

## The 6 Firms Shaking Up The Legal Market

By **Scott Flaherty**

*Law360, New York (April 22, 2013, 7:29 PM ET)* -- The firms that bring a fresh eye to practicing law while tailoring novel approaches and services directly to the needs of their clients tend to stick out in the minds of in-house attorneys, according to a new survey of corporate counsel.

General counsel at some of the world's largest companies recognized six firms that have adopted innovative techniques and targeted them to their clients' wants and needs as those that are shaking up the legal market, according to the 2013 BTI Brand Elite: Client Perceptions of the Best-Branded Law Firms **report** from The BTI Consulting Group (Wellesley, Mass.).

"Innovation, from the corporate client's perspective, represents a promise and a way of thinking," the report said. "Recognition in innovation signifies a law firm's willingness to redefine their way of doing business and better align with clients' needs, goals and priorities."

The report named Jones Day, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP, Morrison & Foerster LLP, Seyfarth Shaw LLP and Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP as the six "best movers and shakers," the report's top tier among firms making waves as innovators.

These firms and others recognized by BTI for innovation have broken the mold in a legal industry that tends to be "steeped in tradition and bound by precedence," the report said.

The six top movers and shakers, according to BTI President Michael B. Rynowecer, are firms "engaging in a range of activities that clients don't see other firms engaging in."

Innovative activities can run the gamut from making use of new technology to redesigning work processes and providing training to clients, to putting attorneys on panels to advise companies on different issues, including intellectual property protections and research and development efforts, Rynowecer said.

Firms seen by in-house attorneys as movers and shakers take part in a "whole big eclectic set of activities that are unique to the firm that is offering it," Rynowecer said, noting that innovative approaches can be, and often are, employed without relying heavily on technological advances.

"You can also innovate without technology," he explained.

But while innovation is itself important, the firms that stand apart from their peers have also taken pains to adapt to their clients' needs. The key on the innovation front, as Rynowecer put it, is not just to break the mold for the sake of doing it, but to suggest to clients that "this innovation, this activity, was designed for" them.

"The client-specific nature of innovative activities is tremendously important," he said.

Rynowecer pointed to Seyfarth Shaw as an example of a firm that is tailoring its innovation to client needs. That firm, he said, has tried to improve efficiency in its work flow by mapping out in detail the activities it undertakes for major clients, with an eye toward eliminating tasks that aren't necessary.

Morgan Lewis offers another example, according to the BTI president. The firm has taken a novel approach toward developing teams of attorneys to work for various clients, making sure to include lawyers with specific experience in the business sectors in which their clients operate.

Establishing client teams with industry know-how has allowed Morgan Lewis to take "deeper dives into clients' needs," Rynowecer said.

Above all, the firms that stand out as movers and shakers in BTI's report made the cut because they engage "with clients in discussions on how to do things," according to Rynowecer.

The best movers and shakers, he added, ask their clients: "How would you like to see this work?"

BTI's "best" movers and shakers are Jones Day, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP, Morrison & Foerster LLP, Seyfarth Shaw LLP and Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP. BTI also named Chambliss Bahner & Stophel PC, DLA Piper, Faegre Baker Daniels, Latham & Watkins LLP, McGuireWoods LLP and Reed Smith LLP in a second tier of "leading" movers and shakers. A third tier of "honor roll" movers and shakers included 78 other firms.

BTI's 2013 branding report was based on more than 500 individual interviews conducted between January 2011 and September 2012 with in-house counsel at the world's largest organizations.

--Editing by Andrew Park.

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