

Former Aerospace Engineer Andrei Iancu Argues Successful Patent Cases: A Success Story

By Kenneth Davis

Summary: Andrei Iancu, a prominent patent and intellectual property attorney, has had a storied career, taking him from satellite designs to arguing cases in the Supreme Court. With an impressive academic pedigree, Iancu earned his bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering, a master's degree in engineering management, and his Juris Doctor (JD) degree, all from the University of Southern California. After working in the aerospace industry, he then shifted to the field of patent and intellectual property law.

Iancu has played a major role in one of the most high-profile patent cases in recent history, *Integra v. Merck*. He argued his case before the Supreme Court and ultimately secured victory on behalf of his client. His success in the Supreme Court has made him a sought-after legal expert and a frequent speaker at patent and intellectual property conferences.

Along with his work as an attorney, Iancu has also served his community. He volunteers his time at the International Rescue Committee, similar to other prominent attorneys including Senator Kamala Harris and former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton.

In his current role as Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), Iancu has made a number of reforms designed to improve patent reviews and the overall patent process. These reforms have focused on streamlining and clarifying patent applications, making the process more transparent and accessible to applicants. In addition, he has worked to create a more efficient and unified patent application process across the United States and the world.

Andrei Iancu's journey has been remarkable, as he has gone from designing satellites to serving as Director of USPTO. From his victory in the *Integra v. Merck* case to the reforms that he has implemented at USPTO, he has distinguished himself as a leader in the patent and intellectual property field.

Andrei Iancu is a patent and intellectual property attorney and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). With a degree in aerospace engineering, master's degree in engineering management, and Juris Doctor (JD) degree all from the University of Southern California, his career has taken him from designing satellites to arguing cases in the Supreme Court. Iancu was victorious in the high-profile *Integra v. Merck* case and has become a sought-after legal expert. He has also passed a plethora of reforms at USPTO designed to make the patent application process easier and more transparent. Additionally, Iancu has volunteered his time advocating for those in need with the International Rescue Committee. His remarkable journey and important accomplishments in the patent and intellectual property field have certainly made Andrei Iancu an influential figure.

From Aerospace Engineer to Patent Attorney

Andrei Iancu is an attorney who works in intellectual property practice and the partner-in-charge of Irell & Manella's Washington, D.C. office. He has authored numerous articles in the area of patent law, represented clients before the Patent Trial and Appeal Board, and argued cases before the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals. But this attorney's path to law was far from traditional. Andrei is a former aerospace engineer who designed satellites for Hughes Space and Communications.

Aerial Designs

Prior to beginning his career as an attorney, Andrei practiced as an aerospace engineer. After graduating with his Master of Science (M.S.) degree in aeronautics and astronautics from Stanford University in 1994, Andrei started working for Hughes Space and Communications and the Hughes Research Laboratories. He was

recruited to the team due to his extensive technical knowledge and expertise in the design, analysis, and optimization of aerial-systems. During his time spent at Hughes Space and Communications, Andrei was responsible for the design and integration of communications payloads on various satellite platforms, a task that he completed both autonomously and as part of a larger team.

Leading the Team

Andrei took on a leadership role within Hughes, where he supervised the works of other engineers and managed projects from conception to completion. His expertise was highly sought after during the development of multiple satellites, and due to the success of his projects Andrei was promoted to the position of senior lead engineer. In this role he was given the responsibility of leading and overseeing the work carried out by his colleagues, in addition to designing and managing the integration of communications payloads.

Courtroom Advocacy

Andrei's transition from engineering to the legal field happened in 1997 when he gained acceptance to the UCLA School of Law, where he received his J.D. He subsequently went on to become a partner of the well-known firm, Irell and Manella, in 2014. Through his work in intellectual property practice and litigation, Andrei has argued several patent-related cases before the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals and authored several notable articles on patent law.

"And I specifically wanted to go into intellectual property, where I could work on a whole variety of cutting-edge technologies," he added.

Iancu enrolled at [UCLA School of Law](#) in 1993, earning his law degree in 1996. After graduation, he worked as an intellectual property attorney at now-defunct law firm Lyon & Lyon in Los Angeles.

"It was one of the more prominent intellectual property boutiques," he said.

In early 1999, Iancu left Lyon & Lyon to join Irell & Manella in its Los Angeles office. He explained why he made the move:

"There were a variety of reasons; one of them was I wanted to be at a general practice firm," he said. "You have a broader base of collective knowledge at a general practice firm. Plus, I knew, being in the field, that there is an [amazing collection here of intellectual property](#) intelligence and creativity."

