

LITIGATION BOUTIQUES **HOT LIST**

SPECIAL REPORT | At the 10 law firms spotlighted here, it's all about skill, not size. The lawyers at these litigation shops, all of which have fewer than 51 attorneys, are as clever at practicing on paper as they are at wooing a jury. Many of these lawyers have honed their craft at the biggest and best firms in the nation and have opted, once they've gained crucial work experience, for a small-firm career. We've highlighted the special strategies and creative approaches they used in 2013 to help set precedent, right wrongs and save the day for the client.



MOLOLAMKEN

A Fanatical Approach To Preparation

In early 2013, the Lao People's Democratic Republic changed attorneys in a dispute in New York federal court over how the Southeast Asian nation would pay a \$56 million arbitration judgment against it.

It was a sobering assignment for the Laotian government's new counsel, MoloLamken. The case was complex, the cli-

ent was new to U.S. litigation and MoloLamken's chief witness was a Laotian official who spoke English, but not well.

Despite the obstacles, MoloLamken attorneys Steve Molo and Robert Kry persuaded the court to deny sanctions against their client. Although the case continues (the court is considering a motion to set

aside the arbitration award), it exemplifies MoloLamken's broader litigation strategy.

The firm is fanatical about preparing its cases, staying focused on the outcome instead of the process and keeping distractions at bay. That formula has served the young firm well. Molo and Jeff Lamken launched their boutique with



STEVE MOLO, LEFT, AND JEFF LAMKEN

five attorneys in 2009. It now has 21 staff attorneys and five wins before the U.S. Supreme Court.

MoloLamken starts with deep conversations with the client that lead to a tight focus on outcomes. Next, the firm writes a detailed project-management plan, complete with a timeline. The plan helps MoloLamken manage the details, avoid surprises and anticipate legal issues.

The firm then masters the evidence. Finally, its attorneys practice in moot court, not once but twice. A MoloLamken attorney in oral argument is going through the material for the third time. At that point, Lamken said, “You’re not surprised.”

MoloLamken has figured in

prominent cases. When Congress blocked cost-of-living pay raises for federal judges, prompting several jurists to file a class action, MoloLamken weighed in with an amicus brief on behalf of the Federal Judges Association.

The lead attorney for the judges, Chris Landau of Chicago-based Kirkland & Ellis, said MoloLamken advanced a statutory argument that proved instrumental in his clients’ victory. “They were the most effective amicus that I ever had,” Landau said.

Retired U.S. District Court Judge John Martin, now a partner at New York-based Martin & Obermaier, was brought in by MoloLamken to work on an investigation and a big securities

TRIAL TIPS

- Assume from the outset that the case will be tried.
- Eliminate the distractions. The trial team should function with military precision. Anticipate and accommodate all of the logistics for the trial team so you can focus on preparing for testimony and arguments.
- Focus on the story. As humans, we communicate through narratives.

—STEVE MOLO, JEFF LAMKEN

FIRM FACTS

Founded: 2009 ■ **Largest office:**
New York ■ **Total No. of**
Attorneys: 21 ■ **Partners:** 9
■ **Associates:** 10

case. “They’re willing to bring in other people to work with them,” Martin said. “That’s a very good thing that not a lot of people do.”

—GEORGE ERB

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