in the low tenor."

"There's a half octave where he's excellent," Washer added.

"Herb is a little bit higher, so we tend to make a good duo," Flattmann said. "We compliment each other."

Flattmann leans more toward the likes of Frank Sinatra, Johnny Cash and Elvis, whereas Washer and others are drawn more to musicals. The firm leader collaborated with Sam Enzer, the firm's head of cryptocurrency and fintech, on a rendition of "If I Were A Rich Man" from Fiddler on the Roof.

James has not yet attended one of the karaoke nights, but she's considering 1980s Madonna for the future, even though she claims she "cannot carry a tune."

That after-hours activity encapsulates why Flattmann said he enjoys the firm.

"It's the kind of firm where we have our litigation partner meetings every couple of weeks. We're all in one room, and they're fun, even though we're getting down to business and making decisions," he said. "Peter and Colleen came to their first meeting about a month and a half ago, and they walked out just laughing and smiling and saying that this is a special sort of place."

James confirmed that experience, calling the meetings "a no-judgment zone," which is both fun and professional.

"It's like being at a big Thanksgiving table with your family," she said.

--Editing by Kelly Duncan.