

Rising Star: Mayer Brown's Robert Pluta

Law360, New York (July 26, 2017, 1:03 PM EDT) - Mayer Brown's Robert Pluta has already notched more than 50 appearances before the Patent Trial and Appeal Board in his young career and has secured wins for high-tech clients like Google and LG Electronics along the way, earning him a spot as one of five technology law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

THE BIGGEST CASE OF HIS CAREER:

Pluta landed a massive win as lead counsel for LG Electronics Inc. last year in a consolidated action challenging graphics processing patents held by chipmaker Advanced Micro Devices and its related companies at the PTAB, where a fourth judge was added to what's normally a three-judge panel.

Adding an extra judiciary to the mix presented a unique challenge, given that PTAB panels are already known for asking pointed technical questions that require quick-thinking answers, Pluta said. On top of that though, the patent owner heaped on a massive amount of evidence attempting to "antedate" LG's asserted prior art, making the case all the more difficult, he noted.

"So what we did was focus the board on the important evidence that wasn't there," Pluta said. "Obviously to be able to do that we had to review all the evidence, ask the right questions to the witnesses and ultimately distill the issue down into what the patent owner was asking the board to do."

HOW HE GOT HERE:

RISING
★ ★ ★ ★ ★
STAR



Robert Pluta
Mayer Brown

Age: 39

Home base: Chicago

Position: Partner

Law school: DePaul University
College of Law

First job after law school:
Associate at Brinks Gilson &
Lione

Prior to joining Mayer Brown, Pluta served as senior intellectual property counsel at Motorola Mobility LLC during the time of the so-called smart phone wars when Apple, Motorola, Microsoft and Samsung were all involved in high-stakes patent litigation.

The tasks of directing litigation strategy while also keeping the company's internal business stakeholders and engineers abreast of its most recent developments was an enormous amount of responsibility for a young attorney just eight years removed from law school, but the experience taught him the importance of taking a step back and seeing the whole picture, not just how an instant case might play out, but how it's going to affect the business or other cases down the road, Pluta said.

"When I was in-house, that helped me see that, because some of the things internal folks cared about were not necessarily things the outside counsel were appreciating or focusing on," Pluta said. "So after having rejoined private practice, I attempted to understand my clients' business backwards and forwards, and I think that helps ultimately give them the best advice."

WHAT DREW HIM TO IP LAW:

As an undergraduate, Pluta majored in engineering. But although he found the theory of engineering and math very exciting, he concluded midway through his college career that he did not actually want to be an engineer when he graduated, he said.

"I felt like my efforts would be directed better elsewhere, and a patent attorney happened to come in and give a talk, and that kind of sealed the deal for me as far as what I wanted to do with my career," Pluta said. "I looked at it as a way to mix my love for the engineering theory and practice with the law, and it's been a great mix ever since."

HIS ADVICE TO YOUNG ATTORNEYS:

One of Pluta's most joyous activities as an IP lawyer is mentoring and offering advice to younger associates, either at the firm or through local bar association events, taking time to grab lunch or a coffee and talking with someone or really just listening and trying to direct any questions they may have about their career, Pluta said.

He also has five children, ages six to 16, and has been a father since he was in law school. So when Pluta advises young attorneys on the importance of finding the right work-life balance, he knows what he's talking about.

"Maintaining work-life balance has always been a struggle, but it's like anything you find important," Pluta said. "I find my career important, but I also find family important, so you have to make both a priority. Sometimes that means you don't sleep a lot, but you have to know the expectations both at home and at work. That helps, but it's difficult."

— *As told to Steven Trader*

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of

Law360 editors selected the 2017 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,200 submissions. This interview has been edited and condensed.

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