

# RAINMAKERS **Who Always SHINE**

MCCA's Annual List of Rainmakers proves that the profession has talented lawyers who also have valuable business development skills. This list includes attorneys from around the country who practice a wide variety of law. Their success stories offer insight and value to lawyers at every career stage.

By Patrick Folliard





## DEBRA BAKER

Partner

Baker Wotring LLP

Houston

Years Practicing: 30

Practice Area: **Environmental and Litigation**

**“Having a unique niche** area of expertise is a way to attract and retain clients,”

says Debra Baker. “We’re a commercial litigation and environmental boutique law firm—it’s unusual for a small firm to do both the regulatory side of environmental as well as full-scale environmental litigation—providing representation to companies, governments, ports, railroads and individuals in significant and complex matters.”

Prior to establishing Baker Wotring in 2001, Baker was at a big Houston firm handling a complex, ongoing case. But when the firm merged with another even larger firm on the other side of her case, an insurmountable conflict arose. “The client asked me to stay with the case, and it was negotiated that we’d set up a small firm,” recalls Baker. “I was flattered, and the large matter went on for several more years. During that time we discovered a real market for a boutique firm. Fourteen years later, we are still here and flourishing and have achieved record-setting results for our clients in a number of diverse and complex cases.”

Born in Washington, D.C., the daughter of a career military man and a Japanese war bride, Baker worked her way through the University of Maryland and Georgetown University Law Center. She left Washington for Houston in search of opportunities. “In the ’80s, Houston was an especially dynamic place for law then; there was a lot of work surrounding refining and shipping.”

Despite its relative size, Houston has a small town feel, says Baker. “It’s really not unusual here for lawyers and clients to become friends. We do CLEs for clients, volunteer at their organizations and team up with them to do charity events. For over 20 years, Baker has also produced, written and/or performed in an all-lawyer musical theater production in Houston, leading her to meet numerous lawyers and judges, while raising an amount approaching \$1 million for law-related charities. “In building a practice here, it really helps to include a social component.

I also speak and publish a lot on environmental law

topics. I have taught environmental law at area law schools, and some of my former students have become clients. But foremost, we strive to provide the highest level of client service and produce an exceptional work product for our clients.”

## MICHAEL A. BROWN

Litigation

Miles & Stockbridge

Baltimore

Years Practicing: 25

**“Ask, ask, ask,”** says Michael Brown. “That’s how you get work. If they say no, you are in the same place you were before you asked.”



A principal and trial lawyer in Miles & Stockbridge’s Baltimore office, Brown handles complex cases in a number of jurisdictions around the country with a focus on products liability, mass torts and commercial litigation.

Now considered a rainmaker, Brown didn’t like traditional associate responsibilities early in his career and knew he had to find a way to be engaged with the firm’s work. “I had just bought my mother a new house, and giving up wasn’t an option. So I began finding clients of my own and asking for opportunities to try cases.”

Several years after starting his career in 1989 at Miles & Stockbridge, Brown set out on his own with two friends. That is where he learned the most about being a rainmaker. For Brown, those years were “sink or swim” time, and he swam. The firm he helped found grew to become Maryland’s largest certified minority-owned law firm. In 2009, he returned to Miles & Stockbridge with a sizable book of business.

“I know my interests, as well as my strengths, and I like trying cases more than running a firm. Returning to Miles & Stockbridge gave me the opportunity to try large cases and to be supported by the resources of a larger firm.”

Despite the focus on self-preservation, says the Georgetown Law grad, “We’re all in this together. While I like to bring in work and win cases, I’m not the guy to write a 50-page brief for appellate court. It takes a team to sustain a top-notch practice, and I am lucky to work with talented lawyers, paralegals and support staff who help make it happen.”



## KELLY-ANN CARTWRIGHT

Partner

Holland & Knight LLP

Miami

Years practicing: 24

Practice Area: **Labor and Employment**

**Like a lot of other rainmaking partners**, Kelly-Ann Cartwright cites time as an ongoing challenge. In addition to a full litigation practice, she is also

on Holland & Knight's Directors Committee and serves as the executive partner of the firm's Miami office. "It's definitely a balancing act. As a partner, you're under constant pressure to bring in work. But you also have to give constant attention to your practice."

