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## Trial Firm Yetter Coleman Trains Young Lawyers for the Long Haul

BY BRENDA SAPINO JEFFREYS



**Firm:** Yetter Coleman

**Firm Leader:** Collin Cox, partner and member of management committee

**Head Count:** 36

**Location:** Houston

**Practice Areas:** We focus exclusively on representing plaintiffs and defendants in high-stakes business and technology litigation, including contracts and business torts, intellectual property and antitrust/securities litigation. Our clients are primarily involved in the energy, technology and financial services industries, although we cover a broad range of industries.

*The answers below were provided by Cox and edited lightly for style.*

### What is your firm's governance structure and compensation model?

Our team is high-performing, so we hope to manage as little as possible and allow our lawyers to focus on their practices. That's one of the many benefits of knowing everyone personally at the firm. We have regular meetings of our lawyers to make sure everyone's input is heard. The business of running a law firm is complex, so we do have a small management committee that concentrates on major decision-making for the firm. That works well for us. With respect to compensation, we operate in a hypercompetitive market, so we think about it all the time.

We rely on data—both our metrics and from the market—to make sure our compensation model and approach reflect our culture. We have to attract, retain and reward high-performers who provide our clients with superior service and contribute to the value we bring to every case.

### Do you offer alternative fee arrangements?

Absolutely. We love entrepreneurial approaches that align the economic incentives between clients and the firm. We like to suggest creative relationships, including success-based arrangements where we share risk and offer lower costs on the front end, and fixed fees that allow clients to manage to a set budget.

### What do you view as the two biggest opportunities for your firm, and what are the two biggest threats?

It is a fantastic time to be a trial lawyer practicing in a boutique, especially given the strength and diversity of the economy and the volume and complexity of disputes where we get a chance to help. That said, it's clear that trial dockets are changing. Fewer lawyers really know how to try a case, because the chances to do so are dwindling. Although we love the counseling role our clients often hire us to provide, if a case is headed to trial, we know our lawyers are battle-tested and ready to win. We also look for chances

to team up with other top lawyers at different firms, as clients increasingly look to assemble a "virtual firm" for a particularly challenging case.

Another opportunity involves the energy industry. Being based in Houston, we naturally focus there as one of our core practices. We have great lawyers at every level who have done work in the upstream, midstream, downstream and service areas. As in any industry, you tend to see the same attorneys time and again, and we're always flattered when a prior opponent recommends us for a new matter.

With respect to threats, we face the same challenges that larger firms face related to business generation, talent management and compensation. We know that other firms covet our star young lawyers, so keeping them happy and engaged is a top priority. And with so many available technological capabilities, there's an increasing pace and emphasis on client communication, no matter the time. Today's environment requires a lot of focus on many fronts to operate competitively. But we love what we do, and we enjoy practicing together, so these threats aren't daunting. We embrace the challenge and are confident that we have a strong offering of top-tier legal talent for current clients and those who haven't hired us yet.

