

MVP: King & Spalding's Norman 'Norm' Armstrong

By Matt Perez

Law360 (September 20, 2022, 2:02 PM EDT) -- Norm Armstrong of King & Spalding LLP led teams throughout the year in successful trial cases and resolutions to regulatory investigations, including a jury win in Delaware federal court that favored his client, German chemical company BASF, earning him a spot as one of Law360's 2022 Competition MVPs.

HIS BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT THIS PAST YEAR:

The BASF case, during which Armstrong co-led the trial team, began with a 2017 patent infringement complaint filed by Ingevity Corp. That resulted in a summary judgment in favor of BASF and a countersuit against Ingevity for alleged misconduct during discovery.

"I'm very proud to have led a diverse team of attorneys and to have won a jury trial for our client, BASF," Armstrong said, identifying the September 2021 win as his biggest of the last year.

Ingevity was found guilty of antitrust violations including tying and entering into exclusive supply agreements with customers and tortious interference with a business relationship, according to King & Spalding, and the jury granted BASF an \$84.9 million award.

"It was especially notable because we overcame Ingevity's defense that its actions were protected by patent rights," Armstrong added.

HIS BIGGEST CHALLENGE OF THE PAST YEAR:

An increased focus on antitrust matters and regulatory actions has made an already complex practice area that much more difficult, Armstrong said.

"Representing clients in this antitrust enforcement climate, where we're seeing an increase in the number of government investigations and an increase in a willingness to pursue novel antitrust theories



— while it's certainly interesting to discuss and consider novel theories, it's extremely challenging to advise clients in this environment," he said.

In another difficult feat regarding the BASF case, Armstrong said, "It was very challenging litigation and especially notable because we had to convince the jury that this wasn't patent infringement and overcome their defense that the actions that they took — [as] the competitor — were protected by patent rights."

WHY HE PICKED ANTITRUST:

While he entered law school with an economics background from undergrad, Armstrong didn't really intend to pursue it as an attorney.

"I really originally didn't think I was going to be an antitrust lawyer," he said, "but my background in economics kind of piqued my interest in antitrust, and I was given an opportunity to work at the Federal Trade Commission after law school. And I loved the work and stayed there in various roles for 19 years."

During his time at the FTC, he served in various capacities, including staff attorney, an adviser to the bureau director, a deputy assistant director and finally a deputy director. He subsequently joined King & Spalding in 2014 and has been with the firm since.

HIS ADVICE TO YOUNG ATTORNEYS:

Given that he never initially intended to become a competition attorney, Armstrong's recommendation for law students is to remain open to many practice areas.

"Usually what I advise folks who come and talk to me is: Don't specialize early on," Armstrong said. "Take your time. Figure out what area of law you really enjoy. Then once you do that, you focus. You become an expert in that area."

That inherently necessitates taking risks, Armstrong added.

"Don't be afraid to take chances, and really look for mentors along the way," he said. "That's one of the most important things that I tell young lawyers, people looking to get into the legal industry."

— *As told to Matt Perez.*

Law360's MVPs of the Year are attorneys who have distinguished themselves from their peers over the past year through high-stakes litigation, record-breaking deals, and complex global matters. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2022 MVP winners after reviewing more than 900 submissions.