Cartwright's practice focuses on general civil and commercial litigation with an emphasis on employment discrimination, civil rights, business torts and labor law.

"My practice didn't develop overnight. It's a work in progress," she says. "As you develop expertise and become successful in matters with clients, more business comes your way. Of course the timing has to be right. Certain things—like the right class action or collective action lawsuit—get you seen and open doors."

In her third year of studying finance at the University of Florida, Cartwright decided against a career in the banking industry and opted to pursue a career in law instead. "I like the debate. I like litigation and advocacy. A certain thrill still comes from litigating a case successfully, whether it's a success at the summary judgment stage, arbitration or trial."

Born in Georgetown, Guyana, Cartwright spent four years in England. The family then moved to the States and settled in Miami, a city she describes as a vibrant place to be educated and pursue a career.

In terms of business development style, Cartwright says doing good work generates the best referrals. "It's also important to be out there doing speaking engagements and seminars," she says. "Anything that places you in front of people who have the ability to hire outside counsel is beneficial."

## SAMUEL A. DANON

Partner

Hunton & Williams LLP

Miami

Years Practicing: 24

Practice Area: **Business Litigation**

**Early in his career**, Sam Danon's language skills set him on the road to rainmaking. "I had not thought much about it before, but when I was help-



ing a domestic company with its operations in Latin America, the GC expressed how beneficial my dual language skills were to American clients. A light bulb went off: Because my first language is Spanish, Latin American clients were very comfortable with me. And as a U.S.-trained attorney, I could report back to domestic clients on Latin American-related matters in English, ensuring that they had a very good understanding of the matter."

Today, Danon's practice focuses on commercial disputes, investigations, consumer class actions, government regulatory advice and corporate compliance, largely for financial institutions and manufacturers of consumer goods. "Litigation is what drives the practice. Half of my work deals with matters that have a connection to Latin America—either Latin American companies being sued here or domestic companies that have operations in Latin America and need guidance.

"My goal was always to have my own practice," says Danon, who earned his JD at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. "So, I focused on upcoming opportunities from the beginning. I viewed all of the work I was given as a chance to create lasting relationships and was never concerned with the immediate dollars involved. Looking back, I think I had a sense of the big picture that has served me well."

Still, a lot of what comes a lawyer's way is based on being in the right place at the right time, so preparation is extremely important. For Danon that means being a strong practitioner who proves his credibility by not only bringing in work but also continuing to try cases. And he does this in addition to performing his duties as head of the Hunton & Williams Litigation team, a team of more than 300 attorneys located throughout the United States.

"I try not to get bogged down thinking in the short term," he adds. "So much is measured on a yearly basis, so it's easy to get caught up in annual results, but I know it's not helpful in the long run."

## SAMIR A. GANDHI

Partner

Sidley Austin LLP

New York

Years Practicing: 25

Practice Area: **Corporate**

**"After pitching a prospective client** at lunch, rarely do you go back to the office and find a message saying they want to hire you," says Samir Gandhi.

"Now and then people will hire you for a large matter immediately without having worked with you before. But most of my significant work comes from lasting relationships I've developed by taking the time over a number of years to listen to clients and understand their business and concerns."



Gandhi is the co-practice leader of Sidley Austin's New York corporate group and focuses on capital markets offerings, corporate and governance matters, private equity transactions and transactions involving India. He also represents The Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football, one of the confederations comprising FIFA, the governing body of world soccer. "It is far more boring than it sounds, but pretty interesting as far as practices go," he says.

At Sidley, all lawyers are encouraged to be commercial but also encouraged to work together in teams, he says. "When I pitch clients, I pitch the firm and the vast resources and expertise we can provide—I rarely pitch myself. I make sure we're being responsive and that subject matter experts that the client needs are available to help. I'm the quarterback of a great team. That's the benefit of a large firm with lots of resources and lawyers who make it a priority to collaborate with each other."

