

GCs Name Best Of The Best Attorneys

By **Melissa Maleske**

Law360, Chicago (February 7, 2016, 3:28 PM ET) -- More than 60 lawyers have been recognized by corporate counsel for cracking the code of client satisfaction and standing out among their peers for at least two years straight.

Of the 312 attorneys from 163 law firms named by general counsel in the 2016 BTI Client Service All-Stars report by BTI Consulting Group (Wellesley, Mass.), 61 have been recognized more than once, earning them honors as MVPs. BTI conducted 322 phone interviews with general counsel and other high-ranking legal decision makers to compile the list.

"Being a client service All-Star comes naturally to some; others work at it really, really hard," said BTI Consulting Group's president and founder Michael Rynowecer. "My biggest piece of advice is work at it. The BTI client service All-Stars by and large never worry about billable hours or where the next client comes from. They have a large, steady and lucrative client base, and that will drive the success of any attorney."

Attorneys who make repeat appearances among the client service All-Stars tend to hold a few attorney traits that general counsel consider the most coveted, Rynowecer says.

The foundation of any good attorney, of course, is legal know-how and results.

"You have to do a good job," said Douglas Sullivan, senior counsel at Crowell & Moring LLP and an All-Star for four years running. "Let's face it: If you don't do a good job, there's a good chance the next matter's going to go elsewhere. It's a results-oriented business, whether we like it or not."

Five-time All-Star Gerald Maatman, a partner at Seyfarth Shaw LLP, says he welcomes the chance to deliver for his clients. "It's easy to be a great lawyer when everything goes right, but being a great lawyer means being able to respond to the client's problems and to do right by that client. That's the real test of client service," he said.

Among those effective attorneys, the ones that stand out most have a laser focus on clients and what they need, where they want to go and how they want to be served. All-Stars said understanding their client is an ongoing process that takes unflagging effort.

"For any lawyer who is successful with clients, the clients have to be really confident that the lawyer is committed to them," said H. Rodgin Cohen, the senior chairman of Sullivan & Cromwell LLP and an All-

Star for 14 years in a row. “Commitment really translates in large part to trying to understand what they want and what they need and to be as responsive as you can.”

At the heart of understanding a client is understanding its business goals and being flexible enough to deliver advice in the context of the broader business picture.

“You have to find out what the clients’ goals are because they’re not often tied simply to winning litigation or following a certain road in litigation,” Sullivan said. “Their goals may be entirely different.”

The clearest path toward understanding is simply asking. GCs told BTI that they were impressed with lawyers who asked for feedback from clients and tried to learn and grow from it, whether it was done through casual conversations or more formal third-party surveys. It tells clients that lawyers are focused on their goals, and it also gives them a chance to improve together.

It also makes clients feel that they’re invested in their attorney’s success, Rynowecer said.

Maatman says he uses every matter as an opportunity to learn how better to serve his clients. Throughout and at the close of a matter, he is always looking for ways to work better, more cheaply and more efficiently in the next matter. It’s how he positions himself as a business partner to clients, not just a legal services provider.

“Client service is a lot about reflection and homework and experience, in terms of learning from mistakes and trying not to repeat them,” Maatman said. “It’s about having the ability to discuss that with a client, to own up to issues with a client and to have very frank and candid discussions with a client, including about budgets.”

Speaking of budgets, good client service today means delivering value along with skills and results. Clients are looking for innovative ways their outside counsel can provide efficiencies and keep costs down, said Jeffrey Ostrager, a partner at Curtis Mallet-Prevost Colt & Mosle LLP.

“More and more, there’s a demand on the part of clients that outside counsel be as efficient as possible, using different project management tools and working with clients to find ways to keep legal costs down,” Ostrager said. “In the times that we’re living through, that is way up there in terms of what GCs are looking for and demanding so they can run their in-house legal departments like the business divisions are run and they can develop budgets and stay within them.”

The most valuable attorneys rely on knowledge and experience to deliver the best advice almost effortlessly rather than billing clients for weeks of research, Rynowecer said. They’re a great investment, transcending billing statements, and are the attorneys clients flock to.

“If you have the accumulated experience and you know you’re going to encounter these three obstacles, and you can tell your client about them and how to avoid them before they even come up, you’ve just saved your client an enormous amount of time and money,” Rynowecer said.

Communication also sets apart the All-Stars. Not only are they gathering feedback, they’re making responsiveness a priority and keeping clients in the loop. Clients don’t want surprises, Sullivan says, so he shares his analysis and strategy with them upfront.

Tom Clare, an MVP, four-time All-Star and a founding partner of Clare Locke LLP, says he aims to get

back to clients when they need him, to answer questions directly and succinctly and produce work product that advances the client's objectives.

"Clients want answers and results, not process. And we try to deliver that," Clare said.

Also critical, Clare says, is a firm culture that prioritizes client service and tries to push that know-how throughout the organization.

Jones Day boasts eight 2016 All-Stars, perhaps because service resides at the firm's core.

"Jones Day's culture is built on a singular tradition of client service, and based on a culture of collaboration and sharing ideas, with a special emphasis on delivering seamless state-of-the-art solutions across practices and jurisdictions," said Glen Nager, a client affairs partner at Jones Day.

At the litigation boutique Clare co-founded, partners are held responsible for setting a good example to the younger lawyers, and the importance of client service is imparted to new lawyers starting during the interview process.

"If our associates and paralegals see the partners living a 'client-first' approach in our day-to-day work, they will too. ... We want them to know that client service — and exceeding our client's high expectations — is something that is part of the DNA of our firm," Clare said.

The full list of 61 client service MVPs includes H. Rodgin Cohen of Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, who has been named for 14 consecutive years; Leslie A. Lanusse of Adams and Reese LLP, who has been named for six consecutive years; Gerald L. Maatman Jr. of Seyfarth Shaw LLP and Jeffrey Ostrager of Curtis Mallet-Prevost Colt & Mosle LLP, who have been named for five consecutive years; Tom Clare of Clare Locke LLP, Douglas R. Marvin of Williams & Connolly LLP, Allen J. Ruby of Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP and Douglas W. Sullivan of Crowell & Moring LLP, who have been named for four consecutive years; Bobby R. Burchfield of King & Spalding LLP, Jacob D. Bylund of Faegre Baker Daniels, Greg M. Frenette of Blake Cassels & Graydon LLP, Wayne A. Graver of Lavin O'Neil Cedrone & DiSipio, Michael Hoffman of Arena Hoffman LLP, Michael A. Kahn of Crowell & Moring, William J. Kelly III of Kelly & Walker LLC, Tracy E. Kern of Jones Walker LLP, Patrick J. Lamb of Valorem Law Group LLP, Michael R. Lazerwitz of Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP, E. Mabry Rogers of Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP, Steven A. Rosenblum of Wachtell Lipton Rosen & Katz, E. Joshua Rosenkranz of Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP, Mary K. Ryan of Nutter McClennen & Fish LLP, Charles T. Speth II of Ogletree Deakins Nash Smoak & Stewart PC, James B. Aronoff of Thompson Hine LLP, John T. Baecher of Chadbourne & Parke LLP, Steven M. Baumer of Bryan Cave LLP, David E. Constance III of Troutman Sanders LLP and Robert M. Conway of Duane Morris LLP, who have been named for three consecutive years; and Ariel J. Deckelbaum of Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison LLP, Stacy Leshock Dee of Reiferson Miller PLC, John Dembeck of Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, Robert W. Dockery of Polsinelli PC, James P. Dougherty of Jones Day, Sean C. Doyle of Skadden, Christian W. Fabian of Mayer Brown LLP, Scott Ferrell of Newport Trial Group, Eric M. Feuerstein of Gibson Dunn, Joel S. Forman of Vedder Price PC, John G. Froemming of Jones Day, Robert B. Gilmore of Stein Mitchell Cipollone Beato & Missner LLP, Stephen Glover of Gibson Dunn, Robert D. Goldbaum of Paul Weiss, Howard M. Goldwasser of K&L Gates LLP, Michael A. Gordon of Sidley Austin LLP, William E. Hannum III of Schwartz Hannum PC, Elizabeth G. Hester of Kaufman & Canoles PC, A. Gregory Junge of Van Ness Feldman LLP, Ethan A. Klingsberg of Cleary Gottlieb and Paula E. Litt of Schopf & Weiss LLP — now Honigman Miller Schwartz and Cohn LLP — as well as Kirk T. May of Rouse Hendricks German May PC, David McIntosh of Ropes & Gray LLP, Teri Lynn McMahon of Alston & Bird LLP, Karrin Powys-Lybbe of Torys LLP, Steven W. Quattlebaum of Quattlebaum Grooms & Tull PLLC,

Pankaj K. Sinha of Skadden, Richard S. Soble of Honigman, Michael J. Solecki of Jones Day, Marc F. Sperber of Mayer Brown, Jay Tabor of Gibson Dunn, H. Glenn Tucker of Greenberg Dauber Epstein & Tucker and Jeffrey J. Wild of Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff LLP, who have been named for two consecutive years.

--Editing by Mark Lebetkin.

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