



# CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

McDonnell Boehnen Hulbert & Berghoff LLP



# MBHB History, Standout Moments, and Future Vision

In honor of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of MBHB, we're excited to share a Q&A featuring the firm founders and current managing partner discussing the history of the firm, how the legal and IP industries have evolved over the last two and a half decades, their standout moments and their vision for the firm moving forward.



**Dr. John J. McDonnell**  
**Founding Partner**  
(Retired after more than  
30 years of patent practice)



**Daniel A. Boehnen**  
**Founding Partner**  
Former Managing Partner



**Bradley J. Hulbert**  
**Founding Partner**



**Paul H. Berghoff**  
**Founding Partner**



**Grantland G. Drutchas**  
**Founding Partner**  
Former Managing Partner



**Gavin J. O'Keefe**  
**Managing Partner**

**NEWEST KID ON THE BLOCK**  
AND ALREADY THE 10<sup>TH</sup> LARGEST  
AND HIGHEST TECH IP FIRM IN CHICAGO

\*\*\*

24 ATTORNEYS AND AGENTS,  
MORE THAN ½ HAVING PH.D.'s  
OR OTHER ADVANCED TECHNICAL DEGREES

\*\*\*

PROVIDING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY  
STRATEGY  
AND HANDLING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY  
LITIGATION  
THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES AND  
AROUND THE WORLD

\*\*\*

MCDONNELL BOEHNNEN HULBERT &  
BERGHOFF  
300 SOUTH WACKER DRIVE  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60606

TEL. 312-913-0001  
FAX 312-913-0002

EMAIL TO FIRM: admin@ip-atty.com  
TO ATTORNEYS: <last name>@ip-atty.com

## MBHB EARLY ADVERTISEMENTS

**MBHB**

LESS THAN A YEAR OLD  
AND THE HIGHEST TECH IP FIRM  
IN CHICAGO

\*\*\*

29 ATTORNEYS AND AGENTS,  
MOST HAVING A PH.D. OR  
OTHER ADVANCED TECHNICAL DEGREE

\*\*\*

PROVIDING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY STRATEGY  
AND HANDLING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LITIGATION  
THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES AND AROUND THE WORLD

\*\*\*

MCDONNELL BOEHNNEN HULBERT & BERGHOFF  
300 SOUTH WACKER DRIVE  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60606

TEL. 312-913-0001  
FAX 312-913-0002

E-MAIL TO FIRM: admin@mbhb.com  
TO ATTORNEYS: <last name>@mbhb.com

### Q: What was the impetus for founding MBHB 25 years ago? Was there a specific business need that you were addressing?

**All:** We were all previously at a traditional patent firm and it was a difficult time for firms like ours because we were facing more competition than ever before. That competition, paired with all of us having an entrepreneurial spirit, drove us to create a firm of our own that recaptured the collegiality and spirit we'd been missing. We fondly remember meeting together at John McDonnell's home, along with our families, and making the unanimous decision that it was time for us to go out on our own and do things in our own way.

**Brad Hulbert:** For me specifically, I knew I was ready for a change because I no longer enjoyed going to work. I knew I still liked practicing law, but I wanted to be at a place where lawyers trusted and liked each other and looked forward to working together. There was a market need for lawyers like me that wanted a great place to work, and that need still exists today.

**Grant Drutchas:** It was important to us that we create a firm that offered a strong culture, transparency from the founders and a consistent rotation of managing partners to force the firm to keep updating itself. We knew this would help recruit and maintain talented attorneys at the firm and allow us to serve clients the way we wanted, with the people we wanted to work with.

### Q: What has been the biggest change in intellectual property since you founded the firm?

**Paul Berghoff:** At the time the firm was founded, the value of IP was increasing and over the past 25 years, clients have become more knowledgeable about the IP practice. It's a much more mature business than it was before.

**Brad Hulbert:** IP has grown in perceived significance. For some sectors like tech, without a good patent portfolio you can't be competitive, and in-house counsel faces pressure to build and support those strong portfolios. MBHB has been able to help establish trust between inside and outside counsel and capitalize on the increased importance of IP.

### Q: On the flipside, what has stayed the same over the last two and a half decades, both in intellectual property and in law more broadly?

**All:** The basis of the entire business model for outside firms is building trust and confidence for clients. We are here to take problems off their desk and put them onto our own so that they don't need to worry. This has been our motto since day one and it hasn't changed.

### Q: What have been your most notable moments and significant accomplishments at MBHB over the last 25 years, and what lessons have you learned?

**Daniel Boehnen:** In the beginning, it was exciting, thrilling and exceeded our wildest expectations when we started the firm. We fondly look back on memories like Brad making sure we had enough cash to "get over the hump" because most new firms failed by running out early on, or Paul's entrepreneurial attitude about "doing the do," which he still tells tales of today and Grant putting his AMEX on the line for enormous amounts of money to make sure we got the right technology, which was laptops, if you can believe it.

**John McDonnell:** The most gratifying moment in my entire practice of law was when we began calling all our clients telling them we were going forward with creating MBHB. They all decided to come with us to the new firm. Once that happened, we knew we would be okay. Another thing that

helped was Chicago Lawyer wrote an article about the founding of the firm that gave us a certain amount of legitimacy and encouragement as the “firm of the future.”

**Grant Drutchas:** One of the most significant lessons we’ve learned is to remain flexible. The firm has adapted repeatedly to different economic conditions, employee availability, client base changes, etc. Adaptability has been the thing that made it all possible and remains a significant aspect of our firm culture. From the get-go, we structured MBHB to be flexible. The fact that we’ve developed a firm in Chicago, which is not a traditional tech hub that is so devoted to high tech and very complex biopharma and biomed work is one of the attractions we had to the great technologists in the city. They don’t have many options when it comes to firms they can go to with the level of complex work MBHB does on the tech and litigation sides, and we were able to build a firm that’s very unique for the Midwest.

**Paul Berghoff:** We were flat out afraid when starting the firm, not knowing which clients would stay or what the future would hold. That adrenaline set a great precedent for us moving forward. We knew we would have to be totally focused to succeed in the business and couldn’t rest on our laurels, which in part is why we’re still here today.

**Brad Hulbert:** I’m so proud that we’re able to provide lawyers a great place to work with a good culture, and that we’ve created a source of jobs and income for dozens of families.

### Q: What is your vision for the firm over the next 25 years?

**All:** Our goal is to pass the baton on to the next generation - nothing would make us prouder than the firm continuing to have success in the coming decades and maintaining the culture we’ve so proudly built. A lot can change in the industry with growth, recessions, retirements and departures; through it all we have sustained a robust range of services that keeps the firm financially healthy and have developed younger talent along the way. The most we can hope for is pushing that success further.

**Paul Berghoff:** A classic challenge that any new business has is transitioning from the founders to the next generation – the process is always fraught with potential disaster. We have a great base of younger attorneys and partners that are top talent and have attracted their own clients and high-quality work. I’m as confident as ever that the future of the firm is very bright and we’ve made the transition.

**Daniel Boehnen:** Transitioning to the new generation of management has been the hallmark of Gavin’s work as the current managing partner. He is adopting and installing upgraded technology throughout the systems of the firm that makes us more efficient and better positioned for success.

**Gavin O’Keefe:** My vision is for clients to continue seeing MBHB as an IP boutique that offers something different than what general practice firms can offer – a balanced, full-service IP partner that our clients trust. We bring deep legal and technical expertise that makes us better at each individual offering. We also know that to be a leader in the industry, we must have cutting-edge technology and tools to pair with our high-quality talent. This has been, and will continue to be, a big differentiator for MBHB.



### MBHB MEDIA COVERAGE THEN & NOW