Gandhi advises associates, "Today's young lawyers have great communication skills but these tend to be primarily electronic and social media-based. The most important advice that I have gotten and give is: Learn to listen. The best way to do that is through personal interaction—you don't need to listen when you are texting someone, but you do when you are on the phone or meeting them in person. Shooting off an email to a client or a colleague isn't always the best way to understand the client's business and needs.

And discipline is imperative. For 20 years, Gandhi has made at least three practice development calls to clients and potential clients each week, sometimes more but never less. "Finding who to call is the easy part. The hard part is having something to say. Only when you say something smart that is valuable to them and their business will they listen. Clients who think you have their interests in mind and can provide them with value always call you for work."

## FAITH E. GAY

Partner and Co-Chair of National Trial Practice

Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP

New York

Years Practicing: **28**

Practice Area: **Litigation**

**Growing up in the segregated South,**

Faith Gay aspired to become either a lawyer or a minister. "I liked to tell stories and had an interest in social change, so both paths appealed to me," she says. "But ultimately I decided I could have more of an impact in law, and there were even fewer female ministers than women practicing trial law at the time."



Gay is co-chair of Quinn's national trial practice. Her own practice is divided among complex civil litigation, corporate governance and white collar matters. Prior to entering private practice, she was deputy chief of the Special Prosecutions Unit and the Civil Rights Division while serving as an assistant United States attorney in the Eastern District of New York.

Because Quinn is an all-litigation firm, there is no corporate practice to feed litigators. Senior partners devote significant time to cultivating new work. "Essentially, we build on the firm's reputation as the most aggressive and creative trial practice in the world. We strive to be game changers while remaining ultra-sensitive to our clients' major challenges. We are devoted to anticipating our clients' objectives and the strategies of our adversaries 24/7."

For Gay's generation, the number of women trying major cases is small. "But that's changing. As women have developed world-class trial resumes and clients have become more sophisticated, opportunities for women have expanded.

"These days," says Gay, "I don't get hired because I'm a woman. I'm hired for my depth of experience."

## FRANCIS Q. HOANG

Partner

Fluet Huber + Hoang PLLC

Woodbridge, VA

Years Practicing: **12**

Practice Area: **Government Contracts**

**Before he was a lawyer,** France Hoang

was already making the connections that would make him a rainmaking partner. A West Point graduate, he

served as an officer in the U.S. Army and later went on to earn a JD from Georgetown University Law Center.

"Law struck me as yet another way to serve," says Hoang, who was evacuated from Saigon at age two and grew up in Washington state. "As an immigrant, I don't take freedom for granted. I've always been driven by a desire to give back."

A partner with Fluet Huber + Hoang since 2010, he represents, advises and counsels middle-market companies on a wide variety of matters, including sensitive government inquiries and internal investigations, corporate compliance, corporate governance and government contracts law.

Prior to his current position, Hoang served as associate counsel to the president of the United States under President George W. Bush. He was briefly an assistant United States attorney in the Eastern District of Virginia.

Hoang's ethos of service extends to his ideas on business development. His mission is to help others solve problems as painlessly as possible. Similarly, he is there for his colleagues: In



addition to building and sustaining his own book of business, Hoang is in charge of business development strategies for the entire firm. "Beyond my own book," he explains, "I oversee a marketing and sales system based on tangible results that supports other partners in building their books. At our firm, entrepreneurial lawyers can come in and build something they can call their own."

His advice to associates: "Be stellar at your craft. But it's also important to lift your heads from the legal documents and meet other people. Enjoy people. Ultimately, clients hire lawyers based on relationships. People want to be with people whom they like."

## MARY E. INNIS

Managing Partner  
Innis Law Group LLC  
Chicago

Years Practicing: **28**

Practice Area: **Intellectual Property**

**Over four years ago**, after decades in big law, Mary Innis opened her IP boutique firm in Chicago. Innis Law Group specializes in trademark, copyright, unfair competition, advertising, rights of publicity, privacy and Internet law.

Her practice is based on developing authentic relationships with clients, says Innis. "My clients stay with me because I do good work and place an emphasis on service. They know I genuinely care."

After law school, Innis joined a prestigious Chicago firm with a heavy concentration in trademark litigation. "As one of the younger lawyers, and for many years the only female equity partner at that firm, I learned that I couldn't depend on senior partners to choose me for the work I wanted to do. So through a combination of luck and sheer determination, I molded my own practice from a young age. As a young associate, I amassed over a million dollars of business.

"From the start, I had a passion for advertising work and sought it out. I like it because it encompasses things like fashion and entertainment, parts of our everyday lives that are easy to understand." Ambitious and interested, Innis pursued cases and connections involving the branding, advertising and media world throughout her career. "When I started my practice there was no Internet. I moved along with my clients as things changed from putting a name on a brand of product to content marketing and branding and emerging multi-platform advertising promotions. The practice has changed. And 20 years later I still have a lot of the same clients."



## RANDALL R. LEE

Partner  
Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr  
LLP

Los Angeles

Years Practicing: **26**

Practice Area: **Litigation/Controversy**

**Rainmaking partner Randall Lee's**

practice involves representing companies and individuals facing investigation or enforcement action by the government, mostly commonly the Securities and Exchange Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice. "Business development can be tough in this practice area," he says. "Clients' needs are unpredictable, and most clients aren't a source of repeat business. In fact, when a matter is done, it's not uncommon for a client to say, 'Thanks very much for the help, and I hope I never see you again.'"

Lee started his legal career as a transactional lawyer, but after four-and-a-half years he began to have doubts. "What I really wanted was to wear a white hat as a government lawyer. It took a leap of faith. I'd never set foot in court or written a brief before. But I knew it was time to give it a try before it became too late."

Lee's interest in public service was initially piqued by his family's experience. His maternal grandfather was the first Japanese-American graduate of the University of Washington law school. But that didn't preclude Lee's mother's family from being incarcerated in internment camps during WWII, along with over 70,000 other American citizens of Japanese ancestry.

Lee has never regretted his decision to change practice areas. He spent 13 years in public service, serving first in the U.S. attorney's office for the Central District of California and later as SEC regional director in Los Angeles and "loved it from the first day to the last."

In 2007, Lee returned to the private sector to open Wilmer-Hale's Los Angeles office. "It was a daunting proposition. I came from government without a single client," he remembers. "And like a true California startup, our first location was my garage. Now we're a thriving and busy office with over 30 lawyers."



## VINCENT J. NAPOLEON

Partner

Nixon Peabody LLP

Washington, D.C.

Years Practicing: 30

Practice Area: Government Contracts

**Vince Napoleon shies away** from the term “rainmaker” as it applies to his model of business development. He sees himself more as a team leader and a trusted legal and business advisor to his clients. He brings a unique perspective to the table as a result of his experience and leadership.

“I lead Nixon Peabody’s government contracts team and work with a multi-practice group of lawyers across our firm’s offices,” Napoleon explains. “We work closely with companies to help them take advantage of the opportunities associated with federal, state and local government contracts. Beyond the contracts, we make sure our clients also understand the risks, obligations and larger business issues associated with them. In addition to our traditional government contract work, we have recently expanded our practice to include working on public-private partnerships issues.

“I am focused on serving not only as a legal advisor to my clients, but also as a business partner,” says Napoleon. “I look for ways to help our clients’ businesses forward, identify new business opportunities or weigh in on strategy where my knowledge and experience can add value.”

Prior to joining Nixon Peabody, Napoleon served as general counsel of major divisions of Fortune® 100 companies for more than 25 years. “That experience provided me with valuable insight from a client’s perspective as I think proactively about solutions to our clients’ business challenges,” says Napoleon. I also served as general counsel of two publicly held companies (a pharmaceutical-related company and a biotechnology company) where I was a member of senior leadership teams and advised and counseled boards of directors.”

A Philadelphia native who was determined to be a lawyer since the age of nine, Napoleon says he realized his goal with the support of interested teachers and an intense professional pipeline program geared to minority high school students. He enjoys his work and values his clients. As he supports his clients’ needs, Napoleon believes, “It’s vital to have an understanding of what it means to supply good client service—being proactive and predictive to provide insight into and an understanding on the issues a client hasn’t yet anticipated.”



## CYNTHIA R. ROWLAND

Partner

Farella Braun + Martel

Family Wealth, Exempt Organizations

San Francisco

Years Practicing: 27 years

**Cynthia Rowland describes herself as a connector.**

“I connect people with those who can help them achieve their goals. It might be me, or it might be another attorney, but I’m always thinking about how to get the problem solved by the best person.”

A partner in Farella Braun + Martel’s San Francisco office, Rowland specializes in representing nonprofits and their donors. Over the years, her practice has evolved into something uniquely her own.

Current projects include assisting with a charitable contribution of a large art collection; helping a “sharing economy” business to create a corporate foundation; and, on the business side of philanthropy, representing a large nonprofit with a major property acquisition. Rowland is enthusiastic about her clients and the diversity of the challenges they bring. “What’s not to like about helping good people to make the world a better place?” she asks.

When the economy tanked in 2008, Rowland remained busy. “Mine is actually a stable practice with mild ups and downs. Still, it’s necessary that I be willing to grow and evolve. Early on in the development of my practice, I would frequently change what I was doing to look for new ways to reach new clients. Now, I change when necessary to remain relevant. Innovation and connection is what make me stand out to a lot of clients.

“I entered the profession very shy with two young children, but I really enjoyed the work. It took many years to build a robust practice. It wasn’t easy, and it took a concentrated effort. But I love what I do, and that makes it all click. When asked by young attorneys for advice on becoming a rainmaker, that’s what I tell them: Do what you love.”





## JESSE H. RUIZ

Partner  
Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP  
Chicago  
Years Practicing: **18**  
Practice Area: **Corporate & Securities**

**Jesse Ruiz never takes his rainmaking status for granted.** A client once told him “never confuse effort with results,” and it hit home. “I can work

very hard, but if I’m not getting the results they’re paying for, then I’m not serving their needs,” he says. “I have to keep abreast of what’s happening in their world and anticipate how to keep them satisfied. I need to be a periscope for our clients. If I can see around the corner and alert them to upcoming problems, then I’m very valuable to them.

“During my first three years at the firm, I focused on working hard and learning,” says Ruiz. “I was learning to be a skilled corporate lawyer. Then I concentrated on growing my corporate and securities practice.”

Drinker Biddle encourages its partners to be active civically and engaged in public service. As one of a few Hispanic large firm partners in Chicago, Ruiz is asked to do a lot of things, particularly with nonprofits and the local and national Hispanic bar associations. “It’s my way of giving back,” he says. “You show up and get the job done. It is also a way to meet a lot of people who become friends, and those relationships can at times lead to client opportunities.”

In April, the mayor of Chicago asked Ruiz to temporarily step in as CEO of Chicago Public Schools. For three months, Ruiz, who has served on city and state education boards, gave up his practice to run the country’s third largest school district. It was heady stuff for Ruiz, whose father was a Mexican immigrant with a third-grade education. “In life you have to be ready for the unexpected opportunity. You can position yourself, but sometimes something just falls into your lap. To make the most of it, you must be prepared.”

## CHARLENE (CHUCK) SHIMADA

Partner  
Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP  
San Francisco  
Years Practicing: **34**  
Practice Area: **Litigation**

**“Not many women and even fewer woman of color** have received recognition in my field,” says Charlene Shimada, a securities litigation partner in Morgan Lewis’

San Francisco office. But Shimada, a Hawaii native who goes by “Chuck” (a middle school nickname that stuck), is a woman of many firsts: first in her family to graduate college; first female law clerk to her federal judge; first female litigation partner at her prior firm, McCutchen Doyle Brown & Enersen LLP; and first woman of color to serve as that firm’s office managing partner, becoming one of the first women of color to serve in that position in any major U.S. law firm.

“It’s not that I set out to be first,” she says. “It’s that I love my work and strive to be an asset to my clients and the firm.” Shimada also strives to be a leader in and outside the firm. She co-founded Women In Securities, a network for women securities defense litigators in the Bay Area that seeks to promote their development and advancement. She also serves on the Bar Association of San Francisco’s board of directors and is a Ninth Circuit lawyer representative.

“The overwhelming portion of new business goes to attorneys who already have relationships with the clients,” says Shimada. “So it’s hard to break in. This is challenging for women and diverse attorneys who historically haven’t had the same opportunities to develop business relationships.”

In response, Shimada’s approach is to become indispensable to clients, make their goals her own and always provide excellent legal work, she says. She also finds internal business development can be a real boon. “When you’re in a large national or global firm with relationships in a wide range of industries, it’s critical to market yourself internally. It’s part of the culture at Morgan Lewis and is very much encouraged and rewarded.”





## RAM C. SUNKARA

Partner  
Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP  
Houston  
Years Practicing: **12**  
Practice Area: **Energy, Environmental and Commodities**

**“There isn’t a set blueprint for business development,”** says Ram Sunkara, a rainmaking partner whose

practice includes representing Fortune® 100 companies, private equity firms and diversified energy companies pursuing cutting-edge energy investments and implementing global energy efficiency and sustainability initiatives. “Your approach must dovetail with your personality and strengths. Throughout my career, I’ve learned different business development techniques from my mentors and other successful attorneys. I utilize a lot of those skills in ways that suit my personality. The legal industry is a relationship-driven business, and for any relationship to thrive, it has to be based on authenticity.”

Sunkara recognized early in his career that he had a knack for relating to a wide range of clients and understanding their needs. “It’s important to move from being a doer to a trusted business adviser to the client. To achieve that, one must learn the ins and outs of their clients’ businesses and be proactive in identifying both risks and opportunities for clients utilizing that expertise.”

Born in India and raised in Atlanta, Sunkara is one of the youngest equity partners in Sutherland’s history. He credits his parents with instilling in him a love for learning and a strong work ethic. “They were first-generation immigrants who didn’t have a lot, but they gave me everything they had.”

Sunkara always knew he wanted to do transactional work, but his start was in a different practice. “I entered the profession just after the dotcom bubble burst, so my first firm assigned me to products liability litigation. While I’d later move back to transactional work, litigating was actually a good experience for me. I learned the importance of understanding complex subject matter and how to avoid ambiguity in the transactional context.”

When asked how he sustains his large stable of clients, Sunkara cited a known quote: “Successful people are not gifted; they just work hard, then succeed on purpose.” Rainmaking, according to Sunkara, takes both hard work and design. “You have to really understand your client’s business. That means making an investment off the clock to learn about it—not just because it could lead to business, but because you genuinely have an interest in your client. Sincerity makes a big difference.”

## JEONG-HWA (JUNE) LEE TOWERY

Partner  
Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP  
Atlanta  
Years Practicing: **19**  
Practice Area: **Korea**

**Jeonghwa (June) Towery** is uncomfortable with the label rainmaker.

But she recalls vividly when she was recognized as one: “It was during my partner review. An executive committee member noted my book of business and said ‘now you’re one of the big boys.’”

In Korean culture, women are expected to remain in the background, says Towery, a native Korean who came to the U.S. as a college student. “Throughout my career I’ve walked a fine line balancing a showing respect and commanding authority.”

Prior to her legal career, Towery taught school for nine years. But there came a point when she looked at her children and wondered how she would send them to college on a teacher’s salary. “I had to do something, but I didn’t think I had the language skills to be a lawyer;” she remembers. “It was scary, but I did it. And I’m glad I did. I truly take joy in helping others, and my practice allows me to do that.”

Towery mostly represents foreign-owned manufacturing companies in the U.S. “Working with foreign expats, I spend a lot of time explaining U.S. laws,” she says. “I empathize with them. They’re learning a new language and adjusting to life in a different culture while simultaneously running a company and having to turn a profit.

“In some aspects, law practice is like teaching. I don’t just take care of the problems. I take time to explain and set up how they can avoid future problems.”

Towery started her practice making cold calls. Today, most of her work comes from referrals and repeat business. “My reputation as a trusted legal advisor is very important to me. When clients have a complaint about a bill, speed of service or my staff, I take it very seriously. If they’re not satisfied in any way, then I try to make it right for them.” ■

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