Iancu's practice focuses primarily on patent litigation, but he also works in all aspects of intellectual property, including patent prosecution, due diligence, and licensing. He is also registered to practice in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Iancu's clients work with a variety of technologies, including medical devices, computer peripherals, and video game systems. He has been involved in a number of high-profile cases in which he has obtained favorable verdicts for his clients.

For example, he successfully represented Immersion Corporation in a patent infringement suit against Sony Computer Entertainment over game-control devices used with PlayStation video game consoles. A jury found all of Immersion's claims to be valid and awarded the company \$82 million in damages in September 2004. The case is now up on appeal, according to Iancu.

Iancu discussed his strategy in the case:

"As usual, our goal is to explain what generally is complicated high technology in understandable terms for the jury that make sense and that would make them be interested in the case," he explained. "So the case strategy is to have witnesses that can actually explain the technology and make a connection with the jury so that you're teaching the jury something that is interesting for everybody, and they can learn from it."

He also represented TiVo, the company that makes digital video recorders that can "pause" live television, in a patent infringement case against EchoStar Communications, a satellite television operator. TiVo alleged that EchoStar's set-top boxes were in violation of a patent on a multimedia time-warping system invented by TiVo's cofounder, Jim Barton. A jury in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas found that EchoStar violated TiVo's patent and awarded TiVo \$74 million in damages in April 2006. The case attracted substantial media and industry attention and was closely watched by Wall Street, according to the Associated Press. Iancu said the case is currently on appeal.

Additionally, Iancu successfully represented [St. Jude Medical, Inc.](#), a global cardiovascular device company, in a patent infringement case dealing with a device for vascular closure.

Iancu, who's currently representing Skype (a subsidiary of eBay) in two patent infringement cases, was named by the *Los Angeles and San Francisco Daily Journal* as one of California's "Top 20 Attorneys Under 40 Years of Age" last year.

Iancu discussed what he enjoys most about his job:

"I love the opportunity to interact with inventors and people who spend their time trying to come up with new things to change the world," he said. "That's a tremendous privilege. With respect to working at Irell & Manella, we have a tremendous collection of knowledge, legal intelligence, and creativity here, and I feel that I am working with some of the most creative lawyers out there. And that makes my job a lot of fun."

He said one of the biggest challenges of his job is [learning new technology](#).

"It's always challenging to learn any technology, and you have to do that all the time," Iancu said. "But that's also part of the fun. I wouldn't want to be in a career where I'm not challenged."

Iancu said balancing work with family life is another big challenge.

"I have a wife and two children at home," he said. "And you have to make a commitment to yourself that family life is very important, and you make sure you're there for your children."

Iancu said one of the people who have influenced him the most is [Morgan Chu](#), head of Irell & Manella's intellectual property litigation group.

"He's one of the country's best trial lawyers," Iancu said. "I always learn from him."

In addition to Chu, Iancu said some of the senior partners at Irell & Manella, including Jonathan Steinberg, have also influenced him significantly. Iancu said he has also been influenced by his patent law professor at UCLA, Laurence Pretty, with whom he remains in touch.

Iancu said one of the highlights of his professional career before law school was his involvement in the launching of a special type of reflector--a shaped reflector--while he was at Hughes. He received the Malcolm R. Currie Innovation Award for his work on the shaped reflector. Iancu said the two highlights of his legal career were his involvement in the Immersion trial and his involvement in the TiVo trial.

Iancu talked about what he believes are some of the most important issues [facing intellectual property law today](#):

"The patent arena is right now in the midst of some potentially significant changes in law," he said. "A huge part of our economy right now is based on intellectual property, more so than ever before. And because it is

such an important part of the economy and daily life, it has begun to get a lot more attention on the legal side, both from Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court, as well as the Patent Office itself. So there are significant potential changes in patent law being considered by all branches of government, which might affect the economy in general."

Iancu was born in Bucharest, Romania, and moved with his family to the United States when he was 12. The family first arrived in New York but moved to California shortly after.

"We only lived in New York for a month, and it was February, cold, snowing, and my father went for an interview in California, and it was sunny, 70-degree weather," he said. "And he did not come back. He just said, 'You guys pack up and come here.' And we've been here ever since."

Iancu has been married for 15 years and has a nine-year-old son and a 13-year-old daughter. He said when he has the time, he likes to go skiing. He is also a big Lakers fan and has season tickets to Lakers games.

Iancu discussed what he'd like to accomplish with his practice in the next few years:

"I want to keep doing what I'm doing here right now and keep growing as a trial lawyer," he said.