



Michael B. Stewart
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Q: What is your area of practice?

A: Fishman Stewart specializes in securing the creativity of our clients using different forms of intellectual property protection. Personally, I have been in this business for almost 30 years and practice in all areas of intellectual property, including litigation. In addition to having my Michigan bar license, I am also a registered patent attorney, which allows me to practice nationwide. To become a patent attorney, the Patent Office has a separate vetting and examination process including satisfying certain technical-based educational requirements. In my case, I have a master's degree in engineering.

Q: How long have you been with your firm, and how long have you been managing partner?

A: The firm was established in 1996, and I am one of its founders. Michael Fishman and I share management responsibility for the firm and we have worked together for almost 30 years.

Q: How would you describe your law firm's mission?

A: Our firm delivers "World Class Quality, Midwest ValueSM". We turn creative innovation into intellectual capital so that our clients accomplish their business goals.

Q: What is your firm's greatest strength?

A: We have amazingly talented professionals who are dedicated to the firm's mission and we work well as a team. Additionally, we have been able to leverage technology to facilitate cooperation. Fully half of our attorneys have been recognized by one or more national organizations for their technical and legal excellence. Our firm promotes a mutually respectful environment between our attorneys and staff allowing us to work as "one" team to maximize each employee's individual strengths.

Q: What practice areas do you see as having the most potential for growth in 2018, and why?

A: This year we are starting to see our clients lay the groundwork for a possible economic downturn

and we turn that on its head to benefit both us and our clients. Business organizations must differentiate themselves while playing to their core competencies, and that is particularly important in times of economic stress. The depth of our technical and legal expertise in combination with the use of innovative analytic tools has uniquely positioned us to partner with our clients to identify growth opportunities, regardless of what happens in the larger economy. Among other things, we help to recognize and develop new products or services, evaluate the intellectual value of possible acquisitions, and identify new outlets for pre-existing intellectual capital. When used properly, other tools, such as litigation, can also provide significant mechanisms to foster growth by disrupting the status quo.

Q: As a managing partner, what trends in management do you see as most likely to lead to substantive change in the legal profession?

A: Until recently, the legal profession received a "pass" from businesses determined to maximize value and their return on investment. That is no longer true. Increasingly, legal providers are perceived as just another vendor by businesses. To be successful, it will be essential for the providers of legal services to differentiate themselves – otherwise, they will not survive.

A: With disruption comes opportunity. We read about firms combining as part of an ongoing consolidation process. That is one approach. On the other hand, technology has also been a great equalizer and it permits practitioners to work in much smaller groups while providing outstanding legal services. I think that it is genuinely amazing. In short, I see the legal profession undergoing a tremendous amount of both consolidation and diversification at the same time in the next five years. That will be healthy for both the profession and for our clients.

Q: What is unique about your firm's culture? What sets you apart?

A: Fishman Stewart's culture is built on mutual respect and the recognition that we all have unique skills and abilities that permit us to deliver world class services at the best possible value. This applies not only to our attorneys, but to our world class staff as well. Our management structure is extremely level and all of our professionals are empowered to do whatever is necessary to promote client satisfaction while still respecting the need to balance both professional and personal obligations.

Q: The local legal community is well-known for its commitment to "giving back". What pro bono work does your firm do that you are most proud of?

Our firm continues to be on the leading edge of technological innovation, and it has been a key driver to the firm's ongoing success.



Q: How is technology changing the practice of law?

A: At Fishman Stewart, we have colleagues located throughout the country. Yet they have immediate and secure access to all the firm's files and analytic tools; even their desk phones work securely simply by plugging them in at their remote location. No longer constrained by physical files, we can work from anywhere in the world. That has freed me and my co-workers to have a much better work and home life balance while being readily responsive to client needs. It has been extremely empowering. On the other hand, technology must be used responsibly and with care. Encryption mechanisms, intrusion prevention, associated testing, and the like are essential along with robust recovery protocols in case of an unexpected disaster. As the world continues to globalize, it is essential that legal providers stay current with the latest technology.

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenge the legal profession will face over the next five years?

A: The legal profession is under siege from non-attorney third party providers that promise to provide the same quality of services at a much-reduced cost. Clients are understandably receptive to such claims and establishing artificial barriers to entry will only delay the inevitable. Ultimately, the legal profession has no choice but to respond to this challenge and to embrace it, recognizing that there are some services that are in fact commodity in nature and that they should be fulfilled by a low-cost provider. Our firm is fully committed to minimizing cost whenever possible. On the other hand, we have a skill set, depth of knowledge, analytic tools, and level of experience that are key differentiators in the marketplace and we continue to build upon our core strengths for the benefit of our clients. We are not – and never will be – a commodity provider.

Q: What do you see as the greatest opportunity the legal profession will face over the next five years?

A: Fishman Stewart is fully committed to giving back to our community. We represent clients on a pro bono or reduced fee rate including the American Humane Association and the Engineering Society of Detroit. We participate in the Michigan Pro Bono Patent Project, which matches low-income inventors and innovators with volunteer patent attorneys. Our firm also engages in numerous educational and community outreach programs including presentations to local schools and universities, seminars at the United States Patent and Trademark Office, and helps to promote World IP Day each year. Additionally, the firm raises money for deserving charities through matching funds, including money raised for the Heat and Warmth Fund. Further, the firm grants an annual scholarship through the Wayne State law school to a deserving student with high academic performance and an interest in intellectual property.

PRACTICE AREAS

- PATENTS
- TRADEMARKS
- LITIGATION AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION
- COPYRIGHTS
- TRADE SECRETS
- IP CONSULTING, TRANSACTIONAL AND E-COMMERCE SERVICES

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