



ATTORNEY SEARCH

By Kenneth Davis

Amar Thakur Utilized His Legal Skills and Experience to Help Build the Intellectual Property Practice at Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton, LLP



When Amar Thakur graduated from law school back in 1995, he initially wanted to go into business law but ended up going into intellectual property law instead. Thakur said he first got into IP law because of his technical background.

"I would say intellectual property law chose me," he said. "Because I had a degree in electrical engineering, I had headhunters calling me with that background. And then when I looked into the area, I found it incredibly interesting. And now at this point, I can't imagine doing anything else."

Thakur is currently a partner at renowned national firm Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton in its Del Mar Heights office, where he has a thriving intellectual property practice. In January, he was named co-chair of the firm's intellectual property practice group. He said his practice is devoted to litigation and licensing.

"So I represent people in patent and trademark litigation," he said. "And I also have a pretty substantial practice in technology licensing and transactions."

Thakur has a roster of prominent clients in the life sciences and technology fields, including Broadcom Corporation, Amgen, Peerless Systems, and Sony Online Entertainment.

He recently represented InfoVista, a leading provider of service-centric performance-management software, in a trademark-infringement lawsuit against Microsoft. The case settled on December 29 of last year.

"The terms of the settlement are confidential," Thakur said. "But it is public information that in January of this year, Microsoft announced that they were buying \$15 million of our client's software."

Thakur also represented Beckman Coulter, a maker of biochemical laboratory instruments, in a patent-infringement lawsuit against Applera. He said the case was settled in the middle of last year with a "complicated set of agreements that included a \$35 million payment to our client."

Additionally, he has a trade-secret case currently pending for his client Wireless Facilities against Celeris Systems.

Thakur joined Sheppard Mullin from Latham & Watkins in June 2004. He explained why he decided to make the move from Latham to Sheppard Mullin:

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"I was attracted to Sheppard Mullin because I think it's a premier California firm with a large office in San Diego-Del Mar," he said. "At that point, I believe they were 60 or 65 lawyers or so, but they didn't really have a material IP practice in San Diego-Del Mar, which is obviously an essential component of a law firm. So it was sort of an entrepreneurial opportunity for me to go in and be the second IP lawyer in the Del Mar office and try to grow it, and as you've probably heard, things have gone quite well."

Thakur completed his undergraduate work at the University of Washington in Seattle, graduating in 1992 with a degree in electrical engineering. He went on to earn his law degree, with honors, from Arizona State University in 1995.

After graduating from law school, he went to work in the Phoenix office of law firm Bowman and Brooke, where he was a general associate. Thakur said that he really wanted to practice law in California but took the job at Bowman and Brooke because his wife was working on her M.B.A. at Arizona State University.

Once Thakur's wife completed her M.B.A., they moved to California, and he joined Fish & Richardson in the firm's San Diego office in 1997. At Fish & Richardson, his practice focused on intellectual property matters. In 2000, he came over to Latham & Watkins' San Diego office and continued to practice intellectual property law. Thakur joined Sheppard Mullin's Del Mar Heights office as special counsel in June 2004. In January of 2005, he made non-equity partner and then equity partner in January 2006.

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Thakur discussed what he enjoys most about his job:

"I think what I enjoy most about the job is sort of being able to have grown it in the way I wanted to grow it," he said. "We've grown in the Del Mar office; before January, I was helping grow that. And we've grown it from two to 16 lawyers and brought in great clients and brought in what I think is really top-tier talent in our group. The group is relatively all young, and there's really sort of good energy in the group, and I've enjoyed that as well."

In addition to running his practice and co-chairing Sheppard Mullin's intellectual property practice group, he frequently speaks publicly about legal issues related to intellectual property and technology transactions. He also regularly participates on panels at American Corporate Counsel Association events and is a guest lecturer at the Graduate School of Management at the University of California, Irvine. Thakur said he also often speaks at gatherings where law students are present. A month ago, he hosted a get-together at his house for the South Asian Bar Association.

"It was mostly law students who were in the community who wanted to meet with lawyers in the area," he said. "So I'm always trying to do something like that. At the end of the day, I think it's important to continue to reach out to your community and reach out to students."

About Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton, LLP

Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton's founding partners began the firm in Los Angeles in 1927 with the simple blueprint of providing superior client service and legal counseling. Sheppard Mullin attorneys continue to respond rapidly to ever-changing business and legal environments with creative, cost-effective, and practical solutions. The firm's philosophy is to staff matters with experienced, effective, results-oriented attorneys who recognize that availability, accessibility, and responsiveness to clients are fundamental.

The firm practices in the following areas of law: general civil trial and appellate practice in all state and federal courts; financial institutions law; commercial law; banking; bankruptcy and reorganization; construction; corporate; securities; antitrust; entertainment; intellectual property; unfair competition; labor and employment; pension and employee benefits; federal, state, and local taxation; government contracts; real estate; land use; environmental; white-collar criminal defense; international business; administrative; probate; trust; estate planning; aerospace and defense.

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Thakur had the following advice for law students:

"The reality is grades matter, so study hard," he said. "And I would say the other thing is to do what you enjoy. If it's not your passion, don't do it for the money. Find the area of law that you like the most, and at the end of the day, happiness is the function of doing what you like, not a function of how much money you make."

Thakur was born in London, England, and went to high school in New Delhi, India. He and his family moved to the states in 1987. His wife, Lisa, is the Vice President of Operations for Scripps Health. They have two sons: Devan (seven) and Jai (four).

He said he enjoys running in half marathons as well as playing golf.

On the Net

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