

INTERVIEW

Top dealmakers 2017: Skadden's Hopkins on the Worldpay merger, 'total war' dealmaking and candid personal feedback

Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom City corporate partner Scott Hopkins was one of the most prolific advisers by value on takeovers of UK companies last year.

Alongside former Skadden partner Michael Hatchard (who remains at the US firm as a strategic adviser), he worked on three deals worth a total of \$16.4bn (£12.3bn) last year. These included the primary adviser role for Vantiv on its \$12bn (£9bn) merger with Worldpay, alongside New York M&A partners Peter Atkins and David Ingles.

He joined Skadden in 2001 and made partner in 2012.

Why did you become a lawyer? I had been aiming for politics or international relations but, after a little practical experience, realised these were unlikely to give me enough freedom to influence outcomes. The law would allow me to work internationally, leveraging my skills and experience, but allow me to have more impact on the process and result.



Who has been the biggest influence on your career? Michael Hatchard - at once a great influence and an impossible role model, because he's a one-off. But I do try to emulate, in particular, his work ethic, his 'total war'

approach to dealmaking and his sensitivity to social issues. Constant improvement is the key.

What was the standout deal you worked on in 2017 and why? Vantiv/Worldpay for many reasons. The deal

itself is big and complex, but also transformational for both companies, in a sector that is important for the future global economy. A great client to work for. It was a privilege and honour to work with the legend that is Peter Atkins at Skadden New York, and immensely satisfying to see a team of lawyers across so many different practice areas pull together and deliver for the client.

What's your proudest professional moment? Making partner at Skadden.

...and worst day on the job? It was a sobering moment to realise the impact of my words on associates as a junior partner - in particular that when I get into 'execute now' mode, it comes across as frightening or, perhaps worse, condescending.

Aside from your own firm, which lawyer do you most admire and why? Paul Whitelock at Norton Rose Fulbright. Very smart and knowledgeable, but commercial at the same time. Also, Mark Bardell at Herbert Smith - for the same reasons - and also because both are great communicators and retain a sense of humour.

What's your strongest characteristic...and worst trait? Determination would be my best trait and my worst would be letting that determination blind me to how others are feeling about the journey.

What advice would you give to young deal lawyers starting out? Spend your energy doing a great job instead of worrying about whether others are recognising that you are doing a great job. It all comes round.

What's the best part of your job? The challenge and the diversity.

What most annoys you about the legal profession? Lawyers who spend their time scoring points and forgetting that it's not their money.

What's the most unusual/shocking request you've ever had from a client? I really wish I could say. Within disclosable parameters, at one completion meeting, one party pulling me aside and requesting payment be made to a different account in the name of a different company.

Most memorable deal you ever have worked on and why? The first bid News Corp made for Sky - for the sheer drama, politics and intensity of public interest.

What is the daftest bit of corporate jargon you've heard (and did you smirk)? Literally the other day I was invited to a 'loopup' call. I did smirk but at least didn't gag, which sometimes one does with other jargon.

Do you see yourself having a career outside law? I hope there is something beyond law. I imagine something with

a political or social purpose where I can leverage skills developed as a lawyer - perhaps at an NGO? See answer to first question.

What's your favourite item of clothing? My Dayton boots - handmade in Vancouver and essential motorcycling equipment.

It's midnight and you're in the office for the night, where's your takeaway from? No eating after eight! But we have associates who will procure a feast of pizzas and salads at any hour, which I find hard to resist. If I am on my own and desperate, a bowl of cereal.

What are your desert island discs? The Tragically Hip - Three Pistols; Miles Davis - So What; Stevie Ray Vaughan - Couldn't Stand the Weather; John Coltrane - A Love Supreme; 67 - Lets Lurk; Pink Floyd - Dogs, Pigs, Sheep; Burning Spear - Marcus Garvey; Jimi Hendrix - All Along the Watchtower.

Favourite boxset? Sons Of Anarchy.

What's your favourite cheese? Roquefort.