

THE 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL ATTORNEYS IN ENTERTAINMENT

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Anyone know a good entertainment lawyer?

Of course you do. Attorneys have become so woven into the fabric of the industry, it's impossible to do anything without them. But how many great entertainment lawyers do you know? Advisers who don't just clean up deal details or file cookie-cutter lawsuits but who actually influence the trajectory of the business -- the attorneys who wield as much power as the moguls they represent. There the list gets significantly shorter.

While assembling THR's second annual Power Lawyers issue spotlighting the 100 most influential outside counsel in entertainment, we noticed something interesting. Collectively, the profiles on these pages illustrate the industry's most compelling dramas: the struggle to define intellectual property rights in a free-for-all digital age; our ongoing labor strife; the decline and replacement (we hope) of old revenue models.

To whittle down the list, writers and editors first solicited nominations from the entertainment community. We then supplemented the hundreds of recommendations with our own research, asking the most plugged-in executives which lawyers they consider the most influential in five distinct categories: talent dealmakers; litigators; entertainment-finance dealmakers; intellectual property and tech specialists; and labor experts. In-house studio/network/music label execs are not eligible, nor are law professors, international counsel and lawyers for think tanks or advocacy groups (although this year we included a guide to the studio general counsels and a **Q&A with Walt Disney Studios executive vp business and legal affairs Bernardine Brandis**, who will receive THR's Raising the Bar Studio Lawyer Award at today's Power Lawyers breakfast).

We've analyzed the year's top stories to figure out the attorneys involved, always with an eye not just on who participated but on what impact his or her actions will have. Candidates were judged against their peers only in their specific categories (i.e., Skip Brittenham was compared with talent dealmakers; Marty Singer with litigators). Leadership positions within their firms mattered, as did educational and philanthropic endeavors. And while some names were selected based on reputations forged over decades, others were boosted this year by a particularly influential court win or an especially innovative deal.

Categories

Talent lawyers
Corporate lawyers
Labor lawyers
IP-Tech lawyers
Litigation lawyers

Category: Talent

Deals, deals and more deals. That's the life of an A-list talent lawyer. With film, TV, music and theater contracts expanding to include everything from new media to new clothing lines, the top lawyers boast creativity that rivals that of their clients themselves



Howard Siegel
Pryor Cashman, New York

Despite having represented more "American Idol" contestants than any other lawyer, Siegel travels each year to Los Angeles to participate in a "beauty contest," pitching contestants as to why they should hire him. For the second consecutive year, Siegel emerged victorious, becoming the lawyer for all 24 finalists in this spring's competition. His secret? He puts the contestants on the phone with prior "Idol" winners like Ruben Studdard, who tell the Idols-in-waiting what a wonderful job Siegel does. "I'd like to say that I would not have won this year's competition without Howard Siegel," jokes current "Idol" David Cook. "I'd like to say that, but it would be a lie. Still, Howard is spectacular. I know I would be a lot more concerned about things -- and a lot less protected -- without Howard on my team." Though some question the leverage that Siegel has in negotiating deals with producers of TV's No. 1 show, he's pushed for finalists to receive more participation in sponsorships, such as the deal completed with Disney last year, and he often continues to represent the singers in record deals even after the season finishes.

Category: Corporate

With the economy teetering, entertainment-finance deals are tougher, which means a good corporate dealmaker is more important than ever. These are the creative minds keeping deals moving and finding money where there isn't any.



James Janowitz
Pryor Cashman, New York

Janowitz handles both litigation and an impressive array of entertainment-finance transactions from his perch atop his firm's vaunted entertainment group. He got Michael London's Groundswell Prods. its financing from TPG-Axon Capital and handles big-ticket transactions for MGM, enabling the studio's transition to releasing its own films. (He also reps former MGM COO Rick Sands.) Janowitz is now working on an unannounced structured finance vehicle that will enable a number of well-known producers to finance pictures through a common facility of several hundred million dollars. "Although the liquidity crisis has made some of these deals more challenging to close," he says, "I believe strongly that well-structured transactions will continue to be a significant source of capital to the film business."