

The 10 Firms GCs Love For Pharma Work

By **Diana Novak Jones**

Law360, Chicago (June 28, 2016, 11:17 PM ET) -- While many firms have clients in the pharmaceutical industry, a few of those firms have used especially strong client relationships to help them stand out among the crowd, get rehired and even win new business, according to a new report.

Client relationships are the foundation of all firm business, but the pharmaceutical industry requires a special type of attentiveness — a focus that has helped some firms earn the majority of their clients’ work in the field, recommendations to other companies, or ideally, both, according to the BTI Power Rankings 2016 report by The BTI Consulting Group Inc. of Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Clients “will invest in the law firms that invest in them,” said BTI President Michael Rynowecer. “The way they measure that is client service and the components of client service, the law firm that really makes your clients’ life easier.”

A select group of 10 firms have hit the sweet spot for client relationships, where the firm is maximizing the client’s value while getting recommendations for new business in the process, a status BTI calls “Clientopia.”

Butler Snow LLP, Duane Morris LLP, Fish & Richardson PC, Hall Render Killian Heath & Lyman PC, Mayer Brown LLP, Ober Kaler Grimes & Shriver PC, Schiff Hardin LLP, Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP, Venable LLP and WilmerHale are in Clientopia in the pharma industry, based on their strong and lasting client relationships, according to the report.

What does it take to reach Clientopia? It starts with industry-specific knowledge, said Rynowecer. The attorneys don’t have to be scientists, but the more they know, the better, he said.

“If you really want to bond, it’s bringing that working knowledge to all the things that you do,” Rynowecer said.

This knowledge should include the foresight to know where the industry is going and what pharmaceutical companies interested in growth should know to get there, he added.

Strongest Firms For Pharma Work

- Butler Snow
- Duane Morris
- Fish & Richardson
- Hall Render
- Mayer Brown
- Ober Kaler
- Schiff Hardin
- Skadden
- Venable
- WilmerHale

Source: BTI Consulting

“There are a couple of law firms that have gotten really aggressive with clients in terms of trying to identify opportunities to generate revenue streams,” he said.

They’re attending product development meetings to get ideas, he said, while others are setting up streamlined checklists for a small or medium acquisitions to make the process efficient.

By taking the time and investing the money in developing that checklist process, the firms are setting themselves up to get the work while educating the client on how to get the deals done faster, Rynowecer said.

Mayer Brown, one of the Clientopia firms for pharmaceuticals, offers its pharmaceutical clients help in several different practices within its life sciences industry group, according to Reb Wheeler, one of the group co-chairs.

“We pride ourselves on our holistic approach to helping our pharmaceutical and other life sciences clients navigate their intellectual property, transactional, litigation, regulatory and other needs,” Wheeler said in an email. “A key to our approach is our interdisciplinary, cross-office life sciences industry group, which allows us to share knowledge and deliver the full breadth of Mayer Brown’s resources and capabilities to our industry clients.”

Regular communication — and good listening skills — are also at the core of happy client relationships, according to BTI. Firms like Mayer Brown say contact with clients is how they understand what they want and how to make it happen.

James Ferguson, the other co-chair of Mayer Brown's life sciences industry group, said the practice group has annual meetings with one large pharma client to discuss the past year from the perspective of both client and counsel, Ferguson said.

“Through these meetings, we not only enhance our lines of communication, but also identify unique ways in which Mayer Brown can help the client — for example, through the secondment of Mayer Brown attorneys at the client or the adoption of creative programs to promote diversity and inclusion,” he said.

It’s caring about the GCs and their companies and doing the maintenance work to prove it that makes these relationships last and become even more profitable for firms, Rynowecer said.

“These firms that make it to Clientopia have conversations about issues that impact the [general counsel’s] life,” Rynowecer said. “They will help clients with their networking, they will introduce their client to like-minded clients who may face similar issues.

“It takes a lot of initiative to do things like that.”

--Editing by Mark Lebetkin.
