

GIR Awards 2019 – The Winners

25 October 2019



The GIR Awards were held in Washington, DC (Credit: iStock.com/uschools)

Investigations specialists from around the world gathered at the Four Seasons Hotel in Washington, DC on the night of 24 October for the fifth annual GIR Awards. During the night, GIR also unveiled the top 30 investigations practices.

Latham & Watkins won the *Most Impressive Investigations Practice of the Year* award, after a standout year during which it helped guide companies such as Cognizant, Microsoft and OSI Systems to favourable resolutions of foreign bribery cases. Latham had been up against strong competition from firms including WilmerHale, Paul Hastings, Clifford Chance and Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom.

Latham and DLA Piper were separately recognised for their work on technology company Cognizant Technology Solutions' declination from the US Department of Justice concerning violations of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act in India, in the *Most Important Development of the Year* category. The company secured a declination within three years of the case opening – and despite senior executives being charged with related wrongdoing.

The award for *Boutique or Regional Investigations Practice of the Year* was handed to BCL Solicitors after it played a crucial role in securing an acquittal for a former DePuy executive in a Greek bribery case after the client had already been convicted in the UK years earlier. The firm also successfully defended an individual in a prosecution brought by the UK's Serious Fraud Office in connection with retailer Tesco's accounting fraud case. BCL fended off competition from other compelling nominees, including Rio de Janeiro-based Saud Advogados, Washington, DC boutique Ferrari & Associates, and New York outfits Kaplan Hecker & Fink and Levine Lee.

Kaplan Hecker had been nominated in the boutique award category in part because of its success in nixing the DOJ prosecution of Robert Bogucki, Barclays' former US head of forex trading, over an alleged multibillion-dollar front-running scheme.

In the case, *US v Bogucki*, Kaplan Hecker and Clarence Dyer & Cohen convinced the presiding judge that no jury could reasonably convict Bogucki on the evidence presented, and as a result the matter deservingly won in the category *Most Important Court Case of the Year*.

The DOJ has had notable successes too this year, in particular its work in resolving a \$850 million FCPA settlement with Russian telecoms company Mobile TeleSystems (MTS). MTS is the final company to settle in what has been one of the biggest bribery investigations of recent years. The prosecution team also charged the government official who allegedly took the bribes as well as one of the executives who allegedly paid them. That's why the MTS prosecution team, including lawyers from the criminal division's fraud section at Main Justice and the Manhattan US attorney's office, is the 2019 winner for *Enforcement Agency or Prosecutor of the Year*.

In two previous instances Brazil's prosecutors scooped up the enforcement agency of the year award. This year saw another Latin American enforcer make its mark: Peru's Public Prosecutor's Office, which has doggedly pursued bribery allegations linked to Brazilian engineering and construction company Odebrecht, and as a result was crowned Emerging Enforcer of the Year for 2019.

The *Investigations Consultancy of the Year* award went to PwC. The firm is recognised in part for its role in assisting the Malaysian government in responding to the sprawling 1MDB scandal, as well as its work for HP in an acquisition dispute with Autonomy, which is currently the subject of a landmark fraud trial in the UK. PwC saw off other impressive nominees for the award, such as Control Risks and Forensic Risk Alliance, a two-time winner in this category.

Natalia Shehadeh, the chief compliance officer at oil and gas company TechnipFMC, is the 2019 winner for *Outstanding In-house Counsel of the Year*. TechnipFMC resolved bribery charges brought by US and Brazilian authorities. The company, which has previously been penalised for FCPA violations, managed to avoid a monitor as part of the settlement – that could only be the case if the DOJ thought TechnipFMC's compliance programme was in top shape.

The night's festivities concluded with the *GIR Outstanding Career Award*, which was handed out to WilmerHale's Roger Witten, who has helped build one of the leading investigations practices today. Witten has worked on landmark cases from the very start of his career, and has played a role in developing a new generation of top investigations lawyers.