

## Rising Star: Latham & Watkins' Jason Silvera

By Karlee Weinmann



**Jason Silvera**  
Latham & Watkins LLP

*Law360, New York (May 08, 2014, 12:17 PM ET)* -- Capitalizing on his deep familiarity with the private equity industry and ability to think quickly, Latham & Watkins LLP partner Jason Silvera has helped seal a series of notable private equity transactions in his career thus far, earning him billing as one of Law360's top young attorneys.

Since he joined Latham straight out of law school, Silvera, 39, has sought out opportunities to work on the kind of deals that carry the potential not only to define a given lawyer's practice but also the marketplace, helping him cement a spot on Law360's Rising Stars list of top private equity lawyers under 40.

"Everything we do as lawyers builds on itself and the more volume of work and more complex work that you see early on, and continue to chew on as you move forward, ends up lending itself to developing a great base," Silvera said.

In recent years, the attorney has carved out a particularly impressive body of work on behalf of Leonard Green & Partners LP, a Los Angeles-based private equity titan that has raised more than \$15 billion since its launch 25 years ago. Silvera helped Leonard Green unload David's Bridal, a portfolio company, to rival firm Clayton Dubilier & Rice LLC in a closely followed billion-dollar sale that left it with a minority stake.

Aside from that transaction, Silvera guided Leonard Green to a series of major acquisitions — including retailer J. Crew Group Inc. and IMS Health Inc. — that carry a combined value of more than \$9 billion. He also helped the firm hand off commercial landscape firm The Brickman Group Ltd. LLC to private equity giant KKR & Co. LP in a \$1.6 billion sale.

A fine-tuned approach to recognizing and managing client needs has helped the attorney deliver results, including on a large scale and under pressure. For Silvera, it traces back to an ability to react quickly and be flexible, understanding clients' needs and finding the best approach given the dynamics of each unique situation.

"Depending on the nature of the issue at hand, I feel like I've had some success in being able to wear multiple different hats to achieve a client's objective," Silvera said. "For the most part, we do M&A and it's cooperative and constructive in nature, but there are times when people are butting heads a bit more and it's trying to work with our client as to the best path to get through whatever is the issue of the day."

Over the past decade — the meat of Silvera's career — the private equity industry has somersaulted through good times and down times, settling most recently with a more promising outlook that has made the bargaining table a more comfortable place for deal makers.

Through that stretch, the attorney steered popular restaurant chain California Pizza Kitchen Inc. to a new private equity owner, Golden Gate Capital, in a \$470 million transaction. He also guided Gibson Energy Inc. in its \$445 million acquisition of private equity-backed Omni Energy Services Corp., which provides environmental and production services to the oil and gas industry.

Significant shifts in the private equity marketplace — and M&A overall — have kept deals practitioners on their toes, but Silvera said his involvement in large-cap transactions throughout and a careful eye toward trends has kept him at the forefront, even through industry volatility.

"I can deliver efficient, very effective advice, having had a very good grasp on that market for quite some time," he said. "We've continued to make sure that we're doing the most cutting-edge deals at the time and, frankly, at the same time we're making sure that we're staying on top of what's happening in deals that we're not involved with."

Part of Silvera's broad awareness of the marketplace is rooted in a well-rounded practice that also includes work on the strategic M&A side.

The attorney said his Southern California home base offers a variety of deal-making opportunities involving private equity players and strategic suitors alike. Throughout his relatively short career, Silvera has pushed along complex transactions, from take-privates to tender offers, that span more than two dozen international jurisdictions.

Last year, Silvera represented label company Avery Dennison Corp. when it sold a pair of units to CCL Industries Inc. for a combined consideration of \$500 million. The deal salvaged deal prospects for the company after the skepticism from the U.S. Department of Justice derailed an earlier proposal that would have sent one of the Avery Dennison subsidiaries to 3M Co.

He also advised Beckman Coulter Inc., a manufacturer of medical lab tools, on its \$6.8 billion sale to Danaher Corp.

"Doing deals in both spaces keeps myself and any other practitioner really at the top of a market that requires understanding both areas of practice," Silvera said. "You're just a better acquisition practitioner, a better M&A practitioner, if you play in both spaces."

While his zest for gaining experience and staying ahead of private equity trends has formed a solid foundation for Silvera's practice, the attorney said another fundamental factor has played a big role in defining his success.

"I like my job," Silvera said. "I always enjoy what I do, which I think helps."

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