



## Report names Honigman a top mergers-and-acquisitions law firm

By Olivia Pulsinelli | Business Review West...

February 26, 2010, 4:14PM

In a recent report of law firms with the largest volume of merger and acquisition deals, **Honigman Miller Schwartz and Cohn** was the only Michigan firm to crack the top 15 for deals in the Midwest and deals in the southern United States.

Independent M&A intelligence service **mergermarket** based its annual report "Americas: League Table of Legal Advisers" on announced transactions of more than \$5 million. For 2009, Detroit-based Honigman ranked No. 6 among national firms based on the value of Midwest transactions. It ranked No. 13 on the corresponding list for transactions in the South. In 2008, it ranked No. 191 and No. 390 respectively on those lists.

The 11 deals that contributed to Honigman's ranking were in the areas of banking, biotechnology, energy and automotive. Phillip Torrence, office managing partner in Kalamazoo, said several of Honigman's high-profile deals helped contribute to that ranking, including working on the GM bankruptcy and the BeijingWest acquisition of Delphi's global brake and suspension component business.



Torrence

Additionally, Kalamazoo-based attorneys either led or were closely involved with around half of those 11 deals.

"The **Kalamazoo office**, within 18 months of its launching, has become intimately integrated in the firm as a whole," Torrence said.

Honigman has always been "a go-to firm" in Michigan for M&A, Torrence said.

"Over the past 10 years, I'd say, the firm has really honed in on its M&A team," he said.

Overall, the firm has a "very robust group" of 37 attorneys focusing on M&A transactions. Recently, the group has been attracting more work outside of Michigan.

"We've had a great deal of success going out of our market to cities like New York, LA, Chicago, Boston — bigger financial markets — to go up the ladder a couple of rungs for bigger deals and more sophisticated legal work, as companies in those areas have decided to shop around a bit and get better deals for their legal services," Torrence said.

He believes that "shopping around" is a trend related to the economy. And he estimates about 80 percent of the Kalamazoo office's work is not tied to Michigan.

"I think with the advent of the Internet and the virtual world we're in today, we've found that we can represent clients anywhere from Chicago to Boston to Beijing, for that matter," he said.

Torrence attributes Honigman's ability to attract the work it does to its success in recruiting high-caliber attorneys from larger cities.

Recently, the Kalamazoo office added two new intellectual property attorneys — Heidi Berven joined the firm from Boston last fall, and David Johnson came from Minneapolis in January.

The Kalamazoo office now has 34 full-time equivalents, including attorneys and staff. As far as continuing the Kalamazoo growth, Torrence said the firm doesn't "have a number in mind" but is always open to talking with potential candidates.

"Given the fact that we have such a young group, we intend to be doing this for quite some time," Torrence said, noting that the average attorney age at his office is 34. "We look forward to continuing to add to the team. I wouldn't be surprised if we added anywhere from two to five lawyers this year."

Also, Torrence expects Honigman's activity to keep up this year. The firm was in the process of closing a deal in Kalamazoo on Friday, and its pipeline of work continues to build.

"We're pretty optimistic about 2010," he said.

© 2010 MLive.com. All rights reserved.