

Rising Star: Latham & Watkins' Bradley C. Faris

By Kaitlyn Kiernan



Bradley C. Faris
Latham & Watkins LLP

Law360, New York (April 16, 2014, 2:02 PM ET) -- Bradley C. Faris has played a leading role on deals totaling more than \$70 billion over the last 16 months, including the complex \$3.2 billion sale of an Illinois Tool Works Inc. unit to Carlyle Group in February, making the Latham & Watkins LLP partner one of Law360's top mergers and acquisitions lawyers under age 40.

In his 14 years with the firm, Faris, 39, has risen as a leader in the M&A practice area, not only locally in the Chicago office, but with the firm globally. That strong leadership combined with his work on some of the firm's biggest deals in recent years helped Faris edge out the competition for one of 10 M&A attorney spots on Law360's 2014 Rising Star list.

"I'm fortunate to be at such a great firm with such a strong team in the U.S. and globally," he said. "That has allowed me to work on a lot of neat and exciting deals."

In his years with the firm, Faris has developed a broad practice. He has represented some of the firm's most notable clients, including private and public companies, private equity firms and financial advisers in a variety of large and complex transactions. Last year, he worked on a deal involving assets in more than 30 countries, a complex dual track tender offer and a large cross-border merger.

Earlier this year, Faris led the team that advised Illinois Tool Works, a new client for the firm, on its \$3.2 billion carve-out. Faris said it was fun working for the new client after winning the engagement through a bidding process.

The complicated deal involved the sale of ITW's industrial packaging segment and assets in more than 30 countries. Though the deal was complex, Faris said Latham & Watkins' global presence — with offices

in 14 countries around the world — left the firm well situated to handle the deal.

“It is exciting to work on the big deals, because you know a lot of attention will be paid to it,” Faris said. And though that deal was large, he said often small deals can be just as challenging.

“I find that deal complexity is often independent of deal size,” he said.

Faris said one of the most challenging deals he worked on last year was last Georgia-Pacific LLC's \$1.5 billion acquisition of Buckeye Technologies Inc. The novel deal repurposed the dual track structure, known as the Burger King structure, which blends the speed of a tender offer with the certainty of a shareholder vote, to protect Georgia-Pacific from possible antitrust delays.

When Georgia-Pacific did run into regulatory delays, it abandoned the tender offer and proceeded with a shareholder vote to lock in the transaction.

“It was the first time a deal structured as a dual track has actually moved to the second track,” Faris said.

Last year, Faris also played a leading role representing Omnicom Group Inc. in its complex merger with Publicis Groupe SA. The \$35.1 billion merger was one of the largest of the year.

Faris credits his rapid rise to a strongly collaborative environment at Latham & Watkins and the opportunity to work under top attorneys in the practice area, including the firm's global M&A chair Mark Gerstein, who is also based in the firm's Chicago office.

“There is such a strong culture of teamwork and collegiality,” Faris said. “It is a rewarding and fun place to build a practice.”

Faris this month became global vice chair for Latham & Watkins' M&A practice group in recognition of his strong commitment to expanding the firm's global footprint.

Faris, an Indianapolis native, chose to practice in Chicago because the legal market was more national in scope than that of Indiana. He joined Latham & Watkins as a summer associate in 1999 and returned as an associate after graduating in 2000 from Harvard Law School.

He received his B.A. from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He currently serves as a member of the prelaw advisory board at his undergraduate alma mater, looking to support and guide students interested in law.

--Editing by Stephen Berg.