

A Firm of Their Own

The four partners of Carlson, Caspers, Vandenburg & Lindquist (CCVL) stand in a circle and stare at the floor that leads their new office. Grey-greenish ceramic tiles are being installed across the welcome area, bordered by narrow black marble slates.

"I don't think we needed a border here; the main tile blends in with the carpet. It would have flowed well from one area to the next," says Alan Carlson.

Someone counters, commenting on how good the border looks. A discussion amongst the members of the new law firm ensues.

While the four men — Carlson, Philip Caspers, Timothy Lindquist and J. Derek Vandenburg, — may have some difficulty coming to a consensus regarding design of the 12,000 square feet of office space, all are in agreement about the mission of their new firm.

While other law firms in the area have intellectual property practices, CCVL is the only one in the Twin Cities that specializes in patent and trademark litigation. Carlson says their goal is to offer something he describes as a "niche within a niche."

"No one else in town is doing exactly what we do," Carlson says. "We want to be the go-to firm for patent-seeking companies."

The four partners stand amidst boxes that they have brought with them from their previous firm, Merchant & Gould. They left Merchant during the first week in January. By all accounts their resignations were on good terms.

Carlson had been with Merchant for 31 years, and the others from seven to 15 years. While the men left positive about their careers at the firm, each craved a new experience.

Carlson says he had the idea of a new IP firm for more than a year, but the actual move evolved slowly. The process started with discussions and conversations that percolated amongst the CCVL founders.

"I think that each of us who started the firm has a desire to be an entrepreneur," says Lindquist. He believes the firm will attract not only clients who will provide challenging work, but also high-quality attorneys.

"We know that there will be enough work here to support growth to 30 lawyers or so, but there is no rush," Carlson says.

Carlson reaches down to grab one of the boxes in the lobby. Some are filled with computers and document scanners, others bulge with client files. The four partners are ready to get to work, and there seems to be plenty of it. As Carlson says with a smile, "Clients choose lawyers, not law firms."

— *Kate Edenberg*