

## Rising Star: Covington's Ranga Sudarshan

By Michele Gorman

*Law360 (July 15, 2021, 3:21 PM EDT)* -- Ranga Sudarshan of Covington & Burling LLP advises clients on a range of cases involving off-the-road tires, bedsheet linens, smartphones and fiber optic cables, and he recently helped an Israeli defense contractor win a \$33 million settlement in a patent infringement suit, landing him a spot among the technology law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

### **THE BIGGEST CASE OF HIS CAREER:**

An Israeli defense contractor and its U.S. affiliate Elbit Systems Land and C4I Ltd. in 2015 had accused satellite communications provider Hughes Network Systems LLC and its customers in the energy and hospitality sectors of infringing its patents for satellite internet technology.

Elbit said Hughes willfully infringed two of its patents for broadband satellite systems by installing its signature broadband networks for oil company Black Elk Energy Offshore Operations LLC and Helm Hotels Group, among others.

The company said Hughes' flagship service — its HX/HN broadband satellite systems — complies with an invalid industry standard that was erroneously ratified by the U.S. Telecommunications Industry Association in November 2003. The company asked the court for higher damages because of the willful infringement.

Sudarshan, who co-led a Covington team representing Elbit, considers it one of his biggest cases, noting that it was a multi-year process and "we were up against a very large team of attorneys from Baker Botts."

"It had been a really, really hard-fought discovery and pretrial process," he said. "We handled the case literally from drafting to complaint, all the way through jury trial, all the way through an appeal, which was resolved. The other side was still thinking about filing a petition to the Supreme Court before it finally settled."



**Ranga Sudarshan**  
Covington & Burling

Age: 39  
Home base: Washington, D.C.  
Position: Partner  
Law school: University of California, Berkeley, School of Law  
First job after law school:  
Associate at Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP

The most memorable and dramatic moment during the jury trial happened when Sudarshan's witness seemingly conceded a point on cross-examination. On redirect, Sudarshan showed that Hughes' lead counsel had doctored a slide to present an inaccurate premise in their question, he said.

"I asked [the witness], 'How does it make you feel that they tried to get you to admit to something that wasn't correct?' He took a pause and he said, 'I feel manipulated,'" Sudarshan said. "It was just this very damaging moment for the other side's credibility."

It was a turning point for the case because up until that point, the jury was having trouble understanding the "nitty-gritty of the technology," Sudarshan said.

"But what they did understand was that our expert, who's this lovable Vietnam veteran who wrote the book on satellite technology ... the other side tried to manipulate him," he said.

Sudarshan said his team and Elbit were pleased with the ultimate \$33 million settlement in December 2019, which accounted for attorney fees and additional damages beyond the jury verdict.

#### ***WHAT MOTIVATES HIM:***

Sudarshan, who in addition to his law degree has a master's degree in computer science, loves the "sheer variety" of cases he works on that involve everything from off-the-road tires, bedsheet linens, syringes and nutritional supplements, to cosmetic products, agrochemicals, semiconductor devices and expandable arrowheads.

The intellectual property issues are central and important to Sudarshan's clients, and it's a privilege to help them work through these issues that are essential to their businesses, he said.

"For me as an attorney, it's a lot of fun to dive into these different cases and learn about these hugely different technologies, and then wrap it up and then go to the next case, or at the same time be juggling different cases that are so hugely different," he said. "Intellectually, I love technology, I love learning about different technologies, [and I] love working with experts."

#### ***THE MOST INTERESTING CASE HE'S WORKED ON RECENTLY:***

Sudarshan has enjoyed advising Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd. for the last several years on its 5G cellular network rollout in part because of the mission. The Indian telecommunications company is trying to make smartphones and 5G internet accessible to a huge swath of the country's population, which ordinarily couldn't afford the technology.

"The work they've already done has been credited with helping the Indian economy grow at a really fast pace and bring people up the economic ladder," he said.

The technology itself also interests Sudarshan. Reliance Jio is developing 5G technologies that particularly address challenges faced by people living in dense, urban environments.

"My colleagues and I at Covington have been advising them on their IP strategy for this big push they're making on 5G," he said. "They're also trying to develop a lot of this technology indigenously in India. It has been a great privilege, and it has been a lot of fun to help on that project."

#### ***HOW HE THINKS HIS PRACTICE AREA WILL CHANGE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS:***

When Sudarshan began his career, the partners who were leading and arguing cases looked a certain

way, he said. While he had mentors and opportunities, the legal profession wasn't diverse.

"I think we're going to see in the next 10 years that in technology law or IP law, the attorneys who are trying the cases and leading the matters are at least hopefully going to better reflect the diversity of our jury pools and the judiciary," he said.

Sudarshan is also hopeful the sector will soon see progress in having more attorneys who don't have a technology background becoming involved in IP law.

"That might be a bit of an equalizer: You bring in people who don't necessarily have the Ph.D.'s and master's in computer science, but can still do a great job for clients on these cases," he said.

— *As told to Michele Gorman*

*Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2021 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,400 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2021, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.*