



OUTSTANDING LAWYER AWARDS



Intellectual Property

Bart Huffman

Cox & Smith

University of Texas School of Law
Years in practice: 16

Favorite Quote:

“It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity.”

~Albert Einstein

BY SANFORD NOWLIN

Cox Smith attorney Bart Huffman practices law on the edge — the technological edge.

With a focus on privacy and data security issues, Internet agreements and intellectual property, Huffman has become one of South Texas' star lawyers when it comes handling technology issues.

He's advised AT&T on privacy and commercial Internet agreements, handled IP litigation for Clear Channel Communications and provided general privacy services for Frost Bank. He recently represented an English news site in litigation over its online content and regularly helps clients sort out anything from data security breaches to e-commerce issues.

“This is an area of legal practice where experience is critical,” Huffman says. “You don't really have a body of law that can keep up with the constant technological advances.”

Huffman says he enjoys the constant challenge of understanding both the nuts-and-bolts aspects of emerging technologies and the legal questions those technologies create. Whether it's social media or cloud computing, technological developments generate new dilemmas about how to protect and properly handle sensitive information.

“I've always had an interest in technology,” he says. “It's constantly evolving and constantly presenting us with new challenges.”

Given his pre-law career track, his interest in high tech makes sense.

Huffman earned an undergraduate degree in systems engineering from Princeton University and provided consulting services with Arthur Andersen before entering law school.

Although he started out working in patent law,

his expertise with technology and the rapidly expanding Internet led him to broaden his focus. For the past few years, his case work has been focused almost exclusively on technology; privacy now represents 75 percent of his load.

Increasingly, Huffman explains, companies are grappling with how best to protect sensitive data — their own and that belonging to customers and clients. He's advised clients on how to protect private information from security breaches, how to stay compliant with emerging privacy regulations and how to best handle computer records discovery and subpoenas.

“The way companies handle information has become a huge part of how they do business these days,” Huffman says. “Sometimes, the information can really be driving the train.”

While there's not always reams of case law to fall back on when it comes to emerging privacy issues, Huffman says he strives to stay abreast of the latest in regulatory developments.

Lawmakers, both state and federal, have taken an increasingly active role in stipulating how businesses handle sensitive data and protect consumer privacy. That's required him to stay abreast of developments in both the federal arena and state legislatures.

Not surprisingly, Huffman is an in-demand speaker when it comes to matters of privacy, intellectual property and the legal implications of new technologies.

He serves on the faculty and planning committee of the University of Texas Technology Law Conference, an event he co-chaired this year.

Huffman also participates in summits and meetings of the International Association of Privacy Professionals and is recognized by the prestigious annual legal guide Chambers USA as leader in the

intellectual property field.

“Bart's engineering background certainly helps him understand the technical side of the things he's examining,” says Ed Kershner, general counsel for SWBC, another of Huffman's clients. “But he's also well-read and articulate enough that he can communicate it to anybody. One of the things that sets him apart is that he has a real ability to explain things in a way people can understand.”

Outside of his legal work, Huffman is an active arts supporter and coaches his second-grade daughter's soccer team.

Friends also praise his skill and versatility as a musician. When seated at a piano keyboard, he shifts with ease between playing jazz and classical music.

Huffman's interest in the arts and public service overlap when it comes to the McNay Art Museum, where he serves on its corporate committee. “My mother was an artist, so I've always been close to the arts,” he says. “But my involvement is also about seeing San Antonio corporations sign on to support what we believe is one our city's greatest assets. The McNay is a real world-class facility.”

Moulton Dowler, a partner at Langley & Banack, says he sensed Huffman's creativity and skill when he mentored the young lawyer in the mid '90s at the now-defunct firm of Gresham Davis Gregory Worthy & Moore.

“You cannot be around Bart and not appreciate his legal acumen, his intelligence and his enthusiasm,” Dowler says. “He also has an engaging personality and communicates well. I wish we had more Bart Huffmans in this profession.”

SANFORD NOWLIN is a San Antonio freelance writer and journalism lecturer at Our Lady of the Lake University.