

GCs Name Favorite M&A Attorneys

By **Benjamin Horney**

Law360, New York (February 7, 2016, 3:33 PM ET) -- A total of 37 mergers and acquisitions attorneys were singled out by general counsels as the best of the best, separating themselves from the pack with the ability to guide any deal and assemble the perfect teams.

The 2016 BTI Client All-Stars report from BTI Consulting Group (Wellesley, Mass.) named 37 M&A attorneys as the cream of the crop when it came to their client service, and they made up a nearly 12 percent chunk of the 312 total lawyers featured this year. The current cohort of deal makers marks a five-attorney bump from 2015.

Michael Rynowecer, president of BTI, told Law360 that 2016's M&A attorneys were praised for many of the same reasons as last year's, including an aptitude for helping clients stand out in a crowded deals market, the ability to meet strict deadlines and a focus on communication.

The lawyers on this year's list, he added, were also commended for their strength in separating transaction types into large-sector and middle-market deals then quickly and appropriately allocating the right people and other resources to help get deals across the finish line.

"We're hearing that law firms that have a combination of global savvy and the flexibility to mobilize such large, coordinated teams, are really standing out," Rynowecer said. "Not every law firm with that global capacity is willing or has the capability to mobilize as quickly as others. With global transactions that are negotiated across multiple borders, the ability to mobilize virtually immediately is a real advantage."

"Streamlining the approach during mid-market acquisitions is important," he explained. "How do you do due diligence but make it easy and not go overboard to get deals done? More flexibility, more prioritization, more discussions of refining risk before going into the transaction, that's probably the hallmark of the middle market."

A total of 25 law firms had at least one attorney recognized by general counsels for spectacular client service, but seven stood out with more than one lawyer named to the list: Clearly Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP and Vinson & Elkins LLP each had two attorneys recognized, while Gibson Dunn, Hogan Lovells, Jones Day, Mayer Brown and Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP saw three attorneys named apiece. For Gibson Dunn, Jones Day and Skadden, it was the second consecutive year the firms had more than one attorney make the list.

Rynowecer said the firms that are mainstays on the list have a few traits in common, including a true

desire to be the best at client service.

"It's more embedded in the firm," he said. "It's discussed more frequently as a metric and as a way of life than other firms."

Stephen Glover, co-chair of Gibson Dunn's M&A practice, was named to the list for the second consecutive year. He told Law360 that he strives to be highly responsive to clients while giving thoughtful and practical advice. In addition, he aims to manage transactions "smoothly and effectively."

"I and my colleagues spend a lot of time thinking about what the clients' goals are, and how we can best help them achieve those goals," he said. "My job is made easier because at Gibson Dunn, I am able to put together teams of lawyers that are unusually strong, and that are similarly focused on being responsive and effective. The firm has an unusually collegial, cooperative culture that translates to great client service."

He also praised his Gibson Dunn colleagues who made this year's list, Jeffrey A. Chapman and Jay Tabor, each of whom are also multiyear honorees.

"They are both very responsive and very focused on making sure that the client's goals are achieved," Glover said. "This client focus is coupled with great judgment and strong negotiating skills. They also benefit from the effective teamwork that is a hallmark of Gibson Dunn's service."

Marc Sperber, who heads up Mayer Brown's global corporate & securities practice and who also made the list for the second straight year, told Law360 that the firm separates itself through the effort it puts into strengthening client relationships and making sure it is up to date concerning the challenges for each client's particular business.

"We understand that this is a keenly competitive market, and exceptional client service is essential to prosper in such a market," Sperber said. "We're gratified that our clients are acknowledging these efforts and will continue to cultivate and maintain strong client relationships."

Nineteen of the 37 M&A attorneys named as client services All-Stars this year also earned the title of MVP, a distinction granted to lawyers making the list for two or more years in a row. That's a significant boost compared with last year's list, which only had five M&A attorneys earn MVP status.

This year's MVPs include Blake Cassels & Graydon LLP's Greg M. Frenette, Cleary Gottlieb's Ethan A. Klingsberg, the aforementioned Gibson Dunn trio, Jones Day's James P. Dougherty, Mayer Brown's Christian W. Fabian and Marc F. Sperber, Paul Weis Rifkind Wharton & Garrison LLP's Ariel J. Deckelbaum, Sidley Austin's Michael A. Gordon, and Skadden's Sean C. Doyle and Pankaj K. Sinha.

"We find that individuals who stay on the list are often the most humble," Rynowecer said. "They are the ones who say, 'I may be stellar, but I'm just not good enough for the client.' They always want to develop more. They are so motivated and so driven."

The full list of M&A attorneys named as All-Stars includes Jon. W. Daly of Andrews Kurth LLP, Michael S. Jefferies of Armstrong Teasdale LLP, Tomasz Krzyzowski of Baker & McKenzie LLP, S. Christian Nelson of Belin McCormick PC, Greg M. Frenette of Blake Cassels & Graydon LLP, John R. Pitfield of Choate Hall & Stewart LLP, Ethan A. Klingsberg and Victor I. Lewkow of Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP, William H. Aaronson of Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP, G. Scott Rafshoon of Dentons, Jeffrey A. Chapman, Stephen

Glover and Jay Tabor of Gibson Dunn, John H. Booher, Elizabeth M. Donley and Michael J. Silver of Hogan Lovells, Lucy Stark of Holland & Hart LLP, James P. Dougherty, Patrick J. Leddy and Randi C. Lesnick of Jones Day, Brian R. Brown of K&L Gates, Daniel T. Lennon of Latham & Watkins LLP, Christian W. Fabian, Marc F. Sperber and Jason P. Wagenmaker of Mayer Brown LLP, Jason L. Giles of Nyemaster Goode PC, Ariel J. Deckelbaum of Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison LLP, Michael A. Gordon of Sidley Austin LLP, Eric M. Swedenburg of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP, Sean C. Doyle, Leif King and Pankaj K. Sinha of Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP, Marc A. Rawls of Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP, Cornell C. V. Wright of Torys LLP, Sarah K. Morgan and W. Matthew Strock of Vinson & Elkins LLP, and Steven A. Newborn of Weil Gotshal & Manges LLP.

--Editing by Edrienne Su.

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