

Media & Entertainment Group Of The Year: Gibson Dunn

By **Drew Singer**

Law360, New York (January 24, 2014, 4:30 PM ET) -- When a federal judge found Paul Ceglia had likely fabricated a 2003 contract with Facebook Inc. founder Mark Zuckerberg that purportedly promised him a 50 percent stake in the company, Ceglia blamed his embarrassment on Zuckerberg's attorneys at Gibson Dunn, one of Law360's Media and Entertainment Practice Groups of the Year.

Over the past year, the law firm's media and entertainment group's wide reach has led it to represent some of the most high-profile clients in the world, but perhaps none more closely watched than Zuckerberg. Upon hearing Ceglia's remarks, practice co-chair Orin Snyder couldn't have been happier.

"I took that as a badge of honor and a sign of success," he told Law360. "That case was about defending a company that stuck by a principle of wanting to vindicate the truth and refused to settle what we believe was an extortionate lawsuit by a man claiming to own a significant part of Facebook."

Gibson Dunn's strategy is one of omnipresence and omnipotence: Be everywhere, know everything and use that edge to win lawsuits.

"What makes our practice very unique is not only is it a bicoastal and international media and entertainment practice, but it is [also] both transactional and litigation and across all spectrums of the media and entertainment industry," Snyder said. "If you look at a company like Facebook, it's obviously a technology company on one hand, but on the other hand, maybe it's the largest content company in the world."

The strategy started about a decade ago, when the powers that be at Gibson Dunn made a decision to focus on the intersection of entertainment and technology.

"That was a very smart place, it turns out, to focus, because entertainment today is almost always about technology and technology is interested in entertainment because it drives eyeballs," practice co-chair Ruth Fisher said. "We try to do as many different channels as we can, because of the benefits of cross-pollination."

The practice group represents tech companies like Facebook, but also traditional brick-and-mortar clients, gaming companies and athletes.

This year, the firm helped NFL quarterback Tom Brady and the rest of the NFL Players Association win an appeals case to block a \$150 million lawsuit by retired players suing over the league's labor dispute.

It also scored a victory in the U.S. Supreme Court, where it helped Comcast Corp. reverse an order certifying a class of more than 2 million current and former customers who alleged the cable company had increased prices through anti-competitive conduct.

On the transactional side, Gibson Dunn helped video game company THQ Inc. sell its assets to multiple bidders as part of its bankruptcy proceedings. As part of the deal, the company could keep seeking higher bids throughout the bankruptcy process.

The firm also helped Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp. close the first major studio slate financing arrangement since the recession began in 2008. The multiyear slate financing transaction with TSG Entertainment Finance LLC garnered much attention in Hollywood as a sign that the industry was emerging from the economic downturn.

Other transactional clients include Paramount Pictures Corp., Time Inc., Steinway Musical Instruments Inc., Fender Musical Instruments Corp. and Vivendi SA, which the firm helped sell 85 percent of its interest in gaming giant Activision Blizzard Inc. for \$8.2 billion.

By now, Gibson Dunn's breadth and experience should be of no surprise. The media and entertainment group is one of eight practice groups at the firm to be named the best of the year by Law360. The other Gibson Dunn practice groups to win are class action, employment, appellate, competition, real estate, bankruptcy and intellectual property.

Much of that success comes back to the firm's decision a decade ago, Fisher said.

"We've been slowly colonizing a lot of the firm," she said. "We're one of the few practice groups that focuses on an industry rather than a substance area, so we have litigators and corporate people and tax people, etc. We have entertainment people in all of our offices all over the world; within almost every deal I can find a technology or entertainment component."

--Editing by Elizabeth Bowen.