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Knobbe, Martens, Olson & Bear LLP

Nathan Reeves, Partner—Litigation, and Jessica Sganga, Partner—Trademark

Nathan Reeves received his J.D. from Harvard in 2015 and holds bachelor's degrees in mechanical engineering, mathematics, and history from Walla Walla University. Nathan joined Knobbe Martens in 2015 and became a partner in 2022. His practice focuses on patent litigation.

Jessica Sganga focuses on domestic and international trademark, unfair competition, copyright, data privacy, advertising, and internet law. She joined Knobbe Martens in 2013 and worked as seconded in-house counsel for Monster Energy in 2017. She is an active member of the International Trademark Association, previously serving as co-chair of a subcommittee of the Young Practitioners' Committee. In addition, she is a member of the firm's Cybersecurity and Data Privacy Steering Committee and serves on the firm's Mentor Committee.

Describe your practice area and what it entails.

Jessica: My practice includes domestic and foreign trademark selection and searching, trademark procurement and prosecution, inter partes proceedings before the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board, intellectual property (IP) licensing, domain name disputes, counterfeit goods and customs, rights of publicity, trademark, trade dress, unfair competition, and copyright enforcement and litigation. I also advise clients on an array of electronic commerce matters, including advertising, promotions, and social media.

Nathan: As a patent litigator, I represent clients in disputes about the validity and infringement of patents. These disputes are often in the federal district courts, but I also work extensively in proceedings at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), including inter partes reviews (IPRs). I work with other attorneys and staff on my case teams to provide comprehensive strategies for asserting patents and defending against accusations of patent infringement. Day-to-day, it's a lot of reading and time spent understanding the technology and the law and writing to communicate this understanding to both clients and courts.

What types of clients do you represent?

Jessica: I represent clients across a broad range of industries, including well-known companies in the food and beverage, cosmetic, fashion, e-commerce, and entertainment space.

Nathan: I've represented both large and small clients across a wide range of technology areas. Medical devices, consumer electronics, software, and outdoor products are just a few of

the client industries I work with. One of my favorite aspects of my practice is being able to represent different clients who deal with different technologies—I'm able to dive deep and learn all about a particular technology and then do the same with a different technology on the next case.

What types of cases/deals do you work on?

Nathan: A large portion of my practice is in IPRs at the USPTO Patent Trial & Appeal Board. These are streamlined, focused proceedings that are designed to quickly and efficiently resolve the question of whether a patent is valid over the prior art or not. I enjoy working on these cases because the structure of the system allows me to spend more time focusing on the core questions and the technology itself—to me, that's the most interesting part. I've also represented both plaintiffs and defendants in district court patent cases.

How did you choose this practice area?

Nathan: Coming out of my undergraduate studies, I knew I wasn't interested in directly pursuing a career in the areas I'd studied. I'd been interested in law school for some time, and it seemed like a law degree would open quite a few doors to interesting career possibilities. Through my time at law school, I found I missed aspects of the science and math that I'd been studying before, and through some research and talking to attorneys in the field, it seemed like IP law would be a great way to achieve a good balance. I've always enjoyed persuasive thinking and writing, so in the first year or two of my career I found myself drawn to litigation, and it's been a fantastic fit for me.

What is a “typical” day like and/or what are some common tasks you perform?

Jessica: Each day is different, which is why I enjoy my job. Common tasks include working on trademark clearance, trademark filings, cease and desist letters, IP agreements, and oppositions.

What training, classes, experience, or skills development would you recommend to someone who wishes to enter your practice area?

Nathan: One of the hardest adjustments to make for most people between their undergraduate education or previous career and the practice of law is learning how to be an effective legal writer. It's especially important in litigation, where being persuasive is important and presentation can often matter a great deal. I encourage everyone interested in becoming a litigator to take every opportunity to practice legal writing—journal articles, mock briefs, clinical work; everything helps.

What is unique about your practice area at your firm?

Nathan: Litigation at Knobbe Martens is different from litigation at many other firms because our focus is solely on IP. Most of our attorneys have technical degrees, and our knowledge of the law is deep and specialized. This means our teams are able to dig deeper into the technology and the strategy of our IP cases. At the same time, our litigation teams are excellent at mentoring junior attorneys and finding opportunities for everyone to participate and progress in their skills and career. I've found great mentors at Knobbe, and everyone I've worked with has been eager to spend time to share their expertise and help me advance.

What kinds of experience can summer associates gain at this practice area at your firm?

Nathan: Our summer program gives summer associates the opportunity to do bite-sized amounts of work in all kinds of different practice areas and technical areas. Summer associates looking for litigation projects can expect to do legal research, write a portion of a brief, or help find and evaluate prior art patents and publications. That said, I encourage every summer associate to take on a wide range of projects, including litigation and non-litigation, because understanding what every practice area at the firm is like is valuable.

What are some typical career paths for lawyers in this practice area?

Jessica: Typical career paths include working at a law firm, like I have done for my entire legal career. Another career path is to work in-house at a company. Many larger companies have in-house legal positions solely focused on IP.

Nathan: Litigation attorneys typically spend most or all of their careers at a law firm. Our firm is designed to provide the training, mentorship, and experience that attorneys need to progress through their careers and excel here. We hire with the intention of seeing everyone have a long, successful career at the firm.

What advice do you have for lawyers without technical or science backgrounds who want to practice in IP?

Jessica: A technical or science background is not necessary for practicing in the area of trademarks and branding.

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Nathan Reeves, Partner