

In-House Attys Name 9 Stellar Real Estate Lawyers

By **Zachary Zagger**

Law360, New York (February 03, 2014, 9:16 PM ET) -- In-house counsel for some Fortune 1000 companies and financial institutions have named nine top real estate attorneys for customer service, emphasizing innovation, creativity and a cost-effective approach to tackling deals.

The attorneys, named as part of the 2014 BTI Client Service All-Stars report from The BTI Consulting Group Inc. (Wellesley, Mass.), were nominated by clients for their exceptional work in handling client needs.

"These client service all-stars are cutting new ground. They are not afraid to try new things or do things differently," BTI President Michael B. Rynowecer said of the attorneys named to the list.

With the real estate industry in flux, in-house counsel say innovation and an ability to steer them in the right direction are the keys to good client service, according to Rynowecer.

"Because real estate is changing so much in recent years, we heard from clients a lot about innovation," Rynowecer said. "Also the ability to understand and predict where the real estate market is headed."

In today's legal real estate market, some of the attorneys named to BTI's list noted, clients demand their attorneys provide a high level of client service while still being cost-effective.

"I think that many clients are price-sensitive when consuming legal services. They are all looking for the same skills and the same interest in their business, yet they want you to partner with them for an economical cost," said Robert A. Karin, a partner in the real estate practice group at Davis & Gilbert LLP.

Karin, who was named to this year's list of All-Stars, said clients want an economical price without sacrificing service, and that is something that is true for transactional lawyers across the board.

To tackle this challenge, Karin said, his firm is always sure to staff deals in a "lean" way — not having more attorneys working on a deal than necessary while still having enough to meet client needs. He said oftentimes there is only one attorney on the deal.

"We try to put the right number of attorneys with the right experience profile, when we have multiple attorneys on a deal," Karin said.

Another real estate attorney named to BTI's All-Stars list, Faegre Baker Daniels LLP partner Scott A.

Anderegg, said good client service in real estate can be challenging because of the multitude of deals going on simultaneously.

“In real estate you have more clients and more transactions,” Anderegg said. “On a particular day I may work with 20 or so matters. It’s important to clients to make them feel you are on top of things. It’s a constant pressure.”

He said he uses a “leveraged” approach, dividing work on a deal based on the various billing rates of the attorneys. This approach enables him to provide a high level of customer service in a cost-effective way, while handling multiple complicated deals at once.

“I sort of evolved into that,” Anderegg said. “There’s only so much you yourself you can do. If you have a leveraged approach and handle more matters and more complicated matters, it enables you to do only the work that you need to do.”

“If you have a good team and a trusted group, with a leverage approach you can handle more deals and get more done in a cost effective way,” he said.

Still, both Karin and Anderegg stressed that the key to great client service in real estate is developing a strong relationship with clients.

“Your choice in an attorney is often a very personal one,” Karin said. “Many clients who hire me [do so] because they want my participation in the transaction.”

The real estate attorneys named as 2014 BTI Client Service All-Stars are Craig Lord of Blank Rome LLP, Robert Karin of Davis & Gilbert LLP, Scott Anderegg of Faegre Baker Daniels LLP, Christopher Koback of Hathaway Koback Connors LLP, William Birney of Kennerly Lamishaw & Rossi LLP, John Mallin of McCarter & English LLP, John Pappano of Phillips Lytle LLP, David Orobio de Castro of Stibbe, and Tom Henry of Weightmans LLP.

--Editing by Jeremy Barker.