WINNER

DLA Piper
Rudnick
Gray Cary

NIKEL KNOWLES, FRANCIS BURCH, LEE MILLER, CO-CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS; GEORGE MITCHELL, CHAIRMAN

Momentum, merger, metamorphosis

While sceptics anticipated the bursting of DLA’s bubble in 2004, Nigel Knowles simply set himself ‘Mission America’ and carried on delivering. While this firm may not rival Slaughter and May for elite M&A work, it’s leaving many rivals feeling less dynamic.

Knowles dedicated 2004 to securing a merger with a United States law firm. The negotiations with Piper Rudnick took a further twist when the Baltimore-based law firm merged with a slick Californian outfit, Gray Cary Ware & Freidenrich – home to superstar corporate partner, Greg Gallo. DLA took the diversion in its stride and global merger took place with a worldwide vote on 4 December. The process was managed smoothly, rainmakers at all three legacy firms are still there, and the brand-new combined management of the three co-chief executives display a genuine chemistry in talking up the respective opportunities now on the table for all of the offices. DLA Piper is leading the legal business community by example. It will become increasingly important for the top-end firms to recognise the dynamism on show with a firm of this structure. The market is changing so rapidly that some ancient partnerships still prominent in the City may become bystanders to a corporate world offering widely different possibilities.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

ADDELSHAW GODDARD

Mark Jones, managing partner; Paul Lee, senior partner; Paddy Grafton Green, chairman

This team is an example of more strong management from the north of England in 2004. The Addleshaw leadership duo of Lee and Jones enacted an acquisition in London that transformed an ambitious but too diminutive London office into what is becoming, with the addition of Theodore Goddard, a credible mid-to-upper market UK outfit.

BEACHCROFT WANSBOURGS

The Right Hon The Lord Hunt of Wirral, MBE, senior partner; Robert Heslett, managing partner;

The combination of leading practices in commercial health, projects, and insurance capabilities has worked for Beachcrofts. Since its 1999 merger, the firm has been playing a long game, setting up a business model that should be perfectly placed to capitalise on Clementi’s proposed market changes.

BIRD & BIRD

David Kerr, chief executive officer; Hamish Sandison, non-executive chairman

It has been a watershed year for Bird & Bird – this year’s winners of TMT Team of the Year. The firm is best judged by comparing its status with similar TMT-focused firms that have stood still over the past five years; not so Bird & Bird. The year 2004 saw its international ambitions coming to fruition with debuts in Germany and Beijing.

SLAUGHTER AND MAY

Tim Clark, senior partner

Slaughter and May needs no introduction, nor does it lend itself to hyperbole. But it is worth juxtaposing the position the firm is in after ten years of watching rivals spread around the globe, with the addition of Theodore Goddard, a credible mid-to-upper market UK outfit.

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WHITE & CASE

Duane Wall, managing partner

This is the first-ever inclusion in the shortlist for the ultimate Legal Business award for a firm founded and headquartered in the US. It has been making the case that the depth and quality of its English capability means that it should be judged on the same basis as a UK firm. We believe it demonstrated this in 2004.

DLA Piper is truly leading the legal business community by example.
THE CITIGROUP PRIVATE BANK
CONGRATULATES

DLA PIPER RUDNICK GRAY CARY
2005 LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR

Building a relationship of trust and confidence between bankers and legal professionals has been our expertise for over 30 years. With our specialist experience in banking and wealth management for legal professionals, we have real insight into the realities and demands of the profession. That means we can work together to ensure your professional success is mirrored in your finances.

To know more about the services we offer, call James Tsolakis on +44 (0)20 7508 8001.