

## Tech, Telecom GCs Have Strongest Bonds With 5 Firms

By **Chelsea Naso**

*Law360, New York (March 26, 2014, 5:21 PM ET)* -- A survey of general counsel from the technology and telecommunications industries revealed they have the strongest bonds with five law firms, highlighting that relationships are key to unlocking new business and holding on to clients in the long term.

While a number of firms were lauded for their relationship skills, DLA Piper, Gibson Dunn, Jones Day and Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP led the pack in the technology industry, while only Morrison & Foerster LLP clinched the "Powerhouse" title for telecommunications, according to the 2014 BTI Client Relationship Scorecard report from The BTI Consulting Group (Wellesley, Mass.).

The report — which collected data from the corporate counsel of more than 500 companies — evaluated how often firms were tapped as a company's go-to firm and how likely clients were to recommend, unprompted, those firms' services to a colleague, BTI President Michael Rynowecer explained.

The gold standard, dubbed "Clientopia," is when a firm is both a company's primary outside counsel and recommended freely, as it shows that a client not only trusts a certain law firm but also is emotionally invested, Rynowecer said.

While the size of a firm and the variety of practice areas it offers can play a role in its placing on the list, one of the qualities clients value the most is how well a firm understands its business and its current and future challenges, according to Rynowecer.

### Industry-specific Initiatives

For Morgan Lewis, driving client relationships starts at a simple, but not necessarily easy, place: understanding every aspect of the technology industry. The firm, which boasts about 1,500 lawyers in 25 cities worldwide, kicked off a technology initiative that provides the framework for in-depth industry knowledge as well as cross-practice collaboration, said Jami McKeon, a Morgan Lewis litigation partner and the firm's chair-elect.

"The collaborative culture of the firm and our ability to provide excellent client service based on a deep understanding of the client's needs is, I believe, what really makes us stand out as a leader," she said.

About 11 years ago, when the firm took over California-based Brobeck Phleger & Harrison LLP, it also launched a technology initiative that served to link attorneys from all practice areas — including litigation, mergers and acquisitions, intellectual property and employment — who were tasked with truly understanding the individual sectors of the technology industry, McKeon said.

That deep focus has driven the creation of collaborative network of technology-focused lawyers who can assist a client, no matter what the issue at hand, explained Rahul Kapoor, a Morgan Lewis business and finance partner.

“Our clients think of their legal services in the context of their own industry. From a client’s perspective, it’s really important that their law firms truly understand their business and technology, their specific place in the market as well as their legal and business challenges,” he said.

### **Collaborative Culture**

That same collaborative culture is fostered at Jones Day, which was also among the top four law firms with the strongest, most abundant client relationships. Daniel Reidy, a Jones Day partner and the practice leader of the business and tort litigation area, emphasized that because the firm does not compensate partners based on fees and keeps earnings private, attorneys are even more encouraged to build client relationships.

“All of my incentives are lined up with my clients' best interests,” he said. “It drives a collaborative culture for us, and it drives us to always select the personnel that are best for our client.”

By tweaking the structure of the firm’s financial process, the firm opened up the floodgates for partners to work together, across all practices, to ensure that its suite of services are available to all clients without even a hitch of hesitation.

“We are able to respond to our clients with the best people without the overlay of jealousy,” he said.

### **Networking**

Morrison & Foerster, the only firm to achieve the Powerhouse rating for telecommunications, also is a firm believer in the importance of networking, said Robert Townsend, a partner and the co-chair of the firm's global M&A practice.

“Like our clients, we network really well,” he said. “That means we network well with our clients; we network well internally; we network well with other service providers to the company. We make sure everyone stays connected and everyone works well together.”

The firm, which has about 1,000 lawyers in 17 offices around the world, came out “head and shoulders” above all other firms, Rynowecer said. In addition to being the only firm labeled as a Powerhouse, no firms were dubbed “Leaders” and placed into the second tier, highlighting how strong MoFo has been in not only fostering but also maintaining its client relationships.

“MoFo just kind of stood above everybody else. They were just clearly and decisively a head and shoulders above everyone else,” he said.

In total, 15 firms landed in the third tier, dubbed the “Honor Roll,” for telecommunications including Reed Smith LLP, Sullivan & Cromwell LLP and Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP.

For technology, a pack of eight followed up in the second tier, highlighting the potential for competition over clients in the future. Those firms include Baker & McKenzie LLP, Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC, Covington & Burling LLP, Irell & Manella LLP, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Sidley Austin LLP, WilmerHale and MoFo.

--Editing by Edrienne Su.

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