

## 5 Firms Lead The Pack With MVP Wins

By **Aebra Coe**

*Law360, New York (November 8, 2015, 10:26 PM ET)* -- Five elite law firms have racked up more than 20 Law360 MVP wins each over the past five years, outshining their competitors with their accomplishments in complex litigation and transactions.

### Putting The 'Most' In MVP

These firms accumulated the most MVP wins since we began our series in 2011.



The top five firms have regularly produced attorneys chosen as MVPs since 2011, which means the firms' attorneys snagged the biggest litigation wins and worked on the most substantial deals in any given year.

Kirkland & Ellis LLP and Gibson Dunn both had the most attorneys named MVPs over the past five years with 34 each. Latham & Watkins LLP was third with 30, followed by Weil Gotshal & Manges LLP with 28 and Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP with 24.

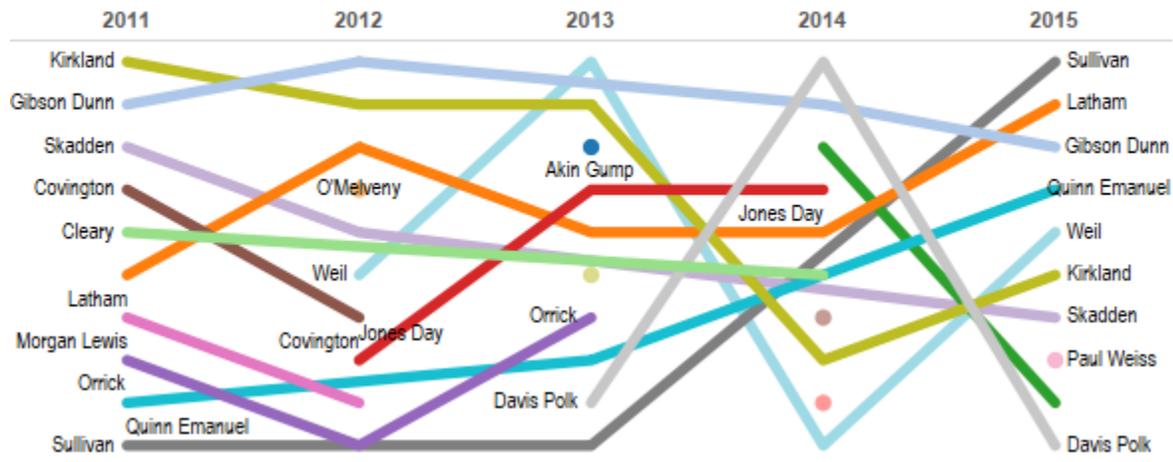
While landing in eighth for most combined wins over the past five years, Sullivan & Cromwell

LLP snagged the most MVP wins of any other law firm in 2015 with 10. Latham was second with nine.

Firms six through 10 are Covington & Burling LLP, Jones Day, Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP and Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP.

## The MVP Leaderboard

The top firms racked up a trophy case worth of MVPs over the past 5 years.



Kent Zimmerman, a consultant for Zeughauser Group, said the geographic diversity of the top firms of the past five years is telling.

“Some non-indigenous New York firms, firms that are not originally from New York, are now extremely competitive with the New York firms and those include Kirkland, Latham and Gibson, among others,” Zimmerman said.

Kirkland is based in Chicago and Gibson Dunn and Latham grew out of Los Angeles.

Zimmerman said that as deal flow has reached pre-2008 levels and an increasing portion of those deals have cross-border components, firms with strong transactional practices that have cross-border capabilities have benefitted.

“It used to be that this list would have been dominated by Wall Street firms,” he said. “Part of what we’re seeing on the list is an increasingly competitive environment for firms that do this kind of highly sought after work.”

He said that, even though the firms are not all originally from New York, they have all built strong practices there.

“If your aspiration is to become an elite firm... to be in the most elite tier, you’ve got to be really strong in New York. The data suggests that that’s the common thread running through top performing firms.”

Weil executive partner Barry Wolf pointed to the diversity of practices among its MVPs, this year and in past years, when describing what it is he believes contributes to the firm’s success.

Wins for Weil this year included attorneys who practice in the bankruptcy, technology, M&A, tax, energy, private equity and media fields, and are based in Silicon Valley, Washington, D.C., and New York.

“One of the things I’m most proud of is that we have a really broad base of extremely talented lawyers in different practice areas, in different offices and different departments,” Wolf said. “That reflects the deep bench of talented partners we have across the firm.”

Michael Rynowecer, founder and president of BTI Consulting, said that the common thread he sees running through all of the firms that made the list is a focus on deliberately developing a specific culture, illustrated by the wide scope of practice areas pointed to by Wolf.

“I think what it does is it speaks to a culture in the firms. It’s both litigation and M&A. That means that from a firm standpoint, there’s a cultural behavior, an understanding of a more intense effort, more disciplined effort, more focused effort, than you might find at some other firms,” Rynowecer said. “The importance of that, when you have that cultural benefit, you perform better across the firm, not just in one or two practice areas.”

Leslie Smith, Kirkland litigation partner and a member of the firm’s global management committee, blames the success of the firm with Midwest roots on intentionally developing a culture where lawyers are practicing at the highest levels and relentlessly attentive to client needs.

“Kirkland is focused on talent and teamwork,” Smith said. “In terms of talent, we hire attorneys who are committed to the craft, train those attorneys and encourage them to have a significant and meaningful roles on major cases and deals.”

Ken Doran, chairman and managing partner of Gibson Dunn also immediately pointed to a culture that holds attorneys to a high standard in meeting the needs of clients as an explanation for his firm's ability to garner the biggest wins.

“We foster a culture that demands excellence and client dedication from our lawyers and our highly qualified staff. We do that by creating and maintaining a culture in which respect, collegiality and collaboration are paramount values,” Doran said. “We treat clients, colleagues and staff with respect. At Gibson Dunn, lawyers share responsibility for clients across practice areas and offices.”

Ora Fisher, vice chair of Latham & Watkins, said she believes her firm’s success can be attributed to the collegial and interconnected way in which it operates.

“Our cross-border platform focused in the world’s leading financial centers, a diversity of top-quality legal talent worldwide and a client-first attitude — that leads to these sorts of successful outcomes for our clients,” Fisher said.

“We are so pleased for the recognition of this group of our colleagues here at Latham. Each of these lawyers and the many wins they’ve had for clients over the last few years — both in court and in the boardroom — demonstrate Latham’s values so well,” Fisher said.

--Editing by John Quinn.