

## The 24 Firms GCs Love The Most

By Aebra Coe

*Law360, Grand Rapids (July 18, 2017, 10:39 AM EDT)* -- Two dozen law firms outpaced the pack in a recent survey of general counsel, winning more votes of confidence from important clients than any other competitor in the industry, according to a report out Tuesday.

The law firms that made the cut were able to maintain strong primary relationships with GCs and garner the largest number of recommendations from top clients to those clients' peers, beating out the rest of the the U.S. legal industry, according to the BTI Industry Power Rankings 2017 report, released Tuesday by BTI Consulting Group.

"Having strong primary relationships is important. Being recommended by clients is important. Achieving both of these milestones with a single client is ideal — and financially beneficial for law firms," the report said, labeling the attainment of both at once as being in a "state of clientopia."

According to the report, just 33 percent of legal decision makers are in a state of clientopia with their primary law firm.

The report was compiled based on 960 in-depth telephone interviews between March 2015 and February 2017.

"By not pushing to bring more client relationships into a state of clientopia, law firms are leaving dollars and growth potential on the table with their existing clients — and giving competitors the opportunity to build stronger relationships with these clients," the report said.

The biggest area in which law firms are falling short from achieving client service bliss, according to BTI President Michael Rynowecer, is that many have a lack of understanding of their clients' businesses, something he says is becoming "a bigger and

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The 24 firms with the most Clientopia relationships:

1. Jones Day
2. Skadden
3. Dentons
4. Latham & Watkins
5. McGuireWoods
6. Cooley LLP
7. DLA Piper
8. Sidley Austin
9. Kirkland & Ellis
10. Polsinelli
11. Hogan Lovells
12. WilmerHale
13. Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe
14. Reed Smith
15. Ogletree Deakins
16. Wachtell Lipton
17. BakerHostetler
18. Gibson Dunn
19. Norton Rose Fulbright
20. Bryan Cave
21. Cleary Gottlieb
22. Paul Weiss
23. Crowell & Moring
24. Alston & Bird

Source: BTI Consulting Group

bigger problem.”

“The average law firm only gets an eight out of 10 when it comes to understanding their clients’ businesses, and clients say that kind of understanding isn’t going to improve the nature of the legal advice they get, which needs to be put into a business context,” Rynowecer said.

McGuireWoods, which earned the No. 5 spot on the clientopia list, uses an industry team approach to client service in order to deliver strong business expertise, according to Melissa M. Glassman, deputy managing partner in charge of industry teams.

“This client-centric, industry approach is ingrained in everything we do. It works for us because we spend an extraordinary amount of time learning our clients’ businesses in depth so that we can go beyond their immediate needs and help clients reach their business goals. From new associates to the most senior partners, we understand it’s all about helping our clients succeed,” Glassman said.

Law firms also often fall short when it comes to communication and the consistency of their client service, Rynowecer said.

“Clients want updates on where matters stand more often because they’re being asked to report more frequently to management on the business risks the company faces and what their status is,” he said.

According to Glen Nager, client affairs partner at the No. 1 law firm on the list, Jones Day, his firm focuses on perfecting the consistency of its client service across a large number of jurisdictions and practices in order to make its clients happy.

“All clients are clients of the firm, not individual lawyers, offices, or practices. We recognize clients have institutional needs, and in turn we provide comprehensive solutions, serving clients as one firm worldwide. We are true partners, with each other, and even more importantly, with our clients,” Nager said.

Elliott Portnoy, global chief executive officer of Dentons — which snagged the No. 3 spot on the list — says his law firm breaks down client service into little pieces in order to fine-tune the way it delivers legal services to clients.

“We are disaggregating the components of what is known as ‘law’ and focusing on doing each part of this service better, faster, and with more demonstrable value,” Portnoy said.

--Editing by Rebecca Flanagan.