

18 Attorneys Score GCs' Repeat Praise For Client Service

Eighteen attorneys have earned all-star recognition among general counsel and other corporate legal decision-makers for at least two consecutive years for their unwavering commitment to clients, which they demonstrate in part by providing pointed advice and identifying needs before major issues arise.

The 18 “all-star MVPs,” or Most Valuable Players, are among 335 attorneys named in BTI Consulting Group’s Client Service All-Stars 2019 report, released Wednesday. To assemble the list, BTI conducted more than 350 phone interviews with corporate counsel between March 2018 and February. BTI also recognized two “super all-stars” who were named by more than one client, as well as two associate all-stars.

When corporate counsel were asked, unprompted, to identify the attorneys who stood out to them as those who deliver the best client service in the industry, some law firms’ names kept appearing. Of the 650 firms serving large organizations, only 72, ranging from small to large shops, have at least two BTI all-stars, which shows they are focused on cultivating a

culture of client service, according to the report.

The report identified 16 firms as having at least five all-stars. They are Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Reed Smith LLP, Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP, Jones Day, Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP, Arnold & Porter, Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP, Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, Wachtell Lipton Rosen & Katz, Covington & Burling LLP, Littler Mendelson PC, McDermott Will & Emery LLP, Ogletree Deakins Nash Smoak & Stewart PC, Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP, Polsinelli PC and Steptoe & Johnson LLP.

“They have these continuing large groups of partners that are hitting their real stride in client service on a regular basis,” said BTI President

Michael Rynowecer. “To me, that’s the big message.”

Kirkland and Reed Smith tied at the top of the list with 10 all-stars each. Gibson Dunn followed with nine, and then Jones Day and Morgan Lewis with eight.

Jones Day, which has often been at or near the top of the list of shops producing the highest number of all-stars throughout the 18-year history of the report, set a record with 16 last year. While the firm has half that number in the most recent report, Rynowecer said it’s not unusual for a firm to see turnover among BTI all-stars, adding that he continues to view Jones Day as among the shops that promote an institutional commitment for superior client service.

“ [Mark Filip of Kirkland is named a] super all-star who earned accolades from multiple legal decision makers.”

"Somewhere it's impacted in the culture of the firm," he said.

Clients face more complex issues in their practices than ever before, and the all-stars excel at taking challenging issues and making them simple, Rynowecer said. Legal decision makers said the all-star attorneys understand their business better than other lawyers, a trait Rynowecer said is increasingly more important because of growing risk.

"The more you understand about a client's business, the more likely

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– Michael Rynowecer
President, BTI Consulting Group

you are to understand their risk. And the more you understand their risk, the more likely you are to help them minimize that risk," he said.

The all-stars also effectively manage and simplify complex legal matters, and they view their relationships as constantly developing. Even when there isn't a specific problem, the all-stars keep in touch with their clients, rather than approaching their partnership as beginning and ending with individual cases or matters, Rynowecer said.

All-stars also offer innovative ideas and solutions that their clients don't hear from other attorneys and provide counsel with what Rynowecer called an "encyclopedic understanding" of issues.

The report lauded Sullivan & Cromwell's H. Rodgin Cohen, who has been nominated for 16 years running. Rynowecer, who called Cohen's recurring place on the list "stunning," said he was pleasantly surprised to again hear corporate counsel name the attorney in the survey.

Edward Herlihy of Wachtell has been recognized for his fourth consecutive year. Three-year MVPs are Ron Chapman Jr. and A. Craig Cleland of Ogletree and Jonathan Moses of Wachtell.

Two-year MVPs are Soumitra Deka and Daniel DiNapoli of Arnold & Porter, Marc Williams of Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP, David De Lorenzi of Gibbons PC, Elizabeth Ising and Brian Lane of Gibson Dunn, John Ursu of Greene Espel PLLP, Monique Cenac and Kelly Simoneaux of Jones Walker LLP, Andrew Marovitz of Mayer Brown LLP, Peter Covington of McGuireWoods LLP, William Geraghty of Shook Hardy & Bacon LLP and Sabastian Niles of Wachtell.

The two super all-stars who earned accolades from multiple legal decision makers are William Aiken of Chambliss Bahner & Stophel PC and Mark Filip of Kirkland.

BTI also recognized associate all-stars. They are Robert Mancuso of Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP and Devon Downs of Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP.

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