

LITIGATION BOUTIQUE

HOT LIST

They may be small, but they command attention. The 10 law firms on our Litigation Boutiques Hot List, each fielding no more than 50 lawyers, demonstrate that when it comes to high-stakes cases it's all about skill, not size. Whether they're working on the plaintiffs' or defense side of big pharma, big oil, white-collar or agriculture matters, the lawyers practicing at these streamlined shops set precedents, righted wrongs or saved companies during 2012. —LEIGH JONES

Firm makes problems slink quietly away

MORVILLO ABRAMOWITZ GRAND IASON & ANELLO PC

Some of the biggest victories won by Morvillo Abramowitz Grand Iason & Anello are the cases that no one ever hears about, according to name partner Robert Anello. Representing white-collar clients who avoid prosecution — and the media spotlight — provides some of the most satisfying wins for the 44-lawyer operation.

"My heart is in the pre-indictment process," Anello said.

Still, the New York-based law firm, which retains its small-shop identity in a practice area increasingly dominated by big-firm white-collar practices, recorded a string of high-profile successes in 2012.

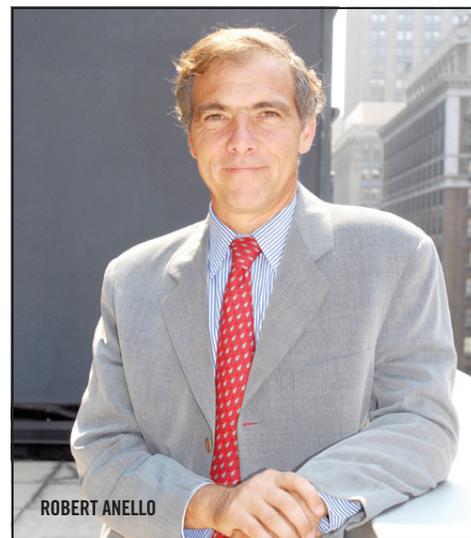
One of them was defending officers and directors at Merck & Co. Inc. (the former Merck and Schering-Plough) in derivative litigation in which they were accused by shareholders of suppressing unfavorable clinical-tri-

al results for the cholesterol drug Vytorin. The plaintiffs alleged that the delay in reporting the findings resulted in a 23 percent plunge in sales once the results came to light.

In February, the parties settled. The damages? Zero. Merck, whose officers and directors were represented by Morvillo Abramowitz attorneys Edward Spiro, Lawrence Bader and James Stovall, agreed to revise its reporting obligations so that delays in releasing the results of clinical trials are reported to company officers and the reasons for the delays identified.

On the plaintiffs' side during 2012, Morvillo Abramowitz attorneys Elkan Abramowitz, Thomas Keane and Sid Kamaraju won \$16 million for Donald Drapkin, former vice chairman of MacAndrews & Forbes Holdings Inc., a company owned by Ronald Perelman. Drapkin sued his former employer in 2009, alleging breach of a severance and stock-purchase agreement. A jury in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York awarded the verdict after deliberating for 90 minutes.

The firm scored victories for the former officers and directors of Cayman Islands-based investment manager Absolute Capital Management Holdings Ltd., alleged to have orchestrated a stock-trading scheme that cost investors \$195 million; and a settlement for Deanna Oppenheimer, a former executive at Washington Mutual Inc. alleged to have misled investors about the health of the bank's mortgage-lending business.



ROBERT ANELLO

High-stakes Wall Street cases aren't the only reason the law firm has made news. Earlier this month, name partner Barry Bohrer, along with two other lawyers, jumped to Schulte Roth & Zabel, which has about 370 lawyers. Anello, who said he remains on good terms with Bohrer, said that the departures would not affect the firm's financial performance.

"I don't see it having any impact on the bottom line," Anello said. —LEIGH JONES

The higher the stakes, the lower the profile you want the case to have.

Avoid the instinct to try to see your name in press. If press is unavoidable, remember: Less is more.

**ROBERT ANELLO, MORVILLO
ABRAMOWITZ GRAND IASON
& ANELLO**