

The Firm Corp. Counsel Can't Stop Talking About

By Elaine Meyer

Law360, New York (September 07, 2010) -- When it comes to winning business in a market where legal spending remains largely flat, savvy law firms know the way to win new clients is by keeping existing clients happy. And there's one firm above all that's making corporate counsel smile and is poised to win work through client recommendations in the upcoming year, according to a new report.

Global law firm Jones Day, which employs more than 2,500 attorneys, was most frequently named by corporate counsel when asked which firms they would recommend to other corporate counsel for litigation work, according to the Litigation Outlook 2011 report by The BTI Consulting Group Inc. (Wellesley, Mass.).

Jones Day garnered twice as many first recommendations from corporate counsel as any other firm, according to Marcie Shunk, a principal at BTI.

And what exactly is the value of a recommendation? According to BTI, more than 65 percent of new hires among corporate counsel come from recommendations or referrals from other corporate counsel.

Jones Day's ability to bring all of its national and global resources to bear for a client is one of the things that earned it the top spot, BTI President Michael Rynowecer said.

"Jones Day goes across the country and finds the right resources for their clients, as opposed to being constrained by an office or a practice," he said.

The firm also lets clients know what to expect and is "very forthright" if it believes it needs to change a strategy, according to Rynowecer.

Tim Cullen, head of Jones Day's trial practice, said the firm was always guided by the best interest of its clients and "has a real blue-collar attitude toward work."

Neither a limited liability partnership nor limited liability company, Jones Day has formed a culture that eschews partners who restrict themselves to matters based on region or profitability, according to the firm.

The firm has a litigation coordinator in each office, with whom Cullen keeps in frequent touch about who the leading clients are and which offices are currently helping them, he said.

“Part of the culture here is that the firm's clients are the firm's clients and that the institution is here to solve their problems — not just one lawyer but the whole office,” Cullen said.

Jones Day has consistently been a leader in BTI's corporate counsel surveys. It was named “the absolute best firm for continuous superior client service performance” by the consulting firm in 2008 and 2009. Cullen has also been named BTI Client Services All-Star MVP.

Seven law firms were listed as "prominently recommended" in the report: Foley & Lardner LLP, Fulbright & Jaworski LLP, Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP, Littler Mendelson PC, Reed Smith LLP, Sidley Austin LLP and Thompson Hine LLP.

Sixteen more firms were "strongly recommended" for litigation: Alston & Bird LLP, Bingham McCutchen LLP, Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP, Bryan Cave LLP, Crowell & Moring LLP, Fisher & Phillips LLP, Howrey LLP, Kelley Drye & Warren LLP, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Latham & Watkins LLP, McDermott Will & Emery LLP, Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP, Ogletree Deakins Nash Smoak & Stewart PC, Seyfarth Shaw LLP, Sherman & Howard LLC and Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP.

These are firms for which corporate counsel are "willing to stand out on a limb and say, 'You know what, I'm going to put my recommendation behind this firm,'" Rynowecer said.

Over the past year, BTI conducted 240 interviews with corporate counsel from 18 percent of Fortune 100 corporations to come up with its list of law firms most recommended for litigation.