



CASE STUDY: CLEARMOTION

Every company deals with bumps in the road, but ClearMotion is working to eliminate them—or at least the experience of them. The company's technology predicts road conditions and transforms the way cars ride and handle, doing for motion what noise-canceling does for sound. ClearMotion is working with several major automakers to equip high-end vehicles with its systems, which can detect rough terrain, then use hydraulics to raise and lower wheels and smooth the ride. Over time, the technology could become widespread, like antilock brakes.

In 2018, ClearMotion announced record patent portfolio growth, and the following year raised \$115 million in a series D round of funding—one of the largest tech startup funding rounds in the U.S. in Q1 2019. In total, it has raised \$282 million. It's no coincidence that this success comes close on the heels of the expansion of its patent portfolio.

"Our intellectual property has been critical to our ability to secure funding," says Zack Anderson, ClearMotion's co-founder and chief commercial officer. "Almost every investor asks about the portfolio and wants to see what's included."

In order to protect this valuable IP, ClearMotion has since its founding in 2009 turned to Wolf Greenfield. Shareholder Neil Ferraro—who heads the firm's Mechanical Technologies Group—Associate John Harmon, and the rest of the team have helped ClearMotion develop its in-house patent portfolio and acquire another major portfolio from Bose Corporation. ClearMotion now has over 350 granted and pending patents across 15 countries.

"We have one of the largest motion control portfolios in the world," says Jack Ekchian, ClearMotion's director of IP and research. "Wolf has been with us since the very beginning and helped us grow it. They've been instrumental in our IP efforts."

A close working relationship has been key. Ekchian and Ferraro talk frequently and have worked together to develop a solid patent strategy, and ClearMotion ensures the concepts it's developing feed into and support the strategy. One size doesn't fit all, so the decision of what to patent and what to keep as a trade secret, for example, is made with the company's specific business needs in mind.

"We have a deep understanding of ClearMotion's business model and short- and long-term goals," says Ferraro. "That makes it much easier to prioritize certain patents. And our experience with the technology involved has allowed us to get up to speed quickly." Ferraro's background is

in automotive technology; he previously worked at Ford. Harmon has a PhD in materials science and engineering from Caltech, and has also worked in industry.

"The team at Wolf is technically very savvy," says Ekchian. "Our technology is extremely complex, with many nuances, and the team is able to quickly absorb and understand it. Patents are an intricate combination of law and technology, so you need people who are comfortable and expert in both areas. We get that with Wolf. We also get this clear feeling that the team there is committed to making ClearMotion successful."

"Patents are an intricate combination of law and technology, so you need people who are comfortable and expert in both areas. We get that with Wolf."