

Shook Hardy, Seyfarth Among ACC's Value Champs

By **Andrew Strickler**

Law360, New York (June 19, 2013, 10:17 PM ET) -- Inventive cost-sharing deals and time-saving technology platforms were key attributes of this year's "value champions" announced Wednesday by the Association of Corporate Counsel.

The recognized in-house legal departments and firms were cited for long-term partnerships and tech strategies that reduced redundant work, cut costs and shortened service response times. Others were awarded for designing work flows that helped companies differentiate high-value work from tasks better suited to legal outsourcing or their commitment to non-billable-hour fees.

"The winners show that more corporate lawyers around the world are moving beyond the billable hour by using exciting technology and management innovations to craft new efficiency systems," ACC President and CEO Veta Richardson said in announcing the 2013 winners.

Among them were the so-called "hot fuel" legal defense group and Shook Hardy & Bacon LLP, which were highlighted for a successful joint defense arrangement in representing 7-Eleven Inc. and other companies against class action claims that they sold gas without revealing or accounting for temperature expansion.

Key to a unified defense, attorney Tristan Duncan said, was a deal in which several companies agreed to pool their legal spend resources, with each paying for common work based on the number of cases in which it had been sued. They also made a commitment to stick together even if the defense faltered.

One of the represented companies won summary judgment, and three others went to trial and won. Other companies who were not sued in Kansas but faced similar actions helped fund the successful defense.

"I think the entire defense group realized that ... we needed a long-term strategy through the trial process and the appellate process," Duncan said. The cost-sharing deal meant that, win or lose, "you won't be abandoned by others in the group ... and that your later part of the trial will have as much

support as the first."

Nike Inc., working with Seyfarth Shaw LLP, was awarded for developing an online system for a high-volume intake of technology procurement contracts.

Working with Seyfarth Shaw's consulting arm, the groups developed a simple Web-based form for intaking the legal services requests, and then reallocating the services across a shared platform. The system greatly reduced the turnaround time on the requests and helped the company send more, higher-value work to the firm, according to Kevin Woolf of Seyfarth Shaw.

Healthcare Insurance Reciprocal of Canada and outside counsel Borden Ladner Gervais LLP were awarded for a six-year representation deal first signed in 2011, in which the firm gets a predictable revenue stream through a yearly base fee, plus a performance fee set by several criteria.

"We would rather the client focus on value and results, and it's a better focus for us," said John Morris, Borden Ladner Gervais' national coordinator for the health law group.

Other award winners were ACEA SpA of Italy, Bank of America Corp., BT Global Services, China State Construction Engineering Corp., Marsh & McLennan Cos., Mondelez International with Axiom, Netapp Inc., Office Depot Inc. and United Technologies Corp.

--Editing by Elizabeth Bowen.

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