



## DISTINGUISHED LEADERS

This award recognizes attorneys in leadership roles who achieved impressive results in the past year. Others may fly under the radar, but this group of 22 extraordinary lawyers had great performances while demonstrating clear leadership skills that resulted in positive outcomes.



### JIM WALDEN

**Founding Partner,  
Walden Macht & Haran**

**Q** ■ What are some of your proudest recent achievements?

**A** ■ Our firm has experienced growth and market penetration, which has been possible

because of our loyal roster of marquee clients. Our five “anchor” corporate clients have each turned to us for repeat engagements.

Based on the needs of those and other clients, we have almost quadrupled our team of professionals, including by attracting prominent, veteran litigators from other top-notch firms. We have attracted very talented associates as well, most of whom came from large law firms or the government. Our team includes a very diverse set of skills, subject areas, and experience.

We have managed this growth seamlessly, without impinging on the firm’s culture. In ways big and small, our culture is based on a core principle: “Clients First.” This is reflected in every aspect of our firm, from associate training, our billing policies, and lawyer compensation. As I told a reporter two-and-a-half years ago: “My goal is to have a firm with a warm internal culture but a laser-like focus on client service.” This focus has resonated with our clients. One general counsel of a Fortune 500 company recently said, “You seem to have found the special sauce.” We think our other clients feel the same.

**Q: What does it mean to be a leader?**

**A:** *An effective leader does not stray from core values.* In terms of client service, this means being responsive to, and fair with, our clients in

every possible way. It means giving them better service than other firms, giving predictability on cost, achieving their goals with creativity and verve, and training young lawyers to put “Clients First” at every turn.

*An effective leader supports his or her team, and incentivizes everyone else to embrace team before self.* We bring out the best in our team. We each believe that lawyers can always improve their level of service and work harder to align with the clients’ goals. We learn from our clients every day. And our training processes include lots of healthy, constructive criticism. We do not hire people who are unwilling to change and develop their ground game.

*An effective leader listens and is willing to adapt to make the most of every team member’s contribution.* It is important that everybody—partners, associates and counsel, paralegals, and back-office support—have my ear when they need it.

**Q: Name a lawyer or mentor whose leadership inspired you.**

**A:** Alan M. Cohen brought me in as his partner at O’Melveny & Myers in 2002, and has remained my most important mentor. He is extremely experienced, whip-smart, and deeply strategic. He taught me the value of “incrementalism,” that is, having a clear vision and bringing your adversary to see an issue as you see it through small, gradual, sequenced steps. No one could have taught me more.

**Q: How are the business and profession of law changing, and how should lawyers adapt for the future?**

**A:** Coming from my hardscrabble background, I am heartened that the legal profession has opened to people from every walk of life. Law cannot and should not be an engine of stagnation or a means of discrimination. When members of a legal team come from different and diverse backgrounds, the solutions they can offer clients are usually stronger and more creative. It is crucial to the health of the legal industry that firms promote diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace.

**JIM WALDEN**  
**FOUNDING PARTNER, WALDEN MACHT & HARAN**