

Midsize

A SPECIAL REPORT

HOT LIST

Editor's note

This year we set out to blow up our annual Midsize Hot List—in a good way.

We asked scores of firms of between 50 and 150 attorneys to answer a detailed questionnaire designed to measure what makes a firm great—big cases and deals, but also commitment to diversity and their pro bono responsibilities. We carefully studied their responses to arrive at the list you'll find in these pages.

We settled on 20 firms that demonstrated excellence in the courtroom or boardroom; that spotted a niche that eluded their competitors or that excelled on many fronts; that developed innovative management, billing or training structures; that changed the face of the country's cities; that set the standard for midsize practice—firms that clearly stand apart from your everyday law firm.

— MICHAEL MOLINE

BARTLIT BECK HERMAN PALENCHAR & SCOTT

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Bartlit Beck Herman Palenchar & Scott hardly flies under the radar. Since its founding in 1993, the 69-attorney Chicago-based litigation firm has won high-profile victories on behalf of major corporations including Merck & Co., Ernst & Young LLP and E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Co. Even with that track record, the past year stands out as a strong one.

In May, for example, Bartlit Beck successfully defended engine maker United Technologies Corp. in a \$3.4 billion patent infringement suit brought by Rolls Royce PLC. Two months earlier, the U.S. Supreme Court denied certiorari in a case that pit its client, Bayer Corp., against an antitrust class action arising from a patent settlement involving the drug maker's antibiotic Cipro—ending an 11-year legal fight in favor of Bayer.

"They are very seasoned," said Du Pont General Counsel Thomas Sager. "They know how to connect with jurors. I don't know if it's their Midwest charm, but they read the courtroom very well."

Outside the courtroom, the firm abandoned the billable hour in 2002 in favor of flat fees and contingency arrangements long before they came into vogue. The firm doesn't hire laterals, preferring instead to train its young attorneys, said managing partner Skip Herman.

"We don't hire people to meet demand, like most firms," he said. "We only hire people if the supply is there—that is, if we find great people. These past few years, with other firms hiring fewer people, the supply has been there."

—KAREN SLOAN

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