

# 2011 LAW FIRM

# RAINMAKERS

BY PATRICK FOLLIARD

IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES, THIS YEAR'S ESPECIALLY DIVERSE SWATH OF 16 PARTNERS AND PRINCIPALS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY SHARE THEIR TAKE ON WHAT MAKES A RAINMAKER. THERE IS NO FOOL-PROOF BLUEPRINT TO GENERATING BEAUCOUP BUSINESS, ONE ATTORNEY ATTESTS. IT DEPENDS ON PERSONALITY AND COMPETENCY. WHATEVER THE APPROACH, HE ADDS, PERSISTENCE IS ESSEN-

TIAL. SELECTED FROM A POOL OF NOMINEES SUGGESTED BY LEADING FIRMS NATIONWIDE, EACH ATTORNEY MAINTAINS A BOOK OF BUSINESS OF \$2 MILLION OR MORE A YEAR. WHILE MOST INTERVIEWED HAVE NOTED THE CHANGING ECONOMY, ALL HAVE FOUND WAYS TO MAKE IT WORK. WHATEVER THE ATMOSPHERE, THEY AGREE: RAINMAKING REMAINS THE BEDROCK OF PRIVATE PRACTICE.



Partner, Morgan Lewis & Bockius San Francisco, CA

Years Practicing:

38

Area of Practice: **Litigation**

## DANIEL JOHNSON JR.

Colleagues describe Daniel Johnson as a rainmaker but he balks at the expression. "I'm a lawyer who handles very big cases that generate a lot of fees. To me, rainmakers are relationship people. They bring in the business and let others do the work, whereas I'm selling a skill set that requires me to assemble a good team and be there."

Johnson's practice includes IP litigation (patents and license disputes) as well as general high-stakes litigation. Throughout his career, Johnson says he has "consistently but randomly" attracted big cases mostly due to his willingness to take risks. And because he got good results, it became increasingly easier for him to get the next case.

Prior to joining Morgan Lewis in 2005, he was a rainmaking partner at Fenwick & West. He also served as a deputy attorney general to the State of California. Johnson graduated from Yale Law School.

He closes deals primarily by providing instant strategic analysis of the client's problem to demonstrate that he and his team have that ability, and presents a list of past accomplishments. "When I go to pitch, I like to say the things I can do rather than run down the candidates I'm competing against."

For a long and successful career, Johnson says "flexibility" and "adaptability" are the words to live by. "Attorneys must be able to adjust and handle current matters, and they need to be able to assess their skill set and figure out how to make it match what is going to sell. An attorney litigator is a rainmaker so long as he or she is trying a big case. Nothing is guaranteed."



Partner, Thompson & Knight LLP Houston, TX and New York, NY

Years Practicing:

10

Area of Practice: **Bankruptcy**

## DEMETRA LIGGINS

Demetra Liggins' bankruptcy practice focuses on Chapter 11, liquidation, out of court restructuring, and litigating commercial disputes stemming from debtor/creditor relationships. After ten years in the profession, she has been a rainmaker for awhile.

Was there ever an exact moment when Liggins suddenly realized that she had reached the envied strata of rainmaking? "It was more like I suddenly understood that I possessed a talent for maintaining multiple professional and personal relationships. It's important and interesting for me to know my clients and their businesses, and once I obtain that knowledge I use it to help them move their businesses forward. In turn, I also get more business from existing clients and new client referrals.

"My grandfather always used to say 'a bald man can't sell me hair tonic.' That means you don't buy into the sales pitch of someone who doesn't have the goods to back it up. So as a young associate I began looking to partners and other successful attorneys and realized they all had a big book of business. I very much wanted that to be a part of my career too, so I began doing what they do."

For Liggins that translates to a lot of business development including being active in national bar associations, bankruptcy Inns of Court, presenting, and writing. "Because I'm practicing in an era of large and complex bankruptcy cases and the marketplace is filled with skilled and competent practitioners, it's imperative that I keep my skills up and achieve greater client outcome."

Do rainmakers flat-out work harder? She replies, "I'm not sure about that, but we do have to keep on top of things."