

Law firm Spilman taps new leader for its Pittsburgh office

BY PATTY TASCARELLA

Ronald Schuler has been named managing member of Spilman Thomas & Battle PLLC's Pittsburgh office. He succeeds David Robertson, who led the office since it opened seven years ago and remains with the firm.

Schuler, who joined Spilman at the end of 2008, has specialized in corporate, securities and commercial transactions, and focused on the technology, biotech and energy sectors.

He has been a partner at McGuire-Woods LLP and Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC. He left the law firm sector to serve as senior vice president at PGMT Energy, an oil and gas exploration and production company launched by a former client that was sold for \$115 million in 2006.

Then he launched Greyfriars Global, a law and consulting firm directed at technology and energy companies.

"But the more people asked me to get involved with oil and gas, I realized I needed some help, and that's why I joined Spilman," Schuler said.

He was recruited to the firm by James Joseph, a member of Spilman's Pittsburgh office with whom Schuler worked at McGuireWoods.

Spilman, founded in 1864, is a full-service firm with eight offices and more than 140 lawyers. Based in Charleston, W.Va., its footprint spans Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina.



JOE WLOJOK

Ronald Schuler, recently named to lead the Pittsburgh office of Spilman Thomas & Battle PLLC, has been a partner at two other area law firms.

It employs 13 lawyers Downtown, and last month expanded its space in One Oxford Centre.

Its seven-year lease encompasses 11,000 square feet on the 34th floor, with options for more as needed, so there's room for additional lawyers — though Schuler isn't saying how many.

Schuler's agenda is to grow the office, but said that's "less about numbers" than adding expertise, particularly in the energy area. Spilman focuses on middle-market companies, he said, and is interested in "highly talented lawyers" from large firms or corporations.

"The vision is to be an Appalachian

regional firm and that plays very well into the energy activity occurring here," Schuler said.

"I didn't need something like this to fill out my resume, but being a manager presents challenges that are interesting to me. It's a puzzle to work out and I'm not talking about nuts and bolts, but dealing with personalities."

Robert Denney, who runs Robert Denney Associates, a Wayne-based consulting practice that works with law firms across the country, said it would "bring a certain extra experience" for a law office chief to have a varied background covering large firms and the corporate and entrepreneurial perspectives.

Denney has not worked with Schuler but said his new post may reflect something of a trend fanned by the energy sector boom.

"The usual trend is to go from law firm to company and he's boomeranged back, which I've just seen happen in the energy field a couple of times in the past few months," Denney said. "This sounds like an interesting skill set, and Pittsburgh is certainly the place to have an energy practice right now."

Schuler has something else on his plate. He is writing "The Steel Bar: Reinventions of a Profession in an American City of Industry and Commerce, 1788 to the Present," a book examining the history of lawyers in Pittsburgh.