

LAWYER OF THE YEAR

John Crabtree

WINNER JOHN CRABTREE
Wragge & Co

When John Crabtree took on the role of senior partner at Wragge & Co in 1993, he became head of a sleepy Birmingham firm with just two Plc clients. A decade later, he retires from a firm that boasts 38 FTSE-100 clients, and is genuinely seen as a top-quality national and international player.

Crabtree is universally admired within the profession as the man responsible for creating the culture that took the firm on to greater things. He is a classic ambassador for his firm, and has seen it rise consistently to top the rankings in partner and assistant satisfaction surveys, as well as appearing in *The Sunday Times* 100 Best Companies to Work For survey. Acclaimed as one of the best law firm leaders of his generation, he has witnessed a doubling of partner profits and a growth in turnover from £27m to £78m in the last six years alone.

Crabtree has been a partner at the firm since 1976, and was for several years the head of corporate before he became senior partner. He has remained client partner for many of the firm's biggest clients, including GKN, BUPA and British Airways.

In his own time, Crabtree is a devoted fundraiser for Sense – the UK's charity for people who are deafblind. He is chairman of the charity's Homes



John Crabtree of Wragge & Co accepts the award for Lawyer of the year from Dominique Graham from Graham Gill

for Life Appeal, working to provide adapted accommodation in the Midlands, for which he has raised over £1m. A true credit to the profession, the loss that Wragges will experience when he retires is only tempered by the strength of the market position in which he leaves the firm.

> RUNNER-UP IAN COLES Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw

Ian Coles joined American firm Mayer, Brown & Platt in New York in 1981, having previously trained as a barrister in London. He moved to the firm's London office in 1984 and was made a partner in 1987. In 2000, now head of the office, he was asked by the firm's Chicago management to

carry out a comprehensive study of the London market and identify possible merger candidates.

His research threw up a shortlist of medium-sized corporate firms, amongst them Rowe & Maw. In 2002, Mayer Brown approached the English firm's management and the rest, as they say, is history.

The two firms merged on 1 February 2002, with Coles sacrificing his office management role in favour of a role as head of the European finance practice. Partners in the merged firm praise his role in integrating the legacy Mayer Brown London office into Rowe & Maw, and his integral role in executing one of the biggest transatlantic mergers. **LB**

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Tower Snow Clifford Chance, San Francisco

Tower Snow took over the management of Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison in 1997 and during his three years in charge, the firm was transformed from a regional litigation outfit to an internationally recognised full-service firm. Under his leadership, the firm's revenues increased by 123% and profits rose 109%.

They say you should get out when you're at the top, and Tower Snow's departure from Brobecks was certainly shrewdly timed. Less than a year after he left, the firm announced it was to dissolve. Snow led what is believed to be the largest ever lateral move in the legal profession: he took 70 colleagues to Clifford Chance, opening four Californian offices for the firm. He helped Clifford Chance leapfrog all but one other non-Californian firm in critical mass, and he took nearly all of his client base with him. No lawyer had a greater escape than did Snow in 2002, and no lawyer made so much of a lateral move.

David Ansbro Eversheds

In May 2000, David Ansbro became Eversheds' first firmwide managing partner – taking on the enormous task of integrating seven regional firms to create a whole with a unified financial structure. He will retire this May after three successful years at the helm, and in 2002 he smoothly managed the appointment of his successor David Gray by keeping well out of an intensely political process. Under his management, Eversheds appointed 96 new partners, 33 of them laterally, and the firm grew significantly in Europe. He introduced a new profit-sharing scheme and adopted a new management structure, as well as significantly expanding the London office of the firm.

Outside of the firm, Ansbro is pro-chancellor and chairman of the University of Leeds. Vice-chancellor Sir Alan Wilson said: 'He brings to this role a sense of direction, a sense of purpose and a sense of proportion. He is a man of acute judgement and transparent integrity.'



GRAHAM GILL

Congratulations!

Graham Gill are delighted to have sponsored Lawyer of the Year 2003.

Congratulations to the winner, John Crabtree, and to all the runners up.

Graham Gill's market intelligence and dedication to what we do means that the results we achieve for partners, teams and assistants are unrivalled. To find out more, call Dominique Graham in confidence on 020 7430 1711.