

The Firms That Dominated In 2019

By **Suzanne Monyak**

Law360 (January 12, 2020, 9:04 PM EST) -- Law360's top seven Firms of the Year cleaned up at the 2019 Practice Group of the Year awards, notching a combined 46 wins after spending the past year helping companies navigate blockbuster deals and secure key high court rulings.

Mayer Brown LLP and Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP, which were also Firms of the Year in 2018, share the top spot with eight practice group awards each. Covington & Burling LLP, Kirkland & Ellis LLP Latham & Watkins LLP, Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP and Sullivan & Cromwell LLP all tied for second place with six wins each.

Paul Theiss, chair of Mayer Brown, credited the firm's success to its attorneys' ability to work together across groups and countries, calling that collaboration a "hallmark" of the firm.

"These eight practice areas, and the other practice areas that we work in, we all work together as one integrated law firm throughout the world, and we think that our clients benefit from that collaboration," he told Law360.

Ken Doran, chair of Gibson Dunn, also attributed his firm's winning year to a culture of teamwork.

"We're deeply committed to client service. We work as teams, so there are tremendous synergies among our practice groups," Doran said.

Here are the 2019 Firms of the Year:

Sullivan & Cromwell

With roots on Wall Street, Sullivan & Cromwell has positioned itself at the forefront of the financial industry, racking up practice group awards for its work in M&A, project finance, capital markets, securities, banking and the energy sector. The firm had a hand in some of the most significant mergers in 2019 for institutions in those areas. SunTrust Banks Inc. has tapped Sullivan &



Cromwell as counsel for a \$66 billion merger with BB&T Corp. — the largest bank merger since the financial crisis.

Sullivan & Cromwell has also made a name for itself in the burgeoning fintech space, advising digital payments company Fiserv during its acquisition of First Data Corp. in a \$22 billion all-stock transaction that law firm chairman Joe Shenker described as “groundbreaking.” The merger was announced in January 2019, and Sullivan & Cromwell helped the company notch approval from the Justice Department later that year.

“We’ve always had very deep ties to the financial institutions. What has been, I think, the source of our success is we’re dynamic, so we’ve moved with the financial institutions,” said Shenker. “As they’ve branched into different industries, we have too.”

Within the practice groups that Sullivan & Cromwell is recognized in, the core of much of its work has spanned areas outside finance, including product liability, cybersecurity and energy, Shenker said.

For example, Sullivan & Cromwell is currently representing Volkswagen against claims by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission that the auto giant defrauded investors by failing to disclose that it had cheated in state and federal vehicle emissions tests. A federal judge instructed the parties to settle last year.

Shenker stressed that the firm’s attorneys are “generalists” who frequently work across practice groups.

“It’s really a testament to the fact that our people are multidisciplinary and are not pigeonholed or siloed, and can really turn to anything,” he said.

--Editing by Jill Coffey.