

WINNER

Howes Percival

ALAN KEFFORD; BRANDON RANSLEY;
JIT SINGH



Brandon Ransley (far left) and Alan Kefford with simplylawjobs' Michelle Jones (left) and Emma Wootton

It is a desire for quality rather than quantity that is driving Howes Percival. The PEP figure, rather than turnover, is the firm's own measure of success. That said, almost every aspect of the firm is increasingly impressive, whether it is increasing profitability, hitting average PEP figures of £310,000 for 2005, up 12%, or being able to attract ever more prestigious clients, such as Kia Motors (UK), National Geographic Channel and Bentley. It is also performing on bigger and more complex mandates, like the recent sale of Page & Moy's cruising business, opposite bigger international firms such as Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Nicholson Graham and Latham & Watkins.

The firm is building a reputation through a corporate team now frequently engaged in eight-figure transactions. Its arbitration team is increasingly international, with activities ranging from an \$11m corporate dispute in London to an intergovernmental hearing in Tanzania. The East Midlands practice, with offices in Milton Keynes, Northampton and Leicester, has ramped up turnover by 43% in three years. And pro bono work is an especially laudable area of the firm, with local community activity for multiple sclerosis charities, SportsAid East and Norfolk Cricket Alliance. But it is in hard-nosed business terms that Kefford, Ransley and Singh have really caught the eye, working together to build a business that may be based in four offices but is going forward as one firm.

HIGHLY COMMENDED
BRABNERS CHAFFE STREET
Michael Brabner

High profitability and an entrance into the *Legal Business 100* for 2005 demonstrate just how successfully the firm has bridged the gap between Manchester and Liverpool, nearly five years on from the cross-city merger. Both firms were already successful in their home cities, which is a good start for any merger, and a policy of not fixing

RICKSONS
Anthony Hughes

The North West is clearly a fertile area for firms with ambition. In two years, Anthony Hughes has taken Preston-based Ricksons away from insurance work into fiercely competitive commercial markets in Manchester and Leeds. Recruitments included an employment team from Eversheds and an in-house counsel from adidas, the latter bringing a prestigious sponsorship deal with Brazilian international footballer Kaká.

THRING TOWNSEND
Thomas Sheppard

Sheppard has applied lessons learned in private business during a three-year sabbatical from the law to a West Country firm that has been on the rise throughout his stewardship. A programme of coaching for partners to increase motivation is just one example. A move to take Laytons' Bristol office extended the private client expert's presence in the region, and showed ambition.

WATSON BURTON
Andrew Hoyle

Hoyle has driven Watson Burton through a period of transformational growth, with turnover now at £16.1m. The firm's move into Leeds on a greenfield basis was done so that the office could be shaped by his vision. The quality of lateral hires has vindicated that idea, embodied by the hire of former Pinsent Masons head of employment John McMullen. The fact that profit figures remain higher than most of its North East rivals must intimidate.

The profit per equity partner figure, rather than turnover, is Howes Percival's own measure of success.

what isn't broken has seen both offices continue to run as separate entities under one banner.

BRODIES
Joyce Cullen; Bill Drummond

That Brodies is a top-tier firm in Scotland is well established, and it excelled in all areas of practice during 2005. Most notably, it obtained significant damages from the government of Libya on behalf of Pan Am, while poaching a four-partner real estate team from Fyfe Ireland was a real coup. 'Its advice matches the best we have received around the world,' is the opinion of Javier Montolivía Diaz, head of legal at Inditex.

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Legal Executive, Paralegal, Solicitor
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Legal Executive, Paralegal, Solicitor
Practice Manager, Temporary and
Legal Executive, Paralegal
Practice Manager, Temp
Legal Executive, Paral
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