

# National/regional firm of the year

## WINNER

# HBJ Gateley Wareing

**Peter Davies, managing partner; Malcolm McPherson and Michael Ward, joint senior partners; Bijan Sedghi, chairman**  
*For building a credible national presence*

As reported by *Legal Business* in February, HBJ Gateley Wareing chairman Bijan Sedghi confidently announced: 'Birmingham won't be big enough for this firm.' Notably, HBJ opened its first international office in Dubai that same month. The ambitious Midlands stalwart used 2007 to thrust itself into the national limelight: merging with shipping boutique Shaw and Croft in April to gain a London platform, then adding Glasgow property and corporate outfit Boyds Solicitors one month later.

More importantly, expansion comes hot on the heels of a record-breaking financial year. In 2007, turnover climbed 13% to £35m, following the January 2006 merger between legacy firms Gateley Wareing and Henderson Boyd Jackson. Certainly weighty, but when commenting on the firm's financials Sedghi prefers to

highlight the firm's profit margin, which stands at a lean 37%, an enviable figure for a firm headquartered outside London.

On the laterals front, the second half of 2007 saw a spate of high-profile swoops. The hire of Paul Minto from Dumfries & Galloway Housing Partnership to establish a public sector group was a particularly savvy move. The firm also recruited former Browne Jacobson corporate head Rob Metcalfe as a director, while on the restructuring side, partner Vicki Conway arrived from Wragge & Co. Undoubtedly, there is more to come: HBJ is breaking out of the Midlands.



Bijan Sedghi of HBJ Gateley Wareing (centre) with George Bull of Baker Tilly

## HIGHLY COMMENDED

### BLAKE LAPHORN TARLO LYONS

**Walter Cha, managing partner; Jonathan Lloyd-Jones, senior partner**

Last year was undeniably momentous for South-East firm Blake Laphorn Tarlo Lyons, which became one of the largest firms in the region following its December 2006 merger, its fourth tie-up since 2001. The union bolstered its City presence and made an impressive impact on profits as turnover soared by 34% to £45.1m and PEP climbed 11% to £198,000. Strong growth has seen the merged firm enter into the *Legal Business 100* at 57.

## BRODIES

**Bill Drummond, managing partner**

Brodies became a real force in the local market in 2007 through a combination of key hires, strong profit and a raft of weighty deals. The Scottish firm outperformed

a diminution in service. Deals have become easier as its contact bases have increased.'

## HILL DICKINSON

**Peter Jackson, managing partner; Tony Wilson, senior partner**

Liverpool giant Hill Dickinson continues to impress. Its recent reunion with Hill Taylor Dickinson was an inspired move and pushed PEP over the £300,000 mark for the first time, while turnover jumped by 22% to £68.5m, the second highest of any North-based firm. Managing partner Peter Jackson is still not satisfied, however. He expects the firm to hit £75m in turnover in 2008 and a longer-term three-year plan predicts the firm breaking the £100m barrier. Hill Dickinson is strongly placed to reach that milestone.

## MILLS & REEVE

**Guy Hinchley, managing partner; Mark Jeffries, senior partner**

Another stellar financial performance from Mills & Reeve has seen it become firmly ensconced into the UK top 50. The Cambridge-based firm posted a 15% rise in turnover to £56.4m in 2007 and, importantly, a weighty 18% of that figure derives from new blue-chip clients, such as The Royal Bank of Scotland and GE Real Estate, boding well for future profit. PEP also climbed 11% to £280,000, despite the addition of four to the equity partnership. Guy Hinchley capped off his excellent first year as managing partner with the announcement of two new offices in Leeds and Manchester.

## HBJ's expansion comes hot on the heels of record-breaking financials.

its financial targets to reach £30m turnover, representing a mammoth 43% hike – despite a 45% increase in staff numbers following its 2006 takeover of seven-partner commercial outfit Bishops. According to one client: 'Although Brodies has been expanding by acquisition in the last few years, we have not seen



## **Baker Tilly congratulates HBJ Gateley Wareing National/Regional Firm of the Year 2008**

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