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Portfolio Media, Inc. | 648 Broadway, Suite 200 | New York, NY 10012 | [www.law360.com](http://www.law360.com)  
Phone: +1 212 537 6331 | Fax: +1 212 537 6371 | [customerservice@portfoliomedia.com](mailto:customerservice@portfoliomedia.com)

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## Q&A With Sutherland's John North

*Law360, New York (August 11, 2009)* -- John L. North, chair of Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP's intellectual property practice group, focuses his practice on patent litigation and related antitrust controversies, and also has handled a number of trade secret disputes. Many international corporations have relied on North to take the lead counsel role in major patent litigations, including one of the world's largest pharmaceutical corporations, a cutting-edge minerals technologies company and a major entertainment company.

North spends considerable time in court handling trials, hearings and appeals. He has handled cases involving a wide range of technologies including pharmaceuticals, interactive program guides, electronic coupons and other electronics issues, various chemical products, medical products, paint, textile dye processes, and a variety of minerals.

Q: What is the most challenging case you've worked on, and why?

A: I represented an international minerals company in a set of related cases against a Swiss company involving a complex set of patent, trade secret and Lanham Act issues. The litigation activity spanned Finland, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and the United States. We also explored novel issues regarding acid chemistry. We ultimately prevailed on the final issue left for trial.

Q: What accomplishment as an attorney are you most proud of?

A: I was lead counsel on three major trials for three separate technologies that took place back-to-back in the Southern District of New York and Delaware. Shifting quickly among three technologies was quite a challenge. It could not have been done without great teams of Sutherland lawyers assisting.

Q: What aspects of law in your practice area are in need of reform, and why?

A: Uniformity needs to be brought to the law regarding inequitable conduct claims. Viable inequitable conduct claims in appropriate circumstances are a necessary check to make sure that the powerful right to exclude cannot be exercised by those who engaged in improper conduct to obtain the patent.

Q: Where do you see the next wave of cases in your practice area coming from?

A: Sooner or later biologics legislation will be adopted, and this likely will create a wave of biologics-oriented pharmaceutical litigation, as did the enactment of the Hatch-Waxman Act. Law firms are already deepening their technology bench in this area.

Q: Outside your own firm, name one lawyer who's impressed you and tell us why.

A: K.T. "Sunny" Cherian at Howrey. I have worked with Sunny on a number of projects over the years. He knows the craft incredibly well, has great common sense and an incredible capacity to work hard.

Q: What advice would you give to a young lawyer interested in getting into your practice area?

A: Getting courtroom experience is a challenge for young lawyers who work on big patent cases. Work on pro bono matters and other projects that will help prepare you to handle courtroom work in a patent case.