



LITIGATION DEPARTMENT OF THE YEAR: GENERAL LITIGATION FINALIST

WILLKIE FARR & GALLAGHER



WILLKIE FARR & GALLAGHER TEAM

Seated, from left, partners Todd Cosenza and Tariq Mundiya, chair of the litigation department; standing, from left, partners Shaimaa Hussein, Christopher St. Jeanos, Mary Eaton and Sameer Advani

Q&A **What are some of the department's most satisfying successes of the past year and why?**

Willkie has achieved a number of precedent-setting victories across a wide spectrum of legal issues in courts around the country involving securities litigation, corporate and municipal bankruptcies, derivative litigation, and insurance disputes. Among them was Willkie's multibillion dollar win for the Plan Administrator of Lehman Brothers Holdings in the largest-ever trial involving RMBS claims. At the conclusion of the 23-day, unique claims estimation trial, the court ruled that the RMBS-related claims—originally asserted by the RMBS trustees in the amount of \$37 billion—would be estimated at Lehman's requested

amount of \$2.38 billion. That victory demonstrated not only our trial capabilities in securities, bankruptcy and complex litigation, but also our ability to handle multidisciplinary matters seamlessly across different departments within the firm.

A prospective client in crisis calls and asks why your team should be retained. What is your answer? A great example of why Willkie should be retained in a crisis was demonstrated by our work representing Relativity Media, producer of

“Zero Dark Thirty” and “Bridesmaids.” Our team was retained only a few weeks before Relativity’s scheduled August 2018 trial against Netflix in bankruptcy court. In dispute was Relativity’s only significant asset—its licensing agreement with Netflix. Immediately, Willkie assembled an interdisciplinary team of litigators and bankruptcy attorneys. In the course of just weeks, our attorneys got “up to speed” and completed document discovery, multiple depositions, expert reports, and pretrial briefing. The result: a total trial victory for Willkie, paving the way for Relativity’s planned sale to UltraV Holdings. It’s just a great example of using our skills as trial attorneys to achieve a terrific result for a client in crisis.

What traits do you respect most in opposing firms and lawyers? We respect lawyers with subject matter knowledge and who understand complex matters and their clients’ needs. From our perspective, it’s almost always better to have a sophisticated adversary who has spent time understanding the facts and nature of the dispute. Even more fundamentally, we respect lawyers who, while still being zealous advocates for their clients, are trustworthy and don’t cross any ethical lines.

What sorts of trends are you seeing in litigation, and what do you think will be the most important development in the law/legal business that will impact your field in the next 10 years? Over the last 10 years, clients have become more savvy about purchasing legal services. They no longer retain the same “go-to” law firm for all significant matters. Instead, clients seek particular lawyers with deep subject matter experience. This has created far more competition in the marketplace. Over the next 10 years, the continued advancement of technology and

LAW FIRM PROFILE		
	\$817 GROSS REVENUE LAST YEAR	\$772M IN 2017
	#50 2019 AM LAW 200 RANKING	#47 IN 2018
	\$3.09M PROFIT PER EQUITY PARTNER	\$1.24M RPL
	658 ATTORNEYS	
146 EQUITY PARTNERS	10 NON EQUITY	427 ASSOCIATES

artificial intelligence and the sustained pressure to decrease costs will inevitably impact litigation. Clients will retain lawyers who can think creatively to handle their most difficult legal challenges.

What is the firm doing to ensure that future generations of litigators are ready to take the helm? On an industry-wide level, because the number of cases going to trial has been decreasing, it has been a challenge to ensure that associates are obtaining the right type of developmental litigation experience. To combat that problem, Willkie has made a conscious effort to provide meaningful opportunities for junior attorneys to gain the requisite skills to eventually serve as lead trial attorneys. Willkie also focuses its efforts on diversity with initiatives that include mentoring programs, improving communication between partners and associates, offering insights from our clients on best practices for associates, and providing opportunities for attorneys to connect in informal settings.

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