

## 5 Firms Leading The Way On Innovation, GCs Say

By **Megan Stride**

Law360, New York (December 6, 2010) -- Companies are on the hunt for law firms that employ creative strategies in billing and technology, and five firms are leading the way with their innovations, according to a new survey of corporate counsel.

The BTI Client Service A-Team 2011 report by The BTI Consulting Group Inc. (Wellesley, Mass.) ranks Bartlit Beck Herman Palenchar & Scott LLP, Foley & Lardner LLP, Jones Day, Seyfarth Shaw LLP and Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP as the most innovative firms.

The scores sum up responses from nearly 300 corporate counsel at Fortune 1000 companies and were published as part of the annual report, which recognizes 30 law firms that received corporate counsel's highest ratings across a range of categories.

Innovation was a new category in this year's BTI report, joining 16 other areas that the consulting firm reported as being key drivers of superior client relationships.

Bartlit Beck partner Peter B. Bensinger Jr. largely attributes the firm's high ranking in innovation to the fact that it has been a pioneer in alternative fee arrangements.

The firm's billing structures usually consist of a flat fee plus a performance bonus, an arrangement that helps to "align the interests of the firm with the interests of the corporations it's defending," Bensinger said.

Foley & Lardner embraced alternative fee arrangements based on feedback from an intensive task force that evaluated how different billing approaches might work for the firm and its clients, according to strategy partner Jim Kalyvas.

The firm also works to create the combinations of billing strategies that best address particular client needs, Kalyvas said.

"We internally have tools in place to help us be creative," he said. "We have a very efficient process for approving alternative billing arrangements within the firm."

New applications of technology was another key strategy clients valued when ranking firms on innovation, according to the report.

Many of the highest-ranked firms are using technology to help change the way they deliver their services, another important area of innovation that corporate counsel consider important, BTI President Michael B. Rynowecer said.

Seyfarth Shaw LLP managing partner J. Stephen Poor said that one of the firm's most innovative tools is its Lean Six Sigma program, an evaluative process that helps attorneys identify and weed out inefficiencies that can drive up client costs.

The program sets the firm apart, Poor said, allowing Seyfarth Shaw to examine the way legal services are delivered

"through the client's eyes."

"The goal here is to make sure you maintain or improve quality, drive efficiency, and hopefully get a similar or better result at a lower overall cost," he said. "The response has been very positive."

Foley & Lardner uses an extranet system to amp up client communication, allowing them to see, in real time, the status of their matter's budget and document exchanges, according to Kalyvas, who works on many of the firm's client service technology initiatives.

The firm's technology systems also allow Foley & Lardner attorneys to do reporting for a client on a project or case's history, providing corporate counsel with the sort of knowledge management that Rynowecer said was a key innovative strength.

"At the end of the day, there's more given to the client than just the bill for the completed matter," Kalyvas said. "There are some lessons learned and a library of knowledge that will help streamline going through that process next time."

Meanwhile, Jones Day has recently expanded its website to be used as an internal tool for attorneys as well as an external one for clients, according to client affairs partner Andrew M. Kramer. The change has helped the firm's lawyers better understand what it offers clients, he said.

Technology should be used creatively in the courtroom as well, according to Bensinger.

Bartlit Beck attorneys use digital document display, real-time transcription and other tools in multimedia depositions and trial presentations, and it's the attorneys themselves who are tech-savvy enough to run the show, he said.

"[Other firms] are vendor-dependent, but here, the lawyers know how to use it," Bensinger said. "In the courtroom, when we stand up, a Bartlit Beck lawyer is going to run that machine and show that presentation, and has the flexibility to use it without having to rely on anybody else."

In all areas, a firm's constant evolution is of tremendous value to clients, Poor said.

"I think that the old ways of delivering services have to be modified and adapted to meet the changing needs of the client, who face their own ever-changing world," he said. "Those firms who can be creative are the ones who are in the best position to partner with and help clients solve their particular problems."