

10 Boutiques Giving BigLaw A Run For Its Money

By Jacob Fischler

Law360, Washington (July 8, 2015, 3:07 PM ET) -- In a trend that has been developing for years, top boutiques continue to encroach on big firms' territory by blending the same high level of skill and expertise with a lower rate structure and greater client accessibility, analysts say.

The ideal boutique attorney has years of big firm experience, but is less expensive and easier for clients to get on the phone. And the best boutiques — whether specializing in a niche or providing a range of practice areas — have adhered to a strategic vision of growth based on where the firm fits in the legal market, industry watchers say.

"Just trying to collect lawyers to be a boutique is not enough," said Carey Bertolet, a managing partner at recruiting firm Laurence Simons International Group Ltd. "If they can say, 'We want partners, and here is how partners are going to fit in with what we're already doing and here's how we're all going to benefit' — now you're cooking with gas."

As the results of this year's U.S. Supreme Court term showed, boutiques are capable of competing with — and beating — the best big firms at the highest level. Here, Law360 looks at 10 boutiques that have established brands on par with the biggest firms.

Bartlit Beck Herman Palenchar & Scott LLP

With 80 attorneys spread between offices in Chicago and Denver and a nearly 22-year track record, Bartlit Beck is one of the most established — and best-regarded — complex litigation boutiques in the country.

"I think there are a lot of boutiques out there, and very few really rise to the level of reputation that Bartlit Beck has," said Amy McCormack, president of Chicago-based recruiting firm McCormack Schreiber. The firm has had success practically since its founding in 1993, thanks in part to its founders' already-established national reputation for excellent litigation work, she added. "That's hard to replicate."

But the firm has cemented its prestigious status by taking on — and winning — high-stakes, high-profile litigation. Just in the past year, its lawyers have won reversal of a \$664 million False Claims Act judgment against United Technology Corp.-owned Pratt & Whitney in the Sixth Circuit, an affirmation of a successful \$80 million defense of Sikorsky Aircraft Corp. in the Federal Circuit and a jury finding no liability for Whirlpool Corp. in a long-running class action.

--Editing by Katherine Rautenberg and Emily Kokoll.