

MIDSIZE HOT LIST



A SPECIAL REPORT

Good things, it seems, come in midsize packages. We asked our readers to nominate law firms with between 51 and 150 attorneys and that excel at deal making, litigation, counseling and other legal services. The 20 firms we highlight this week do all that and more—they also have demonstrated creative strategies that keep them competitive against much larger law firms. They build cultures that attract and retain top talent. And they take pains to understand and serve their clients' needs.

**CHAMBERLAIN, HRDLICKA, WHITE,
WILLIAMS & AUGHTRY**

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Chamberlain, Hrdlicka, White, Williams & Aughtry



WAYNE RISOLI

FIRM FACTS:

- **Year founded:** 1965
- **Headquarters:** Houston
- **Total attorneys:** 122
- **Partners:** 45 ■ **Associates:** 58

It's news any firm leader would like to report: revenue at an all-time high, profits per partner up by 15 percent, surprise year-end bonuses for everyone and three new big-name clients. Chamberlain, Hrdlicka, White, Williams & Aughtry has hit a sweet spot.

"It's across the board our best year," Wayne Risoli, the Houston-based managing shareholder, said of 2014, which saw revenue grow to \$77.5 million. "Every section in the firm had an uptick in work and started getting more and more Fortune 500 work."

Once a tax boutique, Chamberlain Hrdlicka is now a well-rounded firm doing commercial litigation, corporate law, construction, real estate, intellectual property and wealth accumulation. In its 50th year, it has 122 lawyers in five offices in four states.

As the 2008 financial crisis brought Big Law to its knees, Chamberlain Hrdlicka prospered. "We took that as a challenge and as an opportunity. We believed our experience was as good as any of our competitors', but we had better rates because we took a real hard look at cost controls," Risoli said. (The firm's blended hourly rate is roughly \$385, compared with \$550 to \$600 at comparable firms.)

Big companies turned to the firm during the financial downturn and stayed, even as the economy rebounded. Fortune 500 companies now make up about 25 percent of the firm's work. Among its new key clients are CorningWare, Georgia-Pacific Corp. and Halliburton Co.

"We want to provide every client with the best value possible," Risoli said. "Our rates are very reasonable and we staff only the necessary lawyers and paralegals required to handle the case. Then we go back to our clients afterward and say, 'How did we do?' "

—GINNY LAROE

