

Silicon Scene

Tired of being typecast, Skadden, Arps partner Ronald Laurie hung out a new shingle: intellectual property strategist.

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Skadden lawyer starts up IP strategy consulting firm

By Renee Deger

RECORDER STAFF WRITER

Ronald Laurie has billed himself for the past six years as an intellectual property strategist, but his clients kept treating him like a lawyer.

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So Laurie chucked his law practice at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom in Palo Alto, where he had been a partner since 1998, to help launch a consulting firm specializing in IP strategy. The official opening was Jan. 1.

"It's kind of a natural evolution of what I went to Skadden to do, which was integrate IP strategy into deal practices," Laurie said.

The three-person enterprise, Inflexion Point Strategy, is the latest consulting venture set up by longtime Valley lawyers to help companies protect and market their technology. Most notably, longtime Intel Corp. lawyer Peter Detkin left the semiconductor company after eight years in late 2002 to join a similar enterprise, Intellectual Ventures.

Laurie opened a Silicon Valley office for the New York-based Skadden in 1998, leaving what was then McCutchen, Doyle, Brown & Enersen. His hope was to raise the profile of IP issues when it came to structuring deals, but the idea didn't take hold.

"Your only job as an IP lawyer is to tell them there is a nuclear winter issue for which they should pull the plug on the deal," he said. "What I found out after six



A NEW ENTERPRISE:

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years was that by the time the lawyers get involved in the deals, it's kind of too late to do a value-added job."

In his new venture, he's teaming with another former colleague from McCutchen. Joseph Siino, who had left McCutchen about the same time to join the now-defunct Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison, is also a managing director at Inflexion. Siino had left Brobeck in April 2002 to launch his own IP consulting firm.

The third member of the Inflexion team is William Sweet, a longtime Silicon Valley executive and consultant.

Laurie said the new venture is just get-

ting off the ground, and he's still getting used to doing tasks he took for granted while with a large law firm that had plenty of support personnel.

"The administrative details are amazing," Laurie said, adding he's had to buy his own stamps.

"A year ago, if someone had told me in this stage of my career and life I would do a startup, I would have told them they were crazy," Laurie said. "But it's never too late to reinvent yourself."

Senior Writer Renee Deger's e-mail address is rdeger@therecorder.com.