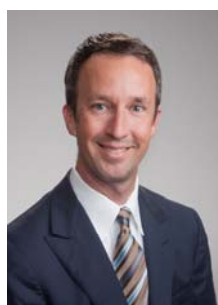


California Powerhouse: Latham & Watkins

By Caroline Simson



James Beaubien
Los Angeles



Tad Freese
Silicon Valley



Shayne Kennedy
Orange County



Karen Silverman
San Francisco



Brett Rosenblatt
San Diego



Chris Brearton
Century City

Law360, New York (May 29, 2015, 6:32 PM ET) -- Latham & Watkins LLP enjoyed a banner year in 2014 representing clients in multibillion-dollar mergers and IPOs, including Botox maker Allergan Inc. in a headline-grabbing \$66 billion takeover by white knight Actavis PLC, and in high-profile litigation that ran the gamut from securities to antitrust and intellectual property.

A dynamo in the California legal landscape, Latham & Watkins dominated the Golden State with eye-popping transactional work that included advising clients on eight of the top 10 deals and four of the top 10 initial public offerings involving California-based entities in 2014. All told, the firm's attorneys handled transactions worth more than \$150 billion across 106 deals, equating to a 72 percent jump in deal value for the firm over the previous year and helping to land the firm a spot on Law360's California Powerhouses for the second year running.

Founded in Los Angeles in 1934 with just three lawyers, Latham & Watkins today has 561 lawyers in its California offices, the highest headcount on Law360's list of California Powerhouses, and a new Century City office opened in November that focuses on media and entertainment.

The firm's sixth office in the Golden State, the Century City office is staffed with a quintet of expert entertainment, sports and media partners who came over from O'Melveny & Myers LLP. Latham also operates 27 other offices throughout the U.S. and the world.

"What drives California is entertainment and media, real estate, health care, life sciences, the tech industry in Silicon Valley, and those are all industries that we're leaders in," said Los Angeles managing partner Jim Beaubien. "We have more lawyers in California than any other law firm, and when you combine the strength of those numbers with our coverage of the industries that drive the state, and then you allow the clients in those industries to tap into the global platform, it's a very compelling proposition for high end legal work and for complex disputes and transactions."

Latham served as counsel on more IPOs than any other firm in 2014, representing the issuer or underwriters on more than a quarter of the offerings nationwide, 75 in total. By way of comparison, the firm that represented the second most IPOs in 2014 had a hand in just under 16 percent, or 47 IPOs total, according to the firm.

On the litigation side, the firm handled one of the most talked-about securities litigations of the past year, with a California-based Latham trial team securing a full defense verdict in favor of Manouch Moshayedi, the former CEO of STEC Inc., in June 2014 in one of the largest insider trading actions ever brought by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

The firm also advised clients on antitrust issues on deals like Facebook Inc.'s \$21.8 billion acquisition of venture-backed WhatsApp, among many others. And no discussion of Latham's merger work last year would be complete without mentioning its representation of Allergan, a longtime client that was hit with a hostile takeover bid by Valeant Pharmaceuticals International Inc. and William Ackman's Pershing Square Capital Management LP hedge fund in April 2014 that ultimately led to white knight Actavis' acquisition of the company in November.

Other work last year included scoring a major win for Toshiba Corp. in follow-on class action lawsuits and investigations around the world related to allegations of price-fixing in the optical disc drive industry by defeating certification of two proposed classes of direct and indirect purchasers, a decision upheld by the Ninth Circuit in January.

The firm also successfully represented San Diego-based Cadence Pharmaceuticals Inc. in an appeal over Exela's efforts to market generic versions of Ofirmev, a form of intravenous acetaminophen, in a decision that was upheld by the Federal Circuit in March.

Given the firm's successes in the courtroom and the deal room last year, it's hardly surprising that it saw record revenue in 2014 of \$2.6 billion, up 14 percent from 2013.

Ask the managing partners in its six California offices what makes Latham & Watkins a California powerhouse, and a theme emerges. Not only is the atmosphere collegial in those offices, that atmosphere extends to Latham's offices throughout the world, allowing the firm's lawyers in the Golden State easy access to a wealth of worldwide legal expertise.

But at the same time, the firm stays sticks close to its California roots. It's the combination of both that really sets Latham apart, according to Karen E. Silverman, managing partner of Latham's San Francisco office.

"We tend to think our ourselves as local assets on the one hand and global assets on the other, and they're very hard to separate," she said. "I think that's one of the things that contributes to our strength in the state, quite frankly. We're very connected to our clients and the local economies, and we're very integrated in the businesses that develop in and across the state, many of which themselves are global or national, and so at a very profound level we understand what they're trying to accomplish."

The sentiment was echoed by San Diego managing partner Brett Rosenblatt, a self-professed "California guy," born, raised, educated and now living and working in the Golden State.

"We've got offices all over the world, but we did start in California, and I think that's important because we're not just sort of a transplant," he said. "We originated here, and so you have a lot of focus on California that, quite honestly, a firm of our size that otherwise came to California maybe after trying the New York or even the international landscape wouldn't have."

Each of the firm's six offices has its own specialty. In San Francisco, the focus is on litigation, including antitrust law. An office in nearby Silicon Valley, meanwhile, focuses on corporate work and mergers and acquisitions. San Diego and Orange County deal primarily with finance and capital markets, respectively, and the LA office specializes in corporate and private equity work. And the new Century City office focuses on media and entertainment.

At the same time, a good part of the reason Latham has been so successful over the years is its ability to cater to both the most junior of startup companies and multinational behemoths like Apple Inc. and Toshiba. That's true in all its California offices, but particularly in Silicon Valley, according to managing partner Tad Freese.

And as a Latham client, those companies, large and small, have access to the firm's formidable global resources, he said.

"In this day and age, even our small startup clients are oftentimes looking to do something else, whether it's in Europe or Asia," he said. "To have offices in those jurisdictions that can service these clients with the same kind of quality that you'd expect of a Latham & Watkins attorney really goes a long way to help solidify a relationship here in the Bay Area."

The other thing that differentiates Latham is its ability to adapt to an ever-changing legal and political environment, the partners said. That can include things like having specialized knowledge of the fields in which their clients operate, or identifying an area where the firm hasn't addressed a need.

That was largely the impetus behind opening the Century City office, according to Beaubien, who said it had been "glaringly evident" to him that the firm "played in the fringes" of the entertainment and media space.

The office now focuses on much of the same work handled in Latham's other California offices — M&As, IPOs, structured finance and intellectual property matters — but aimed squarely at entities in entertainment, media and sports, Century City managing partner Chris Brearton said.

And with the expertise brought by the attorneys in his office, the Century City office managed to combine its legal knowledge with that of Latham as a whole, allowing it to score a lucrative deal announced in February for the Chinese online entertainment and media company Tencent Holdings Ltd. to become the National Basketball Association's exclusive online partner in China.

Brearton said the deal used both the media and entertainment expertise in his office to build on a relationship that Latham offices in China had with Tencent to make the deal come together.

"That's a very good example of putting two and two together," he said.

And the same collegial atmosphere is maintained in the firm's offices throughout the world, whether it's in Tokyo, London, Dubai, or any of the other firm's other 24 offices. That not only makes it easier for the firm's attorneys to feel like they can easily reach out to other offices for guidance and help, it makes them much more likely to keep clients happy, Freese said.

"I think the thing that impresses clients the most is our teamwork and ability to work together," said Beaubien. "We don't have a star system, we don't have fiefdoms. ... It is taught to us from the first day we walk through the door that teamwork is really the essence of providing fantastic client service."

--Editing by Brian Baresch.