

National/regional firm of the year

WINNER

Stevens & Bolton

**Richard Baxter, managing partner;
Michael Hunter, senior partner**

Gutsy performance and astute hires

Whisper it, but while Guildford-based Stevens & Bolton may be a little way short of the *Legal Business 100* in terms of turnover, its profitability and quality are more than a match for many major UK firms. Combining a solid business with a catalogue of strong lateral hires, the firm has emerged as a regional one-centre force, comparing favourably with success stories such as Wragge & Co and Burges Salmon.

The financials are truly impressive. Revenues are up 22% on last year and 36% on two years ago, while PEP has grown 15% to £360,000, a figure comfortably ahead of any of the firms in the South peer group of the *LB100*. The firm's profit margin is an impressive 31%, again, a figure that very few firms in the UK can match.

One of the most impressive aspects of the firm's record growth is that it has been achieved without a merger. While less profitable firms broke into last year's *LB100* through consolidation, Stevens & Bolton's growth is the result of some astute lateral hires.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

BOYES TURNER

Andrew Chalkley, chief executive

Under the leadership of Andrew Chalkley, Reading-based Boyes Turner has established itself as a firm with big ambitions. The launch of a three-year strategy to become the Thames Valley's premier law firm by 2010 has already paid dividends, and turnover climbed 20% to break the £12m barrier in 2007/08. A recent recruitment drive has also been a notable success. Boyes Turner welcomed 21 new lawyers to the firm over the past year, including banking specialist John Barker from Osborne Clarke.

CLARKE WILLMOTT

**David Sedgwick, managing partner;
Tim Hayden, chairman**

The strongest firm in the South is set to become one of the strongest in the Midlands. Clarke Willmott's bold move into Birmingham, coupled with strong financial performances, has seen it raise its profile extensively in recent years. In 2008, turnover climbed by 18% – despite investing in its new head office – and its eye-catching 62% leap in PEP to £315,000 was no mean feat either.

Combining a solid business with strong lateral hires, Stevens & Bolton has emerged as a regional one-centre force.

Such is the firm's reputation that, since 2002, it has attracted a succession of high-quality partners from Allen & Overy, Simmons & Simmons and Denton Wilde Sapte. The hire of Stuart Skeffington, a private client partner from Withers, is the latest addition, and the firm shows no sign of slowing down any time soon.



Stevens & Bolton's Richard Baxter (centre right) with Claire Ballantyne and Greg Holt of Legal Prospects

DUNDAS & WILSON

Alan Campbell and Donald Shaw, joint managing partners

The gold standard in Scotland, Dundas & Wilson continues on its upward trajectory by recording a 23% increase in revenues and breaking into the top 40 of the *Legal Business 100* for the first time. The firm also boasts an enviable 41% profit margin, up four percentage points from 2006/07. Only six firms in the top 100 are more efficient.

HILL DICKINSON

**Peter Jackson, managing partner;
Tony Wilson, senior partner**

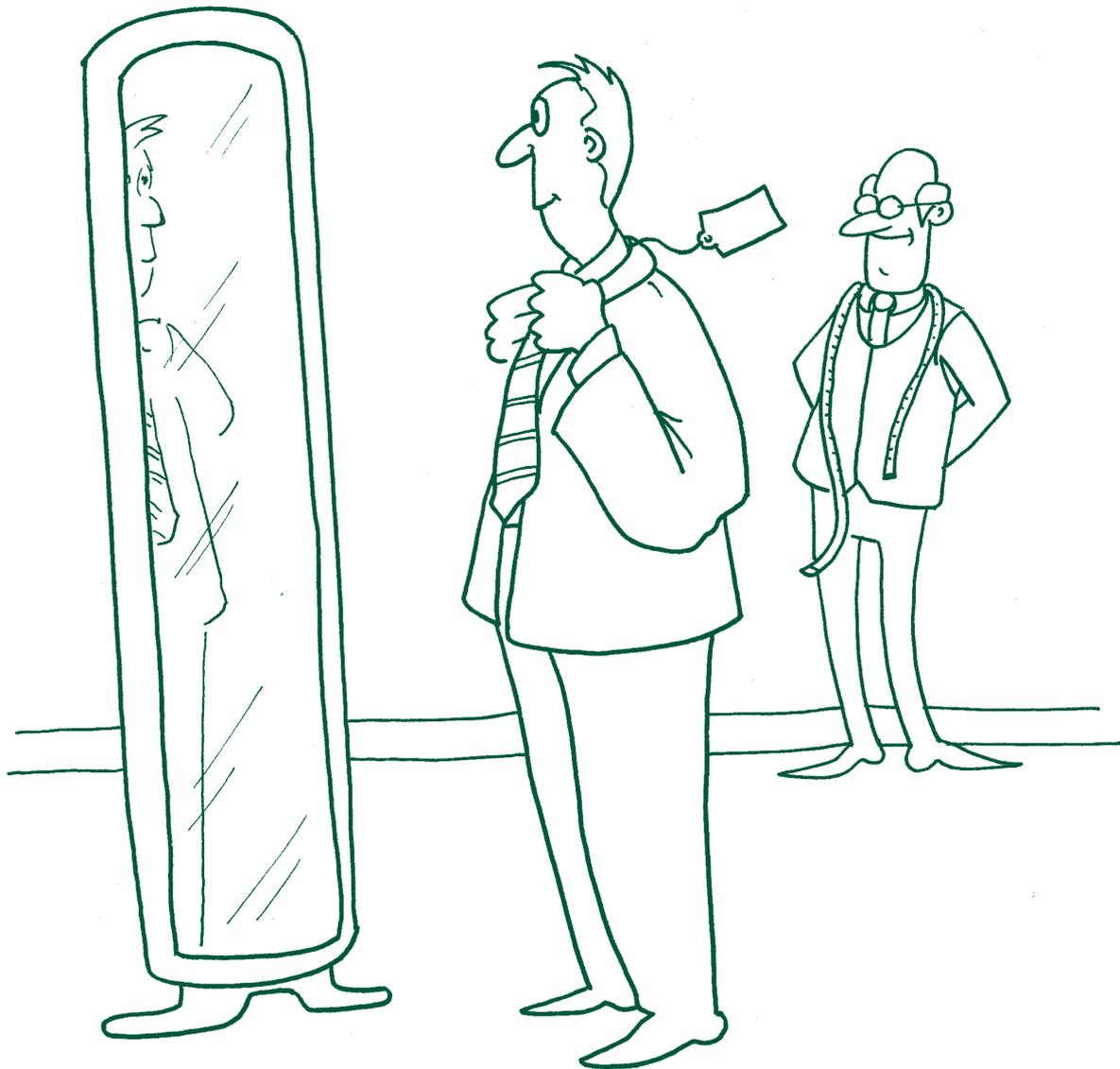
Hill Dickinson remains the most profitable firm in the North, boasting a £73.1m turnover. It's a tough position to maintain, as this regional peer group is the most represented in the *Legal Business 100*. However, managing partner Peter Jackson continues to ensure that the Liverpool-based firm stays ahead of its nearest rivals.

TURCAN CONNELL

Douglas Connell and Robert Turcan, joint senior partners

Douglas Connell and Robert Turcan's decision to break off from Dundas & Wilson to establish their own niche practice was greeted with scepticism all round, but 12 years and a 600% hike in turnover later, the Edinburgh-based firm has proven itself enormously successful. An excellent performance in 2007/08 saw turnover climb 18% to £21.2m and its debut in the *LB100*.

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