
A Continuing Conversation with Leaders from the Legal Industry



Pat Whalen, *Chairman at Spencer Fane*

Pat represents financial services and technology companies throughout the country on their enterprise-critical intellectual property, data security, and licensing issues. Kansas City Business Magazine selected Pat as the top choice for companies involved in Intellectual Property Litigation. He has secured seven-figure jury verdicts and handled patent claims before the International Trade Commission. Pat is former Chair of the Intellectual Property Committee of the American Bar Association's Business Law Section. He previously served on the faculty of PLI's Annual Advanced Licensing Seminar. Pat was a Charter Member of the National Intellectual Property Governance Task Force and has developed a range of practical approaches to guard against data theft. As Chairman of the Firm, Pat was recently recognized as a Law Firm Leader of the Year for driving greater value and efficiency to clients.



Q: Describe your practice and how it has changed over the past five years.

A: I help solve legal problems for financial services and technology companies so they can focus on their customers and growing their businesses. I represent them on their enterprise-critical intellectual property, data security, and licensing issues, and have first-chaired dozens of jury trials and arbitrations over the past two decades.

My practice has shifted increasingly to protecting our clients' critical data assets from misappropriation. The number of companies reporting a data breach increased dramatically in the past two years. Experts agree that every company is susceptible to data breaches, and that it is not a question of if but when it will happen. Banks are especially vulnerable because of their unique position as both a target themselves—for the goldmine of personal and financial information they control—and their connection to virtually every consumer and business in the country.

Q: What practices or thoughts did you have early in your career that you now see as being misguided?

A: I've learned that merely being a world-class lawyer isn't sufficient. Over time, I've realized the importance of understanding a client's business in addition to simply knowing the details of the matter at hand. This has taught me to focus my counsel on what is best for the client's business, and led me to become more thoughtful, more efficient, and more understanding of the factors leading to all the pressures facing our clients. As a firm, we've worked hard to use the lessons that I've learned to encourage each of our professionals to build every client experience on this client-centric foundation.

Q: What is it about you and your firm that keeps clients coming back?

A: We conducted multiple interviews with clients last year, and learned that our business model is a big differentiator. The majority of our attorneys are partners. Rather than the traditional leverage model of 3, 4, or even 5 associates per partner, we have 3 partners per associate. This makes our associates stronger, and also means that our clients have immediate access to leaders. The fact that our clients work directly with our leaders means that decisions get made more quickly, with their business interests in mind, and with fewer billable hours.

Q: Describe your greatest success in representing a client, and explain why that representation was such a success.

A: For each client we represent, our greatest success is when we significantly reduce their legal exposure in a cost-effective manner. One way we do that is to equip our attorneys with world-class resources and best practices that give them the best possible understanding of our clients' businesses. This gives us the ability to help our clients in a strategic fashion rather than merely executing tactics.

Q: You recently rebranded. What drove your decision to do this?

A: Our clients told us that our brand identity didn't match who we really are. They see us as decisive, responsive, and as leaders. Our brand identity came across as old-fashioned, conservative, and a bit inflexible. There was a disconnect. Our new brand identity focuses on how our clients can be certain that their interests are our priority because they work with leaders – leaders who work decisively, execute with purpose, and understand the importance of flawless timing.

The opinions expressed herein are: (a) solely those of the interviewee and are not intended to represent the position of The Wickford Group, the interviewee's employer or any other third party; and (b) for information purposes only and should not be taken as legal or other professional advice.

If you would like to take part in one of Insight's conversations or would like to recommend a legal professional for a conversation, please email us at insights@thewickfordgroup.com.

