IBM, Samsung, Canon Led 2018 Patent Gains, Report Says

By **Dani Kass**

Law360 (May 8, 2019, 4:07 PM EDT) -- IBM Corp. received more than 9,000 patents in 2018, the most of any company, according to a new report from intellectual property boutique Harrity & Harrity LLP ranking the top 300 companies.

The information technology giant was followed by Samsung with 8,023 patents; Canon Inc. and Intel Corp., with around 3,500 each; and General Electric Co., Toyota Motor Corp., Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. Ltd., LG Electronics Inc., Google's parent company Alphabet Inc. and Microsoft Corp., each with around 2,500 — give or take 150 — in Harrity Patent Analytics' inaugural Patent 300 Report released Monday.

"We wanted to really highlight for the [IP] industry who the top 300 largest patent-obtaining companies, organizations and universities are," Rocky Berndsen, head of the firm's patent analytics group, told Law360.

The ranking of patent portfolio strength is based exclusively on number of utility patents companies received, he said.

Harrity noted that the patents obtained by these 300 companies make up 54 percent of the more than 300,000 patents issued in 2018. The vast majority of the patents obtained by these companies, 68.5 percent, were for electrical, software and computer-related technologies, the firm said. Another 19 percent were technical, 9.1 percent were chemical and 3.4 percent were biological. Among the top 300 companies, 122 added patents in the semiconductor and memory technology area, Harrity added.

Companies That Received The Most Patents In 2018
1. IBM
2. Samsung
3. Canon
4. Intel
5. General Electric
6. Toyota
7. Taiwan Semiconductor
8. LG Electronics
9. Alphabet
10. Microsoft
Source: Harrity & Harrity LLP

The report, totaling more than 1,200 pages, takes a deep dive into each ranked company. For example, it breaks down that IBM has a revenue of nearly $80 billion and more than 360,000 employees. It then shows that the company received 9,111 utility patents in 2018, up from 9,044 in 2017, 8,235 in 2016 and 7,612 in 2015.

The report goes through prosecution statistics for each company — including how long it took them to

get a patent on average and how that compares to other companies — and which firms they've hired over the last two years. For IBM, Cantor Colburn LLP was the go-to firm. Harrity also said that IBM was involved in eight pieces of Patent Trial and Appeal Board litigation filed in 2018, always as a respondent.

Harrity breaks down what types of patents the companies have, with IBM largely getting semiconductor memory and database and file management patents, and includes information about company budgets.

Berndsen said they hope the data will allow in-house attorneys to compare themselves within the industry and competitors, and help attorneys at law firms develop their business, both for new and current clients.

"The goal was really to provide something that's going to be valuable across the spectrum of the IP community," he said.

Others on the list included Massachusetts Institute of Technology at number 114 and Johns Hopkins University at 254, along with Uber and GoPro, both ranked 300.

"While having the sixth most patents is a great achievement, it is not Toyota's goal," the company said in a statement. "Our goal remains the same today as it was when we received the company's very first patent — to build things that help improve society. Patents are simply evidence of the hard work and innovation along the way."

Intel said that it's "been one of the world's leading technology innovators and [research and development] investors for more than 50 years. Every day, our engineers and other employees push the boundaries of computing and communication technologies, and we're proud that the value of their inventions is recognized.

Microsoft declined to comment. Representatives for each of the other top 10 companies didn't respond to requests for comment.

--Editing by John Campbell.