

LITIGATION BOUTIQUES **HOT LIST**

A SPECIAL REPORT | This week The National Law Journal highlights litigation firms that are small but powerful. We asked our readers to nominate firms with up to 50 attorneys that won important litigation during calendar year 2014—whether in monetary terms or by establishing precedents at the trial or appellate level—and supplemented those proposals with our own research to find the 10 firms named here.

YETTER COLEMAN

Validation of The Power of Storytelling

Yetter Coleman turned defunct steel distribution company MM Steel L.P.'s complex six-week anti-trust case against carbon steel plate makers and distributors into a fast-paced drama. The Houston firm pressed the premise that a group of powerful steel companies had destroyed MM Steel in just 50 days—the evidence showed that the industrial warfare did its most profound damage during that time, name partner Paul Yetter said.

"We are very big believers in persuasion through storytelling," Yetter said.

The firm, brought in just shy of a year before the trial, secured a \$52 million verdict in March 2014 court-

tesy of the second jury empaneled—the first was dismissed after plaintiffs' firms accused a defense firm of misconduct. The judge trebled the award, for a \$156 million final judgment.

Yetter's team showed the jury photos of the major defense witnesses and places where key events happened, including restaurants where they argued the defendants held secret meetings. "We wanted the jury to be able to put names with faces early on," Yetter said.

Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan partner Karl Stern, who represented Reliance Steel & Aluminum Co. and subsidiary Chapel Steel Corp., praised that approach. "They

made very effective use of visuals and did an excellent job personalizing their clients," he said.

Yetter Coleman also came to the rescue for Business Logic Holding Corp., joining its contract-breach and trade-secrets case against Morningstar Inc. and its Ibbotson Associates Inc. subsidiary in 2013—four years into the fight. Business Logic, now operating as NextCapital Group Inc., had been doing business with Ibbotson and argued that company had used trade secrets to reverse-engineer Business Logic's software and poach clients following its acquisition by Morningstar.

The first order of business was



From left: Christopher Porter, Reagan Simpson, Collin Cox, Paul Yetter, Anna Rotman, and Jim Zucker

to move the case from an Illinois state chancery division. Yetter wanted the case in Cook County Circuit Court, where it could get a jury trial. The move broke the stalemate.

Yetter Coleman took some new “very powerful” depositions that featured Morningstar witnesses “admitting having access to these trade secrets and using them to develop the Morningstar software,” Yetter said. Additionally, the depositions signalled that the firm was paring down its case to focus on five trade secrets rather than dozens.

Shortly before jury selection, Morningstar agreed to a \$61 million settlement, which covered most of Business Logic’s \$64 million in claimed damages.

As one of two lead counsel firms in Texas multidistrict litigation over overtime pay, the firm helped some 4,700 current and former home mortgage consultants at Wells Fargo & Co. and Wachovia Corp. score a \$15 million settlement. The firm worked closely with co-lead firm Wills Law Firm and co-

counsel for the class Marshall & Lewis and Padilla & Rodriguez, all of Houston.

Aside from defeating a defense appeal that challenged class certification, the plaintiffs firms won a fight to include California employees. “We convinced the judge they had to give notice [to them],” Yetter said.

—SHERI QUALTERS

TRIAL TIPS

■ Storytelling is the key to winning trials. Juries love stories and they make you simplify your case.

■ Pictures are indeed worth a thousand words. Your case is more clear if you use more graphics and photos.

■ At trial, start slow and build momentum. It’s like riding a bike—you can’t start at full speed.

■ Treat every witness as a different piece of the puzzle. Don’t repeat your points, and give each one a label.

—PAUL YETTER

FIRM FACTS

- **Founded:** 1997
- **Based:** Houston
- **Total attorneys:** 31
- **Partners:** 11
- **Associates:** 8

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Yetter Coleman LLP

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