

## LITIGATION BOUTIQUES **HOT LIST**

**A SPECIAL REPORT** | They may be small, but their cases are as big as they come. This week, we spotlight 10 litigation boutiques with up to 50 lawyers who enjoyed stand-out accomplishments in 2015. These firms, located on either coast or at points in between, secured key victories—whether in monetary terms or by establishing important precedent at the trial or appellate level. Most of the wins were on the defense side, and the outcomes affected banking and finance sectors, pharmaceuticals and life sciences, international law, employment law, technology, manufacturing and more.

Their clients often are heavyweights, including major sports leagues, pop artists and industry leaders. We also asked these attorneys to provide some insight into what's made them successful, and the advice they've found most useful in steering their careers. Some practitioners received words of wisdom while they were mere children; others did so when they were still in law school or just starting to practice law.

The NLJ based its Litigation Boutiques Hot List selections on nominations submitted by the firms themselves and our own reporting.



### **GOLDMAN ISMAIL TOMASELLI BRENNAN & BAUM LLP**

The team at Goldman Ismail Tomaselli Brennan & Baum prevailed in a tough round of tests last year—and that was even before an associate's December appearance on "Jeopardy!"

The firm saved Bayer Healthcare Pharmaceuticals LLC millions in multidistrict litigation over an intra-uterine contraceptive system that has become the subject of more than 4,500 suits in state and federal courts around the country.

Goldman Ismail partner Shayna Cook convinced a judge to adopt an expedited system for dismissing claims based on the statute of limitations. The plaintiffs alleged that the value of their claims exceeded \$50 million.

Under the expedited system, Cook and her team

simply had to file a three-page letter for each case they wanted to dismiss, avoiding costly depositions and discovery.

So far, more than 140 cases have been tossed out, and the firm expects many more dismissals.

"We wanted to find a way to be cost-effective and efficient about disposing of the claims that had no basis for being in court to begin with. So we just started brainstorming options for moving forward and removing these baseless cases from the docket. And this is the one we came up with," Cook said.

"In most cases, you have to go through the costly depositions and discovery before you can dispose of cases that are time-barred," she added.

"In our case, we made it so we didn't have to go through any of that."

In the multidistrict litigation and in the New Jersey state courts, the firm also set up a procedure that uses so-called "plaintiff fact sheets" to quickly review a plaintiff's background, medical history and other relevant information at the onset of litigation. The firm developed a procedure for Bayer to petition the court to dismiss cases that could not meet certain requirements. So far, the fact-sheet procedure has accounted for more than 400 dismissals.

"We've been very aggressive about enforcing that order," Cook said. "It's carrying it out in a very aggressive way, where you are holding the plaintiffs accountable for their failure to provide basic info and seeking the court's intervention when they fail to do so."

Fred Thompson, one of the

attorneys opposing Bayer, said Cook distinguished herself in the discovery phase of the litigation with her strong grasp of science and pharmaceuticals. Describing her as "hard-nosed" and a "consummate professional," the Motley Rice partner likened litigation against Goldman Ismail lawyers to an experience most find unpleasant.

"Litigating with Ismail is like a trip to the dentist. That's just the reality of it," he said. "They are very professional, very thorough, and they use all the tools in the toolbox."

The firm wasn't able to find similar success in the court of Alex Trebek. In December, associate Rami Fakhouri appeared on "Jeopardy!," finishing second with a score of \$6,600, but fulfilling a lifelong dream. "Just as the lights were going down and it was starting, I felt I'd already won," Fakhouri said.

—C. RYAN BARBER

## FIRM FACTS

- **Largest office:** Chicago
- **Total attorneys:** 19
- **Partners:** 10
- **Associates:** 7

## BEST ADVICE RECEIVED

While clerking for U.S. District Judge Sam Sparks, Shayna Cook received a piece of advice that was later reinforced by partner Tarek Ismail when she entered private practice. "It's so basic that it almost seems ridiculous to repeat: You have to be prepared for everything you do. If you're not prepared, you're going to lose credibility with any court you're in front of and any opposition you're negotiating with."