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MIDSIZE

A SPECIAL REPORT

HOT LIST

Hollingsworth LLP

Editor's note: The world tends to judge law firms by results. Do they win big cases? Orchestrate world-changing deals? Keep big fish out of jail?

Fair enough: We certainly considered the candidates' professional skills when compiling this year's Midsize Hot List. Still, we felt that mere outcomes wouldn't tell the whole story in a world where keeping the client out of the headlines sometimes matters as much as anything else.

And so the 20 firms listed here are good at what they do, but they're also good at how they do it—in spotting legal trends while they're still emerging and positioning themselves to take advantage; in pioneering billing arrangements that deliver results at prices clients can actually afford; and in building groups of attorneys who work well together and stick around to serve their clients for the long haul.

—MICHAEL MOLINE

MIDSIZE HOT LIST

Hollingsworth LLP

In 1982, Joe Hollingsworth opened a complex litigation shop in Washington, D.C. aimed at taking cases corporate clients couldn't or didn't want to handle in-house. Thirty years later, the firm has grown to include 65 attorneys—big enough to defend clients like Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corp. in national mass tort litigation, but still small enough to do it without big-firm bureaucracy.

"We don't have a lot of people entering and then exiting big-time cases willy-nilly," Hollingsworth said.

The firm has a long history of representing pharmaceutical companies in mass products liability litigation. Most recently, Hollingsworth LLP attorneys defended Novartis in federal and state court cases nationwide related to Aredia® and Zometa®, drugs prescribed to treat pain and prevent bone-related injuries in cancer patients.

In August, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit affirmed a trial judge's exclusion of the plaintiffs' doctors as experts regarding the link between the drugs and osteonecrosis, or decay, of the jawbone.

Challenging plaintiffs' scientific experts during *Daubert* hearings is an area of expertise for the firm, according to partner Rebecca Womeldorf. The firm maintains a network of experts who can present a client's side and "help us to really take apart, brick by brick, the plaintiffs' scientific allegations," she said.

The firm helped secure another Aredia® and Zometa® verdict in May, in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York. Womeldorf said the firm set the stage for a favorable judgment early on by arguing to limit or exclude testimony from several experts proposed by plaintiffs.

Although 2011 was a big year for pharmaceuticals work, Hollingsworth LLP's practices span the gamut, from government contracts to toxic torts.

The firm tries to keep costs down by staffing cases "precisely," Womeldorf said. She recently handled a case before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit on behalf of General Electric Co. with just one senior associate (who subsequently made partner).

Other strategies include shopping around for third-party vendors for work like electronic discovery, instead of taking a one-size-fits-all-clients approach to whom they use, she said. According to Hollingsworth, the firm has offered alternative fee arrangements including a combined rate for groups of attorneys with different skill levels. "We try to work hard with our clients on those things," he said.

While cost efficiency is important, Womeldorf said, clients stick with the firm because of its record of winning at trial and on appeal. "Having been with folks...through high-stakes litigation, that is a big source of the bond between us and the client."

—ZOE TILLMAN

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