

## GCs Laud Securities, M&A Attys With Top Client Skills

By **Maria Chutchian**

*Law360, New York (February 01, 2012, 10:06 PM ET)* -- Corporate in-house counsel have named 84 securities, mergers and acquisitions, and transactional attorneys that they identify as the most client service-oriented in the field, thanks in part to their ability to maintain long-lasting professional — and personal — relationships.

The BTI Consulting Group (Wellesley, Mass.) said in its 2012 BTI Client Service All-Stars report that the attorneys recognized were named, unprompted, by more than 240 corporate counsel based on their client focus, exceptional understanding of the client's business, outstanding results, outsized value and legal skills.

BTI President Michael Rynowecer said the lawyers who made the list cultivated relationships with their clients by having an ongoing dialogue with the client and making themselves part of the client's team.

Securities, M&A and transactional lawyers, in particular, face an expectation that they will put forward creative, strategic plans for pending deals and, at the same time, lay out every potential risk the client may face in a particular transaction, Rynowecer said.

Attorneys interviewed all highlighted the need for expertise in the industry their client does business in, and the importance of presenting their tailored advice in such a way that is easy for them to understand and act upon. Several said providing proper advice often means anticipating clients' problems before they occur.

"Clients will call with problems, or a problem will arise in middle of transaction that you have to solve by making them feel like their problem is your problem," all-star Stephen Glover of Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP said. "That you will do everything to solve it in reasonable way is an important message to communicate."

Jones Day's Elizabeth Kitslaar, who was also named in BTI's report, said that while transactional lawyers need extensive knowledge of their clients' subject matter, they also need to be extremely practical and have a good sense of the market, which she said can only be gained through doing an extensive number of deals. Additionally, she said, lawyers simply have to like working with their clients.

"You have to enjoy interacting with them and working with them. When you're working on a deal, you're in fairly close contact on a fairly extended basis," Kitslaar said.

Several all-stars said maintaining a relationship with a client is crucial to providing exceptional service, whether that means picking up the phone, hopping on an airplane or brainstorming ideas off-the-clock.

All-star Peter Devereaux of Latham & Watkins LLP said he made a point of respecting his clients' time and delivering appropriate communication — specifically, knowing how often they want an update on a situation and in what form.

"They have other demands. I try to make our work fit in their schedule, so we're not an imposition," he said.

Stephen Bivens of Baker & McKenzie LLP said first and foremost, listening skills are key to ensuring a client receives top-notch service from an attorney.

"You have to understand not only what the question is, or what the issue may be at hand, but what the client's overall objectives may be and how this particular transaction fits into its business objectives — and more importantly, how we can help achieve those objectives," he said.

Attorneys also said they worked to maintain a high level of responsiveness to their clients' needs and inquiries. While sometimes that means returning a client's call as quickly as possible, other times face-to-face interaction is even more important.

"One thing that is important to me and my group is in-person relationships," all-star Stephanie Smith of Cooley LLP said. "We do maybe spend more time on the road or flying out to clients. Instead of a conference call, we may come out and do it in person."

Several attorneys highlighted the importance of an entire team when working with a corporate client, including Christopher Hilbert of Jones Day, who said excellent client service isn't up to an individual attorney, but that it takes an entire team to support a client's needs.

"To really to deal with a client, you need a firm that's just there for you, so when you reach out, people selflessly will support you, and listen to you," he said.

Mayer Brown LLP's Edward Best said a successful transactional lawyer must have a deep knowledge of not only the client's business, but the clients themselves. Additionally, he said, clients prefer to work with people that are likable on top of being knowledgeable. Best said he modeled his approach after a former Mayer Brown chairman.

"He said, 'I think what really gets business in the long term is not only being the smartest, best-prepared guy in the meeting, but also being the nicest guy in the meeting,'" Best said.

The securities, M&A and transactions BTI list includes Alston & Bird LLP's Mark Kanaly, Andrews Kurth LLP's Jeff Dodd, Arnall Golden & Gregory LLP's Adam Skorecki, Baker & McKenzie LLP's Roger Bivans, Alan Harvey and Craig Roeder, Bryan Cave LLP's Fred Bartelsmeyer, Seth Frederiksen and William F. Seabaugh, Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC's Jeremiah Garvey, Butler Snow O'Mara Stevens & Cannada PLLC's James Lawless Jr., Chadbourne & Parke LLP's Marc Alpert, Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP's Ethan Klingsberg, CMS Legal's Oliver Blum, Cooley LLP's Stephanie Smith, Cravath Swaine & Moore LLP's Philip Gelston and Sarkis Jebejian, Curtis Mallet-Prevost Colt & Mosle LLP's Jeffrey Ostrager, Daffer McDaniel LLP's Kirby Cronin, Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP's David Caplan, Daniel Kelly, Richard Sandler and Richard Truesdell Jr., Dechert LLP's Ian Hartman, Dinsmore & Shohl LLP's Charles Herlein Jr., Foley & Lardner LLP's Jay Rothman, Fulbright& Jaworski LLP's Deborah Gitomer and Gerard Pechy, Gernandt & Danielsson Advokatbyra KB's Dick Lundqvist, Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP's Steven Finley, Stephen Glover and John Olson, Greenberg Traurig LLP's Dennis Block, Hogan Lovells' Paul Hilton and Thomas Woolsey, Jones Day's Christopher Hilbert and Elizabeth Kitslaar, K&L Gates LLP's Matthew Topham, Kaufman & Canoles PC's Elizabeth Hester, Kecker & Van Nest LLP's Robert Van Nest, King & Spalding LLP's William Bates III, Latham & Watkins LLP's Peter Devereaux, Lidji Dorey & Hooper's Brian Lidji, Linklaters LLP's Michael Sullivan, Macleod Dixon LLP's Kevin Johnson, McMillan's Sean Farrell, Mayer Brown LLP's Edward Best, McDermott Will & Emery LLP's Paul Lawrence and Michael Peregrine, Miles & Stockbridge PC's David Eberhardt, Mintz Levin Cohn Ferris Glovsky & Popeo PC's Stephen Gulotta, Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP's James W. McKenzie, Morrison & Foerster LLP's Kenneth Kuwayti, Murchison, Taylor & Gibson PLLC's G. Stephen Diab, Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP's Michael Hollingsworth II and J. Brennan Ryan, Norton Rose LLP's Thierry Dorval, Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison LLP's Toby Myerson, Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP's Craig Barbarosh, Proskauer Rose LLP's Peter Samuels, Riker Danzig Scherer Hyland Perretti LLP's Stephen Wiseman, Saul Ewing LLP's David Antzis, Schiff Hardin LLP's Patricia Brown Holmes and Robert Minkus, Sidley Austin LLP's Larry Barden and James Conlan, Simmons Perrine Moyer Bergman PLC's Leonard Strand, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP's D. Rhett Brandon, Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP's Paul Lockwood and Peter Krupp, SNR Denton's Richard Simonds Jr., Squire Sanders & Dempsey LLP's Matthew Holman, Steptoe & Johnson LLP's Scott Katzman, Sullivan & Cromwell LLP's H. Rodgin Cohen, Robert Downes and Scott Miller, Thompson Coburn LLP's Thomas Litz, Thompson Hine LLP's Derek Bork and David Hooker, Troutman Sanders LLP's F. Claiborne Johnston, Varnum LLP's Michael Wooldridge, Vedder Price PC's John Blatchford, Weil Gotshal & Manges LLP's Raymond Gietz, Michael Lubowitz and R. Jay Tabor, WilmerHale's William McClucas and Jonathan Wolfman, and Wyrick Robbins Yates & Ponton LLP's Donald Reynolds.

--Editing by Elizabeth Bowen.

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