

LITIGATION
Boutique
OF THE YEAR

Footnotes

For litigation boutiques, work spans the globe, and the docket ranges from union-side labor to high-stakes IP.

WALLACE KING'S MELTING POT

Small doesn't have to mean homogeneous.

WALLACE KING DOMIKE & REISKIN doesn't have a formal diversity committee or task force. There isn't any women partners' initiative to speak of. In fact, the 22-lawyer firm doesn't even have a written policy regarding issues of racial or gender diversity.

But that hasn't stopped leaders at the Washington, D.C., boutique from creating a workforce that is a model for its much larger brethren. Of course, in absolute numbers, Wallace King's minority numbers are small, but diversity percentages at the ten-year-old firm are nonetheless quite impressive. Three of the firm's six partners (50 percent) are women or minorities—including three of the four name partners. Women and minorities constitute 54 percent (12 of 22) of all attorneys at the firm.

"We decided we could start a firm to achieve certain ideas that were lacking in big firms," says firm cofounder Richard Wallace, Jr. (right). "One of those objectives, and a principle that guides our decisions, is to achieve racial and gender diversity." Lawyers at Wallace King, many of whom are refugees from big firms, contend that part

of their boutique's success lies in fielding a team that mirrors the diversity of the firm's home city. "I think it reflects well on our clients in trial to field a diverse team of lawyers," says Wallace.

And according to lawyers at the firm, clients have taken note. Chevron Corporation, for instance, has honored the firm for its commitment to minority and female lawyers. "It is attractive to clients that diversity is at the core of the firm and not an add-on," says name partner Terri Reiskin, who joined Wallace King three years ago.

Of course it's not diversity statistics alone that keep clients coming back to the firm. Last year—after previously getting Chevron dismissed from the suit—the firm successfully defended Shell Oil Co. in a four-month trial brought by Plainview Water District, which alleged groundwater contamination by the gasoline additive MTBE. Wallace King has also won significant trial and appellate victories for Mercedes-Benz USA LLC, Mack Trucks, Inc., and AB Volvo in the last two years.

—DREW COMBS



Illustration By William Rieser