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Novak Druce Opens New IP Office With Akerman Attys

By Denise Oliveira

Law360, New York (January 23, 2009) -- Intellectual property firm Novak Druce & Quigg LLP is continuing its national expansion, opening a West Palm Beach, Fla., office to be staffed with six lawyers snatched from Akerman Senterfitt.

Houston and Washington, D.C.-based Novak Druce, which specializes in proceedings before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, opened an office in San Francisco three years ago. The current expansion to Florida marks a continuation of the firm's strategy to build a national biotechnology practice, said Gregory V. Novak, the firm's managing partner and CEO.

Five of the new lawyers, scheduled to make the move to Novak Druce on Feb. 2, are partners J. Rodman Steele, Gregory Nelson, Jerold Schneider, Joseph Bain and John Vetter. The sixth addition is senior associate Gregory Lefkowitz.

Florida has a growing biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry, mirroring developments already under way in California, Novak said. In addition to serving those clients, the new Florida office will add depth to the firm's expertise in the electrical engineering, software and computer science areas, he said.

According to Novak, his firm launches more filings before the USPTO's central re-examination unit than any other law firm in the country.

The firm represented Research In Motion Ltd. in the highly publicized patent matter pertaining to the BlackBerry, Novak said.

"We saw the Novak platform as a very positive direction, with their emphasis on the various proceedings in patent office, including re-examinations," said Steele, who had been

practicing at Akerman Senterfitt for eight years, handling a variety of patent and trademark matters for domestic and international companies.

"There is nothing more important in today's patent world than re-examinations, because of the cost of patent litigation," Steele said.

"If you're going to litigate, your patent should be as strong as possible, and coming out of the patent office with as strong a presumption of validity as possible is very important," he said.

Steele and his team handle not only USPTO proceedings, but also intellectual property litigation, primarily for smaller companies, which they intend to continue to do at Novak Druce, he said.

Novak Druce first became aware of Steele and his team last year, and were quickly intrigued by their expertise and the Florida market, Novak said.

"We had studied the market, we had studied the people we'd like to have be a part of our growing national platform, so we acted rapidly," Novak said. The negotiations were completed in just two months, he said.

"We are excited about working with this impressive group of skilled attorneys as we expand our reach and further reinforce our position as the go-to intellectual property firm for complex client needs," Novak said in a statement Friday.

Novak Druce has approximately 60 lawyers and patent specialists.

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