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20 TO WATCH UNDER 40

Litigating the Edge

To intellectual property and media attorney Craig Cardon, the word “convergence” buzzes in his ears with the same annoyance as other techie clichés that permeate the Web 2.0 world. Offenders like “organic” and “synergy” come to mind.

Distaste for catchwords aside, Cardon is happily at the forefront of crucial legal issues surrounding the evolution of e-commerce. The 39-year-old partner at Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton has devoted his practice largely to litigation and licensing deals involving the often-rocky marriage between technology and user-generated Web content.

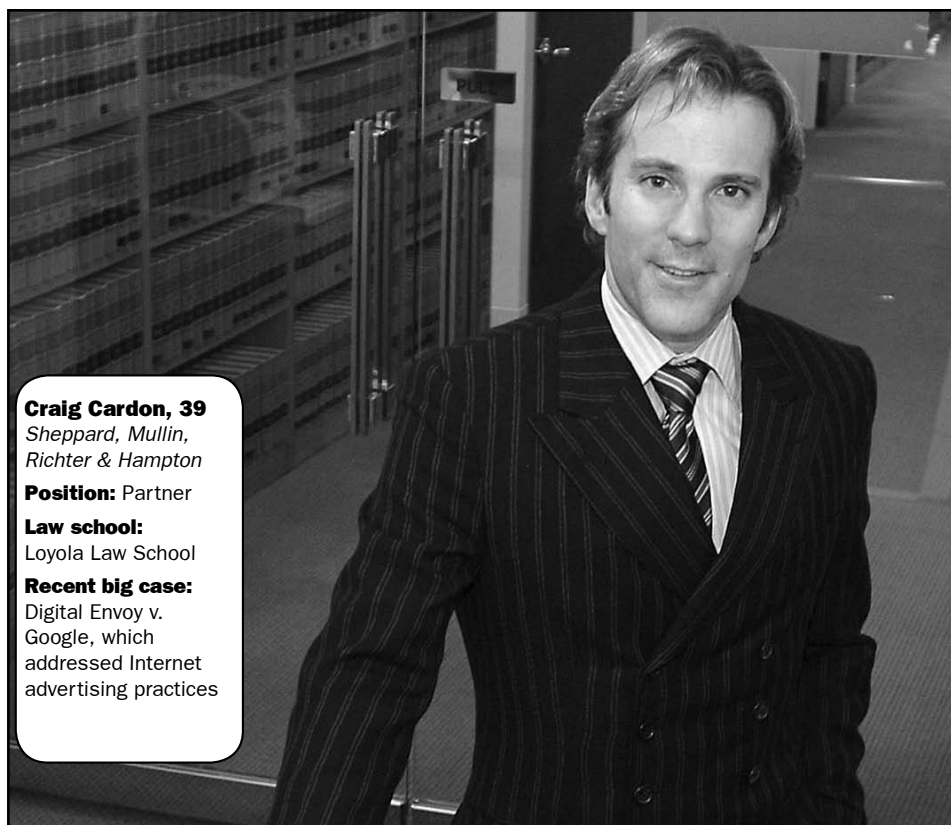
“We are seeing the democratization of media, and in just a few short years, it’s changed how everybody in the country, if not the planet, gets their news and entertainment,” he said. Cardon routinely advises Fox Interactive Media as lead outside counsel on copyright and intellectual property issues for 50 interactive Web sites, including Fox Sports, IGN, On the Lot, and social networking titan MySpace.

Working in tandem with Fox in-house lawyers and programmers, Cardon recently helped to implement a first-of-its-kind music filter for MySpace to stem the tide of copyrighted content. MySpace is embroiled in a lawsuit brought in November by Universal Music Group, which says that the Web site is complicit in allowing users to post copyright-protected music and videos.

“I’m very proud of the filter we put in place. User-generated content is important, but we also want to respect the rights of copyright owners,” Cardon said. “The record labels don’t always like what’s going on, but we try to make it more palatable.” Among its features, the filter boasts a takedown tool for copyright owners to quash unwarranted use of their works, he added.

Lou Meisinger, a senior adviser in the entertainment, media and communications practice group in Sheppard Mullin’s Century City office, said Cardon “is a very smart lawyer in an area that is becoming increasingly more topical these days — issues concerning the Digital Millennium Copyright Act and issues pertaining to copyright protection in new technologies.” “He’s also a wonderful entrepreneurial practitioner and does a great job on the business side of a being a lawyer,” Meisinger said.

Cardon is praised equally by colleagues for his



Craig Cardon, 39

*Sheppard, Mullin,
Richter & Hampton*

Position: Partner

Law school:
Loyola Law School

Recent big case:
Digital Envoy v.
Google, which
addressed Internet
advertising practices

Photo: Xiang Xing Zhou

off-line litigation. He has represented the Williams-Sonoma corporation successfully against a recent false advertising class action and an antitrust suit filed by competitor Cost Plus World Market.

He also recently obtained summary adjudication in a trademark-infringement claim brought by Sean John marks against Ross Stores. After graduating from Loyola Law School in 1993, Cardon cut his teeth as a first-year associate at Bartco, Zankel, Tarrant & Miller, where he defended Baker & McKenzie in a sexual-harassment suit brought by a paralegal.

During the 1994 trial, the first to be broadcast by Court TV, Cardon said he learned a valuable lesson: When cameras are in the courtroom, look busy.

“If you didn’t keep yourself occupied at all times — even when the judge was in chambers — you looked either stupid or guilty.

Our solution was tick-tack-toe,” he joked.

Cardon left Bartco Zankel in 1997 and moved to Graham & James, which later merged with Squire, Sanders & Dempsey in San Francisco. In 2001, he became the youngest partner in Squire’s history at the time.

Equal parts attorney and free spirit, the New York City native is an avid global traveler and mountain climber, having written guides on both Himalayan and Andean mountain ranges. Cardon splits his time between Sheppard Mullin’s San Francisco and Century City offices, which he’s been doing since he joined the firm in 2003. Each week, Cardon and his wife, the artist Shell Cardon, stow their two miniature Doberman pinschers underneath the airplane seats in front of them as the shuffle from one city to the other. “I have more fun every day at work than I deserve,” Cardon said.

— Andrew Harmon