

## WINNER

# DLA Piper

**Tony Angel, Sir Nigel Knowles**

*Defying critics and becoming the world's largest firm*

The original challenger brand is in danger of becoming part of the global law establishment. 2013 was a highly symbolic year for DLA Piper, with the rapidly assembled business services juggernaut becoming the world's largest law firm in revenue terms with income up 10% to £1.54bn.

But it's not just the top-line financial performance that has impressed. The firm made considerable ground in pushing up the value chain, a key aim behind the 2011 appointment of former Linklaters head Tony Angel as global co-chair. Profit per lawyer (PPL) was up 11% annually to around £95,000 – a sure sign that the firm is defying its critics by adding profitability to ambition and this was manifest in some top-level lateral hires during the last year, including Clifford Chance finance specialist Tony Lopez.

In typical no-nonsense style, co-CEO Sir Nigel Knowles summed the firm's approach up in conversation with *Legal Business* last year: 'We don't ever want to be regarded as a global elite, like a Magic Circle firm, we want to be the leading global business law firm.' It is well on its way to achieving that.



The DLA Piper team with James Tsolakis of The Royal Bank of Scotland and Alex Novarese of *Legal Business*

## HIGHLY COMMENDED

### AXIOM

**Al Giles**

Axiom is now fully established as the pace-setting 'alternative' law provider, challenging and winning work from leading City firms for clients such as Vodafone and more recently, BT. Dismissed in the early days as a fad, Axiom has trebled in size over the last two years and hired 58 lawyers in the first quarter of 2013.

### HOLMAN FENWICK WILLAN

**George Eddings**

With 82% revenue growth over the last five years, all achieved organically, HFW has quietly become one of the top-performing firms in the City. Turnover was up 14% on the previous financial year in 2012/13, while profit per lawyer increased by 7% to £91,000.

### MISHCON DE REYA

**Kevin Gold**

This firm continues to set the pace for financial performance with another trend-busting year, with profit per lawyer up 38% since 2012. Turnover increased by

21% during the last financial year (88% over five years), while the firm has used its financial muscle to invest in some significant lateral hires during 2013.

### PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS LEGAL

**Shirley Brookes, Leon Flavell**

Recently becoming the first of the Big Four accountants to secure an ABS for its legal services arm, PwC continues to perform well in a market that has grown consistently tougher, averaging 22% revenue growth annually over the last five years, combined with a 12% increase in headcount and staff retention rate of 94% in 2013. An underrated force in global law.

### RPC

**Jonathan Watmough**

The firm is reaping the benefits of its 2008 strategy 'not to let a serious crisis go to waste' with some impressive lateral hires and expansive thinking. With double-digit growth for the second successive year and headcount up 25%, this firm has continued to be a standout performer in the LB100.

### STEWARTS LAW

**John Cahill**

In posting the highest organic revenue growth in LB100 this year (30%), revenue at this high-performing disputes-driven firm has gone from £11.7m in 07/08 to £45.2m in the last financial year. 2013 saw the firm entered into a strategic alliance with a US plaintiff firm.